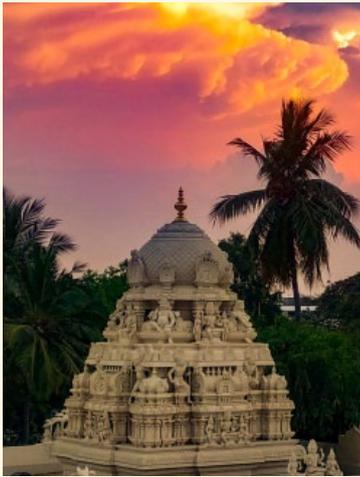


# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

MATRUBHUTESWARA 100  
JUNE 2022, VOL. 16, NO.6



D. Thiyagarajan



## Saranagati



MATRUBHUTESWARA 100  
JUNE 2022, VOL. 16, NO.6

IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

Agni nakshatra this year turned out to be mild owing to intermittent rainfall and cloudy days which took the edge off the heat waves of April and early May.

The month of May has been busy as the Mother's Shrine turned 100 and the Ashram celebrated its 100th Mahapuja and ends with the annual global Saranagati online programme out of Arunachala Ashrama, NY.

In this issue, we continue the life story of T.R. Kanakammal and review the events leading up to and surrounding Alagammal's leaving the body at Skandasramam on 19th May 1922. Please also refer to page 14 for coverage of the recent Global Online Aradhana celebrated on Sunday, 9th May.

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to [https://sriramanamaharshi.org/resource\\_centre/archives/](https://sriramanamaharshi.org/resource_centre/archives/) or write to us at [saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org](mailto:saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org).

In Sri Bhagavan,  
*Saranagati*

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## Calendar of Ashram Events

3rd June (Fri) Punarvasu Day  
12th June (Sun) Pradosham  
13-14th June (Mon) Full Moon  
30th June (Thu) Punarvasu  
10th July (Sun) Cow Lakshmi Day  
12th July (Tue) Pradosham  
13th July (Wed) Guru Poornima

25th July (Mon) Kavya Kantha Day  
26th July (Tue) Pradosham  
27th July (Wed) Punarvasu  
7th August (Sun) Kunjuswami Day  
10th August (Wed) Pradosham  
11th August (Thu) Full Moon  
24th August (Wed) Punarvasu





## IN PROFILE

### T.R. Kanakammal (Part III)

During her first three years at Sri Ramanasramam, Kanakammal witnessed numerous extraordinary events first-hand. After getting to know some of the older devotees, she also heard of the astonishing experiences each of them had over the years in Bhagavan's presence. While she did not participate directly in the conversations that went on in the Hall, she observed with great care all that took place from the vantage point of her deep meditative silence.

Kanakammal quickly learned that it was not her task to grasp at anything tangible in the Maharshi's presence but rather, to open herself to the fullness of each passing day. She knew that the deeper encounter with Bhagavan was beyond what could be gotten hold of by the conceptual mind. She came to see that Bhagavan was pointing the way to something intimately bound up with silence.

If Bhagavan eschewed abstract and philosophical discussions, neither did he actively seek questions of any sort. Bhagavan helped free Kanakammal of the desire to be the knower. She trusted the reluctance she felt in respect of speaking to Bhagavan merely for the sake of saying something and came to understand that the silent communication she shared with Bhagavan was vital and alive, even if it took place without recourse to audible words. She came to accept this as her way, all the while understanding that Bhagavan's spoken words were also an expression of his deep silence. She thus resisted nothing that went on and apprenticed herself to the words spoken in the Hall, as well as to the gaps between them.

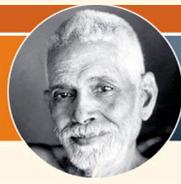
#### The New Hall

After the Golden Jubilee on 1st September 1946, Bhagavan had begun to spend more time in the thatched Jubilee Hall adjacent to the Old Hall that had been constructed for the Jubilee celebrations. All the while, the New Hall and the temple over the Mother's Samadhi were being constructed. Following their completion, Mahakumbhabhishekam was performed on the 17th of March 1949 and on the 1st of June, the New Hall was consecrated. The large stone sofa installed there was to be Bhagavan's new home, and it was from there he gave darshan:

*Bhagavan's sofa was carved out of a single block of grey granite which when polished becomes black stone. We usually classify anything hard as being 'like a stone'. But this very hard stone in Bhagavan's realm allowed itself to be carved into an object of exquisite beauty. The most intricate designs have been carved into it'. Bhagavan reclined upon this stone sofa. On either side of the sofa, there was space for the devotees to sit down and meditate. Male devotees would sit on the Eastern side of the hall and*

1 The haloed 'Om' carved into the sofa's headrest by Vaidyanatha Stapathi became the Ashram logo (as seen below, right).





the ladies would be seated on the Western side. Devotees filled the space in front of the sofa as well. This arrangement made it possible to feast one's eyes upon Bhagavan's enchanting form from both sides and from the front as well. Wherever one might be seated, however, Bhagavan's compassionate gaze would fall upon each. I usually sat close to the window, on the southern side of the hall facing Bhagavan. Rani Majumdar, a Bengali lady from the Bose Compound, regularly sat beside me.

