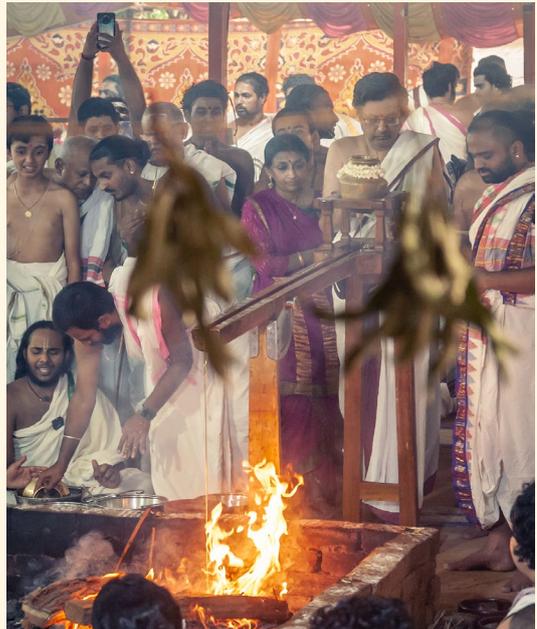
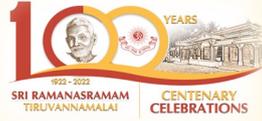


Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

APRIL 2023 EXTENDED EDITION
VOL. 17, NO. 4



Dev Gogoi



Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE



Dear Devotees,

In this issue, we take up the life story of Dhiruben Patel who came to Bhagavan in 1945 at the age of 18. She went on to become an accomplished author and was lauded by writers across India following her recent demise at the age of 96.

Also, in this extended edition is coverage of the recent *Athi Rudram* as well as the concluding segment of *Ramana Reflections* about Bhagavan's surrender as it relates to what Bhagavan calls *chidakasa*.

For videos, photos and other 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

3rd April (Mon) Pradosham
5th April (Wed) Full moon
14th April (Fri) Nirvana Room Chanting/Tamil New Year
17th April (Mon) Major Chadwick's Day
18th April (Tues) Bhagavan's 73rd Aradhana
20th (Thu) April Surya Grahanam (solar eclipse)
26th April (Wed) Pradosham

3rd May (Wed) Pradosham
4-5th May (Thu-Fri) Chitra Pournami
3rd June (Sat) Full Moon
12th June (Mon) Mahapuja
30th June (Fri) Cow Lakshmi Day
3rd July (Mon) Guru Purnima
1st September (Fri) Bhagavan's Advent Day





IN PROFILE

Susri Dhiruben Patel
(1926-2023)

Born 29th May 1926 in Dharmaj village, Vadodara, Gujarat, Dhiruben grew up in Santa Cruz, Mumbai among very interesting company. Her father, Gordhanbhai Patel, was a journalist with the *Bombay Chronicle*, and her mother, Gangaben Patel was a freedom fighter and member of the All-India Congress Committee. Jailed six times for her independence activities, Dhiruben's mother practised Gandhian non-violent resistance alongside the great women of the day. Her comrades-in-arms were Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Usha Mehta, all three of whom were freedom fighters. Sarojini became the first woman President of the Congress in 1925. Usha

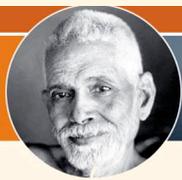
organised the *Secret Congress Radio* for which she was jailed in 1942, and Kamala was the first lady in India to stand in elections and the driving force behind the revival of Indian handicrafts and theatre. Clear-eyed trailblazers, all three were accomplished writers. Such was the greatness that surrounded Dhiruben during her formative years. She would be inspired to strive in similar ways from an early age. As a baby, Dhiruben slept in the lap of Gandhiji, and as an adult, she formed a close working relationship with Usha Mehta.

Though Sarojini Naidu was the sister of the devout Ramana devotee, Harindranath Chattopadhyay (the famed poet-writer), and though Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was Harindranath's wife, it was not through these women that Dhiruben's mother came to Bhagavan. Rather it had been a family friend in Bombay, Chhaganlal Yogi, who brought them to Ramanasramam. He had come to Bhagavan at the insistence of a colleague in 1939, only intending to spend a few hours at the Ashram. When Bhagavan asked him to chant some verses from the Gujarati translation of *Upadesa Saram*, Chhaganlal was compelled to sit before Bhagavan and be observed at close range. In these few minutes of recitation before the meal, the complexion of the situation changed. By the time he went into the dining hall, he knew that he had to stay overnight. Instead, he stayed on for three days, an experience which proved transformative. Chhaganlal Yogi communicated his experience to the Patel family, but it was only when the family suffered a tragedy five years later that they were induced to come. Dhiruben narrates:

My mother, Gangaben Patel, was very badly shaken along with the whole family by a tragic misfortune that occurred in 1944. My eldest brother met with a drowning accident, which my mother witnessed from the shore. After a few months, Mr. Chhaganlal Yogi suggested that she should go to Sri Ramanasramam. At the time we were living in Santa Cruz, Bombay. When my mother came to Sri Ramanasramam and saw Bhagavan for the first time, she was so impressed that she came back to take the whole family. So that is how I, my father and my newly widowed sister-in-law came to Sri Ramanasramam.

At the time, Dhiruben was only eighteen years old and had no interest in taking the long train journey to visit an Ashram or a guru. She describes the journey:





Those were the days of World War II, around 1945, and en route, when we reached Villupuram, some British soldiers wanted to get into our first-class compartment, so we were asked to vacate. We were compelled to wait on the Villupuram platform the whole night. This was a very bad experience for me. In the morning we got the bus to Tiruvannamalai rather late, so it was almost twilight when we reached the Ashram. I was so tired and so dirty that my only thought was to go and have a wash and a drink of cold water. But my mother — oh, she was ever the dictator! — said, 'No, as soon as you enter the Ashram, the first thing you must do is to go and have Bhagavan's darshan.'

Dhiruben had inherited some of the fierce independence of her mother but could also be obedient:

I was very reluctant, but those were not the days when children could argue with their parents, so I had to agree, and I followed my mother's instructions. There I saw the Old Hall where Bhagavan was sitting along with one or two attendants standing nearby. Next to Bhagavan I saw a small vessel in which charcoals were burning. I took that one step up to go into the hall to give my namaskar. I did it by impatiently joining my hands and bowing. I just wanted to get it over with as soon as possible. I was not interested in Bhagavan or having his darshan. As I couldn't defy my mother, I had to do it. So, with closed eyes, I just did it.

Then the same thing that had happened to Chhaganlal and so many others over the years, happened to her:

When I raised my head, I can't find words to describe what happened to me. As soon as Bhagavan's gaze met mine, he looked at me and in that very second it seemed that I was annihilated. I didn't exist any longer and there was a great sense of release and peace, and there was light, but not strong light. It was like a soft moonlight all around me, with no boundaries and no barriers anywhere. It was as if I was lost in a sky of light and peace.

And I don't know how many minutes or how many seconds I was in that state. When I came back to my material existence, I just could not accept what had happened.

The family stayed five days and Dhiruben had Bhagavan's darshan several times per day, though the experience of the first day was never repeated:

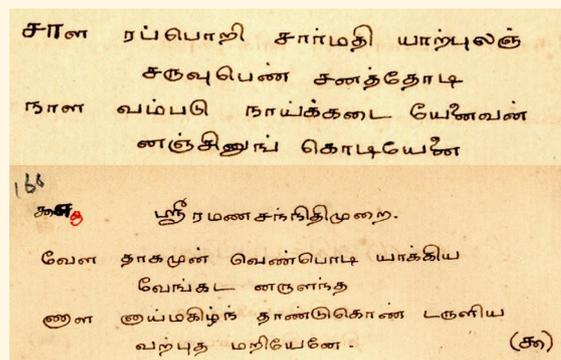
It happened only once, but it made me think very deeply and continuously: 'What was it? And how can I be in that state constantly?'

Now the young girl felt inclined to participate in the exchanges between devotees and the teacher, understanding intuitively that there was something here to be gained:

When on the next day after having our bath, we sat in the hall along with the other devotees and Bhagavan was there and anybody who wanted to ask a question could ask. I wrote two questions on a piece of paper and handed it over to the attendant. He then told me that I should sit quietly, and I will get the answers. But being young and impatient I was unable to wait, so after some time I again bothered the attendant. I told him I was not getting any answers. The silent questioning was not working. So, I went near the couch where Bhagavan was sitting and insisted on getting my answers. Then, Bhagavan gave some answer, which of course I couldn't understand because he was talking in Tamil. Someone was interpreting, so I asked him to explain Bhagavan's answers.

'If two persons are sleeping and one person has a dream of a tiger and is frightened and the other person is awake sitting by his side, is it not the duty of the second one to wake up the dreaming person so that he will no longer be afraid? Why doesn't he do it?' That was my first question, to which Bhagavan gave the explanation that the dream state belongs to the person who is asleep and the person who is awake has only to wait for the moment of wakefulness occurring

Bhagavan's Handwriting: Muruganar's 'Decad of Miracle' (v. 9)



Saa larap-pori saar-madi yaar-pulam/Saruvu-penn sant-todi
Naal avam-padu naai-kadai yenai-van/Nanji-num kodi-yenai
Veladu aaga-mun ven-podi yaakkiya/Venkatan arul-anda
Naala naai-magi-zhindu aandu-kondu aruliya/Arpudam ari-yene.