Bhagavan's devotees conversed with him freely. While engaged in conversation, Bhagavan's graceful gestures and his playful gaze captivated us. Bhagavan never acknowledged anyone as his disciple. Neither did he give religious discourses. His life was his teaching. Even seemingly casual remarks were full of meaning and an earnest seeker could find a valuable lesson in every look, word, and gesture.<sup>2</sup>

Kanakammal was content to sit quietly in meditation and absorb all that went on, frequently opening her eyes to glimpse Bhagavan. She could not help but be drawn to the encounters between the master and his devotees as well as the interactions between him and the various short-term guests who came to see him:

Once an earnest seeker came, prostrated in all humility to Bhagavan and asked: 'Bhagavan has said that the real nature of the Self can be attained only by constant dhyana. But how is it possible for one like me saddled with official responsibilities and the management of household affairs? If a major part of one's life is spent managing these, where is there time for atma vichara, much less uninterrupted dhyana? What is the way out? I beseech Bhagavan to enlighten me on this.'

Looking at him compassionately, Bhagavan said: 'Suppose you leave your house with the intention of coming to the Ashram and on the way, you meet a friend. You greet him, exchange pleasantries, and then take leave of him, proceeding to the Ashram while your

2 Cherished Memories, p. 63.

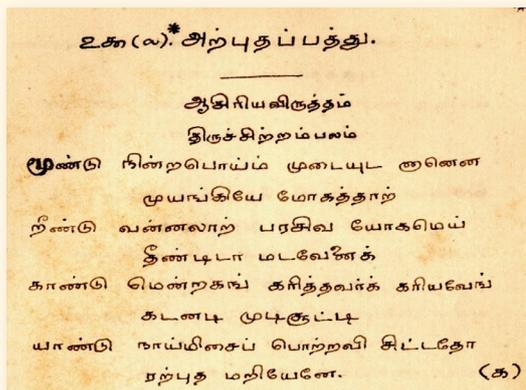
friend goes his way. Now you don't go away with your friend but rather continue toward the Ashram, do you not? The thought of coming to the Ashram is so fixed in your mind that whomsoever you happen to meet on the way is spoken to in the appropriate way and parted with in order that you may fulfil your original intention. Likewise, if the mind is deeply engaged in meditation after doing whatever has to be done, the mind will return to meditation. By engaging the mind before starting work and after finishing it, even while working, it will automatically acquire the ability to do the necessary while inhering in its natural state. In the course of time this becomes in-built, habitual, and natural, and one no longer feels the lack of being engaged in constant meditation.'<sup>3</sup>

When Bhagavan sat upon the sofa and stretched out his legs, some felt as though they were being granted the rare privilege of sitting at his lotus feet. Kanakammal sometimes sat in the corner of the New Hall near the small door which Bhagavan used when he left the hall. One morning, she sat in her usual spot, lost in meditation:

As I sat with eyes closed, absorbed in Bhagavan's presence, I did not notice the arrival of Mouni with the day's mail. After going through the letters, Bhagavan got up to go to the cowshed, as per routine. All the devotees except me got up and made way for Bhagavan. I was so engrossed in meditation that I was totally unaware of what was going on around me. I continued to sit there, directly in Bhagavan's path. When Bhagavan had come very close, a lady devotee tapped me on the shoulder and hissed in my ear, 'Get up! Get up quickly! Bhagavan has to go out and you are blocking the way.' With a violent start, I opened my eyes. My legs had become numb from sitting for an extended period. So, I was not able to get up immediately. Somehow, I managed to rise, and went to stand against the wall.

3 'Encounters with Bhagavan', part II, *The Mountain Path*, July 2006, pp. 31-32.

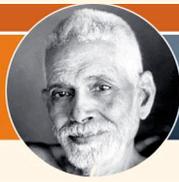
## Bhagavan's Handwriting: Ramana Sannidhi Murai's 'Decade of Miracle', v. 1



Moundu nindra-poim mudai-udal naan-ena/Muyan-giye mogat-taal  
Teendu vanna-laar para-siva yoga-mei/Teendi-daa mada-venaik  
Kaandum endru-ahan karit-tavar-kku ariya-veng/Katan-adi mudi-sootti  
Aandu naai-misaip por-tavisu ittador/arpudam ari-yene

Embracing the fallacy of the body as myself due to deeply engrossed delusion, I, fool that I am, have never in this birth practiced the exalted supreme Siva yoga. Venkata, inaccessible to those who arrogantly proclaim to have seen him, has placed his holy feet on my head as a crown, elevated this dog [and seated him on] a golden throne. How did this miracle happen? —





*Bhagavan had seen all this. He was annoyed with the lady who had told me to get up. He chided her in Telugu, 'Where was the need to disturb her? There is so much space here. You need not have roused her at all. Does devotion to Bhagavan mean disturbing other people?'*

*The lady held me responsible for Bhagavan's rebuke. She was angry and grumbled to me privately, 'Some people like to draw attention to themselves by pretending to be absorbed in meditation.' I tried my best to convince her that I had really been unaware of Bhagavan's approach, but she remained sceptical. I was very much upset by the lady's attitude but could not do anything about it. From that time onwards, I never sat in that spot. And I regret to say that Bhagavan never used that doorway again. After that incident, Bhagavan started using the eastern doorway. The doorstep on this side was rather high and so, a thick coir mat had to be laid there, to make it easier for Bhagavan to step across. Every time I saw Bhagavan using that doorway, I was consumed by guilt. I wanted to say, 'I am very sorry, Bhagavan. Please forgive me for having caused you so much trouble. Please start using the smaller door again.' But I could never find the courage to say all this to Bhagavan. Just looking at Bhagavan rendered me speechless. The other devotees, too, hesitated to speak to Bhagavan about this matter. Right up to the end, Bhagavan never used the small doorway again.'*<sup>4</sup>

### At Night in the New Hall

Kanakammal was now part of the regular daily assembly of devotees in Bhagavan's midst. She made a point of getting the details regarding Bhagavan's comments during the previous evening and on any occasions she was unable to attend. As ladies were not allowed in the Ashram during evenings and nights, she consulted the attendants regarding those times.

Now that Bhagavan was living in the New Hall, restrictions were imposed, most notably that darshan could only take place between fixed periods and that no one should sleep in the New Hall except the attendants. Moreover, the attendants should not keep Bhagavan up late but should lay down and go to sleep at a specified hour:

*Kodur Venkatratnam, Sub Registrar Narayana Iyer and T.P. Ramachandra Iyer used to offer to serve as the attendants at night since they would be in the company of Bhagavan. In these days Bhagavan was in the habit of interacting with those around him, whether it was day or night. When he was narrating a story, Bhagavan would enact*

<sup>4</sup> *Cherished Memories*, p. 73.



Darshan in the New Hall, 1949

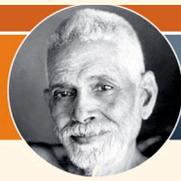
*the drama with lively gesticulations. Sri Niranjanananda Swami was keen that the attendants did not engage Bhagavan in conversation and that they lay down quietly. So, he would go on inspection rounds outside the Hall at regular intervals, peeping through the window in between to check. Venkatratnam and Narayana Iyer would sit erect and gaze at Bhagavan while he dramatized the story. They would entirely forget the environment. But Bhagavan would know the approaching danger and would suddenly stop his narration and make signs with his hands to lie down; they would dutifully obey. After some time when the Sarvadhikari had left, Bhagavan would again make silent signs that the coast was clear, and the avid listeners would get up. How childlike Bhagavan was!*<sup>5</sup>

Kanakammal heard from them that on one such night, while Bhagavan was telling a story, Venkatratnam was massaging Bhagavan's leg to relieve his rheumatism. Venkatratnam was transfixed listening to Bhagavan while the attendant massaged. Bhagavan stopped the narration and looked at him. Thinking that Bhagavan wanted more pressure to be applied, he massaged with added force. After some time Bhagavan looked again at him, and again Venkatratnam pressed the leg ever harder. This happened a third time and then Bhagavan suddenly said:

*'What are you doing? You want to massage something, do you? Go and massage that stone pillar'. Venkatratnam was flabbergasted. Then only did he understand his mistake. Instead of massaging the whole leg, absorbed in listening to Bhagavan's storytelling, he was massaging the same place again and again. When Bhagavan looked at him to make him understand his error, he pressed with*

<sup>5</sup> 'Noble Ramana', *The Mountain Path*, Oct 1985, pp. 265-266.





ever greater vehemence, so much so the spot had swollen. The next morning, he could not face Bhagavan. He avoided coming before Bhagavan feeling ashamed. Then Bhagavan called him in and said: 'Why are you avoiding me? Anyone else in your position would have done the same. You were absorbed in the story. It is alright'.

These soothing words from Bhagavan relieved Venkatratnam. Here, one can see not only the forgiving nature of Bhagavan but his solicitude in rescuing devotees from their mental suffering.<sup>6</sup>

## The Sixth Kosha

Such things happened frequently. Devotees had their full attention focused on Bhagavan and invariably had good intentions. But sometimes, in going out of their way to be of assistance to Bhagavan, they overdid it:

Once during an unusually cold winter, Manavasi Ramaswamy Iyer had two shirts made for Bhagavan because he wanted to protect Bhagavan from the biting cold and felt that a loincloth and cotton dhoti were insufficient. Lacking the courage to present them personally, he placed them on the stool in front of Bhagavan's sofa while Bhagavan was taking a walk on the Hill. Upon his return, Bhagavan saw the shirts and questioned the attendant. Just then Manavasi put in his appearance and murmured inaudibly, 'Bhagavan, it was I who put them there. It is very cold Bhagavan and....' But Bhagavan interrupted him, saying, 'Did I complain that it was cold?' 'No, Bhagavan, I took the initiative. I thought Bhagavan should protect himself.' But Bhagavan wouldn't hear of it, 'No, take them away'. Manavasi persisted and yet nothing would make Bhagavan accept them. Finally, with a tinge of frustration, Bhagavan said, 'I already wear five shirts,' (referring to the panchakosas). 'Is a sixth one necessary?'<sup>7</sup>

On another occasion, a devotee had a requirement of a different sort. Seeing how amateur films had

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 265-266.