Through the window of the five senses, my mind was constantly bound to sense pleasures like one chasing after women. I, ill-famed, lower than a dog, deadlier than poison, am gracefully and joyfully ruled by Venkata, the merciful Brahman, who once burnt the illustrious Manmadhan (god of love) to ashes. How did this miracle happen? —





to the person who is sleeping. There is no question of saving the dreamer because there is no tiger.

My second question was: 'Bhagavan, when I look at the mirror for a long time and try to understand who I am, I don't get the answer, but on the contrary, I feel frightened looking at my own reflection. What should I do?' He told me: 'Don't look in the mirror. Why is it necessary to look in the mirror? Go inwards and find out who you are.'

This incident happened on the second day of my visit. Being with Bhagavan and noticing his every movement and listening to his voice, I am unable to describe it in words. Being there with him was the most wonderful event of my life.

Dhiruben's mother came regularly and used to rent a cottage near the Ashram and stay for two or three months at a time. Dhiruben tells us:

My mother was a sincere soul and a self-educated woman. She had very little school education, hardly two or three years. Nevertheless, she learned Hindi, English, Sanskrit and wrote in Gujarati. But when she came here, she found that all this was of no use because Bhagavan talked mostly in Tamil and rarely in English. My mother had such an irresistible attraction towards Bhagavan and his teachings that she used to stay here and meditate very regularly, despite all the other work that she was doing. What happened to her here, she spoke little of.

Dhiruben tells of another incident between a family member and Bhagavan. It was her two-year-old nephew who came to the Ashram with Dhiruben's mother:

As usual, Bhagavan was going for his walk after lunch on the hill, and all devotees were standing in a row. My nephew was there. Suddenly he saw Bhagavan and ran to him, taking hold of his walking stick and holding it so firmly that he wouldn't allow Bhagavan to budge. Everybody was aghast and requested the child to go away and not to bother Bhagavan. But he didn't listen. And for a long time, he went on staring at Bhagavan. Bhagavan put his hand on the boy's head. At once he let go of the stick and started weeping, not loudly, but tears were streaming down his cheeks while he just stood looking at Bhagavan.

It would be several years before Dhiruben would see Bhagavan again. In her 24th year, she came for what would be her last *darshan*. It was the spring of 1950 and Bhagavan was not well. He sat on his couch with a bandage on his arm. Dhiruben narrates:

People filed by, single file, going quietly. When I came near him, I couldn't help saying, 'Bhagavan, call me again.' Then, with infinite compassion, and immense love, he looked at me. Then he said, 'Sari, sari,' in Tamil. I didn't understand what 'sari' meant. Someone told me later that, it meant 'Alright, alright.'

Dhiruben never saw Bhagavan in the body again. Meanwhile, her mother also grew old and one day, suffered a paralytic stroke. She was not able to speak at all:

After a month and a half, gradually her speech began to come back. But then, it was not fluent, and we could not understand her. For example, if she wanted her shoes, she would ask for soap and then would sometimes get annoyed because we couldn't understand her. Everybody was depressed about this, and we felt sad that such a wonderful person as my mother might have to end her life in this condition. All of a sudden, I remembered the evening *parayana* of *Upadesa Sarah* and recited one or two lines before her. My mother was at once alert and picked up the recitation and concluded the thirty verses without a single mistake. After this she was able to recite Bhagavan's works and slowly, she then became normal. She wrote her autobiography also.

In her last illness she made me promise that nobody would weep when she goes and that Bhagavan should be with her, and that I should be the one responsible for these requests. She insisted that I must do this. So, I replied, 'How can I do that? Who knows when the last minute in a person's life will come?' Still, she made me promise. And by God's grace and Bhagavan's blessing it happened just as she had wished.

During her last moments I was there and this nephew of mine held a very big, framed photograph of Bhagavan before her eyes. She quietly gazed at the photograph and then turned her eyes and passed away. And in many ways, I have always felt Bhagavan's loving presence.

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Sundaram Iyer Day



On Sunday 12th March, devotees gathered in the Mother's Shrine to observe Sundaram Iyer's Day with special puja. KVS sang his song *Sundara Aryane* and devotees followed with v. 8 of Bhagavan's *Arunachala Navamanamalai* beginning with the words *puvikkul pongidum*. —





It was not until 2007 that Dhiruben made her return journey to Ramanasramam. Her decision to come after so long happened this way. The nephew who had taken hold of Bhagavan's walking stick as a youngster had grown old and was now in the hospital. His condition was serious:

When I went to the hospital each day, my nephew would tell me, 'Foie [Auntie], do you know what we are going to do as soon as these doctors leave me and I am able to go out?' I said, 'I don't know.' He said, 'We will go to Ramanasramam. That will be the first thing we do. And only you and I will go.'