<sup>7</sup> 'Remembering Bhagavan', *The Mountain Path*, Jayanti 2007, pp. 44-45.

been made capturing Bhagavan's physical form and movements in and around the Ashram, he noted how no one had yet managed to capture Bhagavan's voice on tape. Kanakammal describes the day:

Until he had gotten the recorder in the hall, he was apprehensive whether Bhagavan would permit him to make a recording. He set the recorder in front of Bhagavan, did his usual pranams, and sought his permission to record. To the devotee's surprise, Bhagavan started putting questions to him, eliciting technical information on the recording device. While responding, the devotee felt relieved at the thought that Bhagavan was interested and was agreeable to having his voice recorded. After the explanations were over, the devotee went around and instructed all those present to keep quiet. Bhagavan was keenly watching all that was going on. The devotee then placed the microphone near Bhagavan and switched on the recorder. He quietly moved a little distance away. From then on silence fell. Only the whizzing sound of the revolving reel on the recorder could be heard. Ten or fifteen minutes passed in absolute silence. Disappointed, and not knowing what to do next, the devotee went near Bhagavan, switched off the recorder and in a subdued tone, asked Bhagavan why he did not speak. He added, that unless he talked his voice could not be recorded. Bhagavan replied: 'Why do you think so? My voice, indeed, has been recorded. My language is that of silence, and that has been recorded. Is it not so?' On hearing this the devotee stood baffled. Just then, Sri Muruganar addressed the devotee: 'Why did you switch off the recorder before asking these questions? If you had not, there would have at least been the recording of Bhagavan's explanation of his own voice.' Now the devotee was all the more perplexed.<sup>8</sup>

## Darshan of the Lord

Requests and inquiries made by visitors spanned a vast range of subjects and Bhagavan was ever ready to

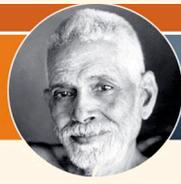
<sup>8</sup> Kanakamma's talk at Arunachala Ashrama in New York City on May 12, 1991 (trans. by Professor S. Raman).

## 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 SRMH website: <https://www.srmh.org/> or by sending an email to: [sriramanamaharshiheritage@gmail.com](mailto:sriramanamaharshiheritage@gmail.com).





greet them one by one. But sometimes it was one of his devotees who stepped in to respond:

*One day a visitor came to the darshan hall. Since his youth he had been an upasaka of Lord Subrahmanya and had been faithful in following all the practices enjoined in the scriptures regarding worship of Lord Subrahmanya. This gentleman entered the darshan hall and spoke plaintively to Bhagavan: 'O Swami, all my life since my childhood, I've devoted myself to Lord Murugan and yet, in all this time, I've not been blessed with a vision of the Lord.' Bhagavan sat in silence, merely gazing upon this devotee before him. Meanwhile the poet Muruganar was sitting nearby. Normally Muruganar never spoke to or even acknowledged anyone, least of all short-term visitors. Even when devotees challenged him, prodded him or tried to rouse him in some way, he would simply remain quiet. But this day was different. Upon hearing the man's pleas, Muruganar interrupted him and with uplifted hands emphatically directed toward Bhagavan, he said: 'You've been waiting for the day to have Lord Subrahmanya's darshan. Why, my dear man, the day you've been waiting for has arrived!' Then without the least hesitation, Muruganar gestured toward Bhagavan's regal form reclining on the sofa before them and with words that seemed to pierce the very air itself, he cried out: 'Who else do you think this is here in front of you? Can you not see Him sitting right here before you?'*

*As if in response to a lifelong yearning, Bhagavan's form was evidently transformed before this visitor's eyes and indeed shone as Lord Subrahmanya. The man stood still, speechless, transfixed. Then he began to rub his eyes as if to be sure that what he was seeing was real and not some trick of the eye. Finally with eyes open wide, mouth agape and a countenance full of wonder, tears began to stream down his cheeks. His voice quivered and cracked as he shouted out loud before the gathering, 'Aamaam, aamaam!'— 'Yes, yes!'<sup>9</sup>*

9 'Encounters with Bhagavan', part I, *The Mountain Path*, April 2006, pp. 42-43. This account comes to us by way of Muruganar, who, on the evening of the day in question, was visited by this devotee. He approached him with pranams and prostrations and other gestures of thanksgiving for Muruganar's role in the former's 'miraculous vision' of the Lord.

## Principal and Interest

On another day:

*A disciple of a reputed Swami of South India came to Bhagavan to have his darshan. With some hesitation he started telling Bhagavan about his guru's strict injunction that one of his devotees should do so many thousands of japa each day and surrender the phala to the guru as their offering. Bhagavan smiled and observed: 'Is it so? It is to be appreciated. So much gain for the guru with no strain on his part!'*

*While Bhagavan was saying this, Muruganar entered the Old Hall. Turning to him Bhagavan said: 'Do you know? His guru commands each of his disciples to perform so many thousands of nama-japa and surrender the phala to him, as guru kanika. After that will there be any balance for the disciples? It looks like one keeping the principal and surrendering the interest to the guru as offering. How do you appreciate this?'*

*Muruganar, with tears in his eyes, replied: 'Bhagavan, their guru is far better. He at least leaves the principal and demands only the interest. But this guru here (pointing to Bhagavan) is worse. He takes away the principal itself; then where is room for interest? He demands the devotees' mulam (principal) and vaddi (interest) all at once!'*

*Bhagavan gave a benign smile enjoying the poet's humour.<sup>10</sup>*

## Silent Initiation

During three years in Bhagavan's midst, Kanakammal continued to remain silent and sat quietly at the rear of the Hall. One morning in 1949, however, the seating arrangement was altered:

*One day, Rani Majumdar said, 'See, there is nobody in the front row. Let us go and sit there today.' This was a tempting idea indeed! Seeing the two of us moving to a space so close to Bhagavan, Kameswaramma, also came to sit beside us. I prostrated myself before Bhagavan and settled down. From that instant, Bhagavan's eyes stayed on me. If you want to look at Bhagavan, you must choose*

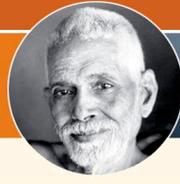
10 'Omniscient Ramana', *The Mountain Path*, April 1986, p. 101.



## Ashram Gardens: The Begging Bowl Tree

**C***rescentia cujete* grows up to 10 meters in height and is commonly referred to as the Begging Bowl Tree (Calabash). Its fruit comes encased in a very hard shell (calabash) and was traditionally used for utensils such as cups, bowls and basins for carrying water as well as for alms rounds. This tree lies behind the Mountain Path office. Another can be found at the rear of the Ashram gosala. —





a time when he isn't looking directly at you. When his gaze falls upon you, something happens, which makes it impossible for you to keep your eyes open. The intensity of Bhagavan's direct look is too much for an ordinary human being to bear. It is as though some invisible power has entered you and made its way to the very core of your being and there is nothing but the blissful awareness of the Self.

For a short while, I gazed at Bhagavan. Within a few seconds, however, my eyes closed of their own accord, and I was totally immersed in a peace beyond description. I do not know how long I was in that state. After a while, I managed to open my eyes and found that Bhagavan's gaze was still upon me. He had not changed his position, nor had he lifted that magical look from me. I closed my eyes again.

After a while, I heard voices and opened my eyes to see what was happening. Mouni Srinivasa Rao had come in with the day's mail. Bhagavan was going through the letters and other correspondence. When Mouni left the hall, Bhagavan too got up and went out towards the cowshed, accompanied by his personal attendant. At that point, I stood up and went back to my usual place at the back under the window. Kameswaramma followed me. She was in a very emotional state. She embraced me and, with tears in her eyes said, 'Kanakamma, you are indeed very fortunate. What a wonderful experience you have had! From the time you sat down before him to the moment when Mouni arrived, Bhagavan's eyes were on you. Not for a moment did he shift his gaze. I was

watching you and Bhagavan the whole time, and I could see the effect Bhagavan's look had on you. Bhagavan has been extremely gracious to you today. He has showered his Grace on you through his uninterrupted gaze. You have attained the culminating point of your life today. What more could you want?'

I was in no state to say anything at all and was unable to respond to her words. The state of my mind was indescribable. I felt a deep peace within me. The outward physical sign of this mental state was the steady flow of the tears that streamed down my cheeks. For many days afterwards, this peace stayed with me. Every time I think about the experience of that day, I feel the same thrill of ecstasy.

Most spiritual teachers attach a lot of importance to the initiation ceremony. But that was not Bhagavan's way. He never gave formal initiation to anybody. Nevertheless, he wrought miracles with a mere look. Many of his devotees have had experiences like mine. They can all testify to the power of Bhagavan's 'Glance of Grace'. Through a mere look, Bhagavan could transform a person's mind and heart. Through the Grace that flowed from his eyes, a person could transcend all obstacles and enter realms of Supreme Bliss without any conscious personal effort.<sup>11</sup> —

(to be continued)

11 Cherished Memories, pp. 63-65.

## Sri Bhagavan's Ayurvedic Recipes: Ashwagandhi Churnam

### Ashwagandhi Churnam

Sīrāṇa lavaṅgamoḍu siṛunā gappū  
siṛappuḷḷa vēlamiḷa garicit tipli  
vārāṇa sukkuḍaṇē yamukka rāttūḷ  
varisaiyadā miratṭittē yeḍuttuk kūṭṭic  
cērāṇa tūḷeḍaikku camamē cīṇi  
cevvaiyāyk kalandiḍittu vaittuḷ koḷga  
pērāṇa kashuvagandhic cūrṇa mappā  
perukkamuḷḷa viyādiellām pōkkum pārē.

Sīrāṇa lavaṅgamoḍu siṛu nāgappū  
siṛappuḷḷa ēlamiḷagu arisi tippili  
vārāṇa sukkuḍaṇē amukkarāt-tūḷ  
varisaiyadām iratṭittē eḍuttuk kūṭṭi  
cērāṇa tūḷ-eḍaikku camamē cīṇi  
cevvaiyāy kalandu-iḍittu vaittu uṭkoḷga

pērāṇa ashuvagandhi cūrṇam appā  
perukkamuḷḷa viyādi ellām pōkkum pārē.

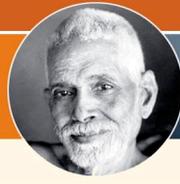
*Ingredients:* clove 10 gm; sirunagappu 20 gm; cardamom 40 gm; black pepper 80 gm; rice pippali 160 gm; dry ginger 320 gm; withania 640 gm; and sugar candy 1280 gm.

*(The quantity of the ingredients increases by multiples of two. This is a speciality of Bhagavan. In ancient medicinal books the prescription for this recipe does not contain as many ingredients nor proportional increases.)*

*Preparation:* Clean the ingredients, powder them and mix them well.

*Benefits:* This tonic is good for general vitality, strength and vigour. It is also reputed to cure or alleviate many diseases, even complicated ones. —





By the morning of the 19th of May 1922, her condition was critical. A telegram was sent to Sri Bhagavan's sister, Alamelu Ammal, alerting her to the prospect of her mother's imminent passing from this earth. That morning Bhagavan went into Mother's room and sat with her, not leaving her side, even taking his lunch there. Whenever she gasped for air excitedly, he would put his right hand on her chest until she became calm again. By 6 pm when dinner was served, Chinnaswami, Ramakrishnaswami and Kunjuswami stayed with Bhagavan at Mother's side while others took their food. Raju Sastri, Vaidyanatha Sastri, Sundaresa Iyer and others recited the Vedas while Saranagathi Ramaswamy Iyer and others did Ramajapa. Those sitting near Bhagavan recited Aksharamanamalai. Meanwhile devotees in town, having gotten the news, began climbing the Hill in order to pay their final respects, among them Kavya Kantha Ganapathi Muni and his wife who came up to join the vigil.

By evening her breath had slowed considerably and was laboured. Bhagavan soothed her by placing one palm on her head and the other on her chest. Just before 8 pm while devotees outside the room chanted and while Bhagavan maintained his holy hands firmly placed on her, Mother's breath became evermore shallow. In the midst of the activity outside, the sounds of prayers, recitations and mourning, Bhagavan maintained deep concentration not wavering from the task at hand. As his mother's breath gradually subsided, he held his right hand on her heart and his left on her forehead and maintained this position for some time after the breath had stopped completely. By this means, he later said, her soul merged with the Self and every last vasana was purified and extinguished.

When vibhuti had been applied to her forehead and her body was covered with a new sari, devotees moved the sacred form onto the front verandah of the Ashram. Once garlanded with flower malas and rudraksha beads, Bhagavan announced, 'Now we can eat; there is no pollution (*theettu*)!'<sup>2</sup>

After dinner, devotional singing continued into the night and Bhagavan joined in the chanting of *Tiruvachakam* which lasted until 4 am. It was quickly decided that cremation was not an option. Since the

<sup>2</sup> Viswanatha Swami in *Boundless Ocean of Grace*, vol. 1, p. 575.

## MATRUBHUTESWARA 100

### Establishing Mother's Samadhi

In 1922 Mother Alagammal suffered from an unrelenting fever and loose motion that lasted more than a month. Easwaraswami gave her medicine each day but without any noticeable benefit. Bedridden and unable to carry out her daily chores, Chinnaswami and Kunjuswami washed her clothes for her. Accepting with calm detachment what lay ahead, she called Bhagavan to her side and placing Chinnaswami's hand in his, told him: 'Look, my dear, this boy does not know what is right and what is wrong. Don't let him go away from you. Keep a watchful eye on him. This is my last wish'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters from and Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam*, Chapter 1.

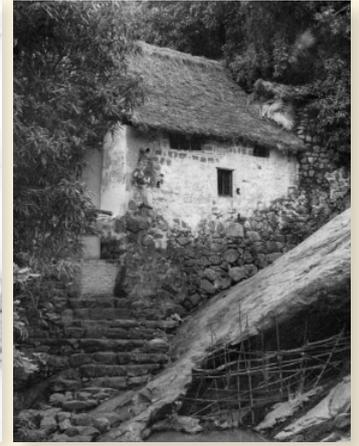




Mother's room at Skandasramam



Bhagavan and Mother at Skandasramam ca. 1916



Skandasramam from below

body of a fully realised soul is a temple itself and should not be altered in any way. The question was simply where the samadhi should be established. Some had suggested a place near Skandasramam but this was also decided against on the grounds that not only would it be in violation of temple rules regarding burial on the Hill, but it would preclude the possibility of ever erecting a shrine over the samadhi. By agamic tradition, Arunachala as *lingaswarupa* obviates the establishment of any shrines upon the Lingam-Hill itself.

When it was decided that Mother's remains would be interred at the foot of the Hill in an area reserved for sadhus, devotees started fashioning a bamboo palanquin with which to carry the body down to the foot of the Hill. Meanwhile Perumalswami, Ramakrishnaswami and others went to town to procure supplies for performing funeral rites. When they

returned, all was made ready. At 5 am Perumalswami, Ramakrishnaswami and others carried the body down the Hill to Pali Tirtham and everyone followed except Kunjuswami who stayed behind to await the arrival of Bhagavan's sister Alamelu and her husband Pichu Iyer.

Once the site was established, a large pit was dug according to the instructions of Tirumular for enshrining a jnani. While work was underway, Mother's body was placed beneath a large old pipal tree on the bank of Palakothu Tirtham around which Sri Bhagavan and devotees were seated. Alamelu and Pichu Iyer arrived. By dawn, scrub brush had been cleared away from a large area in order to accommodate the hundreds of devotees who came from town.

As music and devotional songs echoed in the early morning air, work on the samadhi continued at a steady pace. Abhishekam with milk, curd and coconut water took place at 10 am after which the

## Alagammal's 100th Mahanirvana Day: Chanting at Skandasramam



Bhagavan in her room at Skandasramam, devotees climbed the hill at 5 am and chanted the *Tiruvachakam* in front of the Mother's Room. The recitation began about 5.30 am and was completed at 10.30 am. —

Late in the evening of 19th May 1922 after Mother breathed her last, Bhagavan asked devotees to recite the *Tiruvachakam*. A Tamil tradition says that *Tiruvachakam* should be chanted following the death of a loved one. On the morning of 19th May 2022, one hundred years since mother merged at the Feet of





body was taken to the samadhi pit. Sacred ash and darbha grass were placed inside the pit and Mother Alagammal's body was lowered into it seated in the lotus posture. Sri Bhagavan and others each tossed a handful of sacred ash and camphor into the pit. The burial chamber was then sealed with a stone slab upon which a Sivalingam was installed. Puja and appropriate rites then followed. By 12 noon all was completed and the party started to make its way back to Palakothu. Kunjuswami describes the sight:

*Sri Bhagavan walked slowly to the accompaniment of Nadaswaram music. The procession took over one hour to cover a distance of 150 metres between Mother's Samadhi and Palakothu. The slow walk of Sri Bhagavan and the enchanting music of Nadaswaram were indescribably beautiful.*<sup>3</sup>

For the next ten days, pujas were performed each day at the shrine by Chinnaswami and Ramanatha Brahmachari who came down from Skandasramam for this purpose. On tenth day a special puja was performed and no less than a thousand people turned up for the lighting of the *moksha deepam* ('lamp of liberation') at Mother's Shrine. Residents at Skandasramam came down the previous night and stayed at the Ganesha Temple alongside Palakothu. Meenakshi Ammal and Sri Bhagavan's sister, Alamelu Ammal prepared dosas in the Tiruchuli style. Devotees from Kumbakonam came with a variety of prasada. A big pandal was put up near Ganesh Temple and food was prepared under

<sup>3</sup> *Living with the Master*, Kunjuswami, pp. 71-73.



Mother's Shrine and the Illupai Tree, ca. 1924

the supervision of Chatram Narayanaswami Iyer where some one thousand guests took prasada. On this day it was decided that the pujas should continue for a period of one mandala or forty-eight days.<sup>4</sup> Commenting on the final day when he attended on her with such care, Bhagavan later said:

*Innate tendencies, vasanas or subtle memories of past experiences leading to future possibilities, became active. Scene after scene rolled before her in the subtle consciousness as the outer sense had already gone; the soul was passing through a series of experiences that might possibly have required many more births but for the quickening process worked out by the special touch given on the occasion. The soul was at last disrobed of the subtle sheaths before it reached the final destination, the supreme peace, nirvana from which there is no return to ignorance.*<sup>5</sup> —

<sup>4</sup> See Kunjuswami's *Living with the Master*, pp. 63-67 and 'Evolution of the Mother's Temple' in *The Mountain Path*, 1981, pp. 183-188.

<sup>5</sup> *Life Sketch*, p. 23.

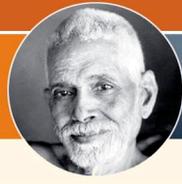
## Ashram Gardens: Sivagami Ammal Samadhi



This shrine to Sivagami Ammal, the daughter of Kulasamy Nadar of Tirunelveli District, Satur Taluk, is situated in the Ashram proper at the very rear of the property behind the Mountain Path office along the Ashram's front perimeter wall. Seventy years back, visiting this temple was thought to offer relief for those suffering migraine

headaches (as well as headaches that appeared on one side of the head). The shrine dates to *poosa* nakshatra of Kartikai *masam* in the year of Prajothpati which corresponds to the 30th of November 1931 of the Gregorian calendar. —





The digging place was this very spot where the well is today. The excavation left a small cavity in the ground which, when a heavy rain came some days later, filled with rainwater. After the rain, the usual hot dry summer weather returned but the water in the depression did not dry up but remained at a constant level. When this was noticed by Chinnaswami and Ramanathan's son, they drained the water from the hole and found that the former water level was soon restored. They took a sample of the water up to Skandasramam to show Bhagavan. Bhagavan came down the hill, inspected the site and asked them to dig a pit three feet wide and three feet deep. Once done, water began trickling in and the site revealed itself to be a spring. Although twelve feet higher than the nearby Pali tirtham, the spring perennially and unceasingly bestows sweet, crystalline water.

This auspicious development earned the awe of devotees and the site was christened as 'Alagamma Tirtha' by some and by others as 'Ramana Tirtha'.

The spring's discovery was commemorated by Ganapati Muni in a Sanskrit verse:

*Here is the new tirtha, remover of all blemishes, at the Samadhi of Mother Saundaryamba, like the stream of pollen from the twin lotus hands of Ramana Maharshi. —*

## MATRUBHUTESWARA 100

### The Ashram Well

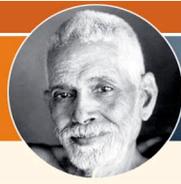
The Ashram Well also turned 100 this month. Its origins go back to the 20th of May 1922 when Mother's Samadhi was being constructed. In the aftermath, a platform had to be constructed above the samadhi and for this purpose, sand was needed.

## Matrubhuteswara 100: Tiruvachakam Chanting



The first puja at this site that is now called Matrubhuteswara took place on the morning of 20th May 1922 and has continued without missing a day for one hundred years. At 7.45 pm on the evening of 20th May 2022, one hundred years since the first stone was laid at the foot of the Hill for Mother's Samadhi, devotees gathered in the Matrubhuteswara and commenced chanting Manikavasagar's *Tiruvachakam*. A Tamil proverb says, *if you are not moved by Tiruvachakam, then no vachakam (word) will move you*. The recitation attended by some fifty devotees included Sushila Ramanan and was performed with great emotion and enthusiasm, only to be completed at 1.30 am. —

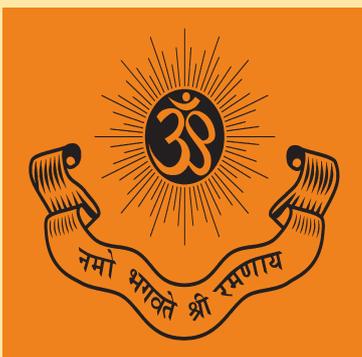




## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: 100th Mahapuja



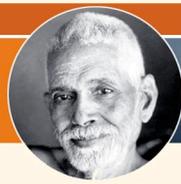
On the early morning of 24th May 2022, one hundred years since mother merged at the Feet of Bhagavan, as per the Tamil *panchagam* (i.e. according to *tithi*), the Mother's Shrine was adorned and decorated with beautiful flowers in preparation for the observance. Devotional singing led by Sushila Ramanan, Dr. Sarada Natarajan and Ambika Kameswar was conducted throughout the morning until puja and arati which took place around 10.30 am. All were invited for food which was served alternately in four batches from the New Dining Hall and the Old Dining Hall. —



### Announcement: Sri Ramanasramam Centenary (1st September 2022- 28th December 2023)

Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary celebrations called, *Ramanasramam: The Next One Hundred Years* are set to begin on 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 finally 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>. —





## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Global Online Aradhana



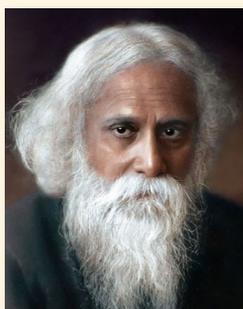
Sunday 8th May, Arunachala Ashrama and satsang groups from around the world joined together on Zoom to observe Sri Bhagavan's 72nd Aradhana. The programme went for 12 hours and ended on the morning of 9th May (IST) with a moving talk by Sri Ramanasramam President, Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan (see <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGsAvwmKaI0>>). —

## The Ashram Gardens: New Ashram Bee Colonies



Two new bee colonies have been donated to the Ashram to occupy the last remaining hives situated in the garden behind the Mountain Path office and the second gosala hive. After being transported recently from Chengalpattu, the colonies seem to have adjusted to their new home and members can be seen hard at work in their respective gardens. —

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Tagore's Birthday



Not only the great classical poets of the Tamil land but those from distant parts of the country are sometimes remembered at puja time. This year on the 9th May being the lunar birthday of the Bengali Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, KVS sang at the evening puja the Bengali song *Klaanti Aamaar Khomaakaro Prabhu*, one of Tagore's 2,000 compositions. —