Now it is no longer possible since he is no more, I thought that it is now my duty to go to Ramanasramam. I thought that I will go alone, stay there and find out if Bhagavan's presence is still felt. Whether I am here or there, I tell you I feel that Bhagavan is with me. And that is all due to the first wonderful moment when he looked at me that day in the Darshan Hall. ¹—

[Editor's Note: After meeting Bhagavan as a young woman, Dhiruben Patel went on to complete a B.A. in English literature in 1945, and an M.A. from *Bhavan's College* in 1949. She never

¹ *The Mahabshi*, Sept/Oct 2008; video at: <https://archive.arunachala.org/ramana/devotees/dhiruben-patel>

married. She taught English at *Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan* and became an acclaimed writer, publishing more than fifty books in Gujarati, including novels, short stories, poems, translations, and children's books. Her diverse career as professor, founder of women-writers' organisations, founder of two independent publishing houses, president of *Gujarat Sahitya Parishad*, scriptwriter for radio, television, theatre and film and an aircraft pilot, she remained a Gandhian throughout and wore only *khadi* saris. She edited the respected Gujarati journal, *Sudha*, and her stage play, 'Mummy, Tu Aavi Kevi?' was a big hit on the Gujarati circuit with 60-plus performances. Two of her works received national attention, 'Bhavni Bhavai' (1980), Ketan Mehta's film which won a National Award; and a novel called '*Agantuk*' (2002), for which she won the prestigious *Sahitya Akademi Prize* for literature. She received the *Ranjitram Suvarna Chandrak* award in 1980, the *K. M. Munshi Suvarna Chandrak* award in 1981 and the *Sahitya Gaurav Puraskar* award in 2002.

Respected writers called her an 11th-hour writer and marvelled at her ability to 'frame her words in her mind', writing in one sitting, without rewriting, editing, or proofing.

On 10th March, 2023 at the age of 96, Susri Dhiruben Patel passed away following a brief illness.] —



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Vidya Havan

In the Sri Vidya tradition, Goddess Lalita Tripurasundari is supreme, and the physical universe is but her manifestation. She is worshipped through the two-dimensional Sri Chakra yantra and through the three-dimensional Meru Chakra. Each year at the Ashram, the Sri Chakra and the Meru Chakra are rededicated in yagna called *Sri Vidya Havan*. This year's havan took place on Friday, 17th March in front of Bhagavan's Shrine commencing at 7 am with Navavarna Puja followed by homa. *Purnabuti* at 2.45 pm was followed by *deeparadhana*. Procession into the Mother's Shrine ensued and *abhishekam* with final *deeparadhana* took place at 3.15 pm.—





Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Athi Rudram

Athi Rudram was conducted at the Ashram from the 23rd to 27th March. Now what is *Athi Rudram*?

Sri Rudram consists of eleven chapters in praise of Lord Siva and is the central portion of the fourth *kanda* of the *Krishna Yajur Veda*. Meaning ‘fire that comes from the bowels of the earth spreading God’s Grace in the world,’ *Sri Rudram* lists the various names of the Lord. By its recitation, Lord Siva’s multiple aspects are venerated, and obstacles and difficulties (*dosha*) are removed. When accompanied with *yagna*, it is called *Rudra Yajna*.

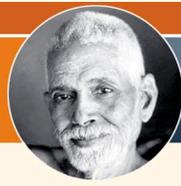
Rudram is made up of *Namakam* (because of the repeated use of the word *namo*) and *Chamakam* (because of the repeated use of the word *chamey*). Eleven recitations of *Namakam* followed by one recitation of *Chamakam* chanted by eleven priests is called *Ekadasa Rudram*. Eleven rounds of *Ekadasa Rudram* constitute a *Laghu Rudram*. Eleven *Laghu Rudram* constitute a *Maha Rudram*, and eleven rounds of *Maha Rudram* constitute an *Athi Rudram*. A *Maha Rudram* means chanting the

Rudram 1,331 times (121×11). A *Maha Rudram* repeated eleven times completes an *Athi Rudram* during which time the *Sri Rudram* would have been chanted a total of 14,641 times (121×121).

If the *Athi Rudram* is chanted for the spiritual welfare of the world (*loka kshema*), then why is the *Chamakam*, which is said to only confer material benefits chanted at all? This is because *Chamakam*, in the context of *Athi Rudram*, is an appeal to the Lord to provide the needed materials for the *homam* itself such as large quantities of ghee, special wood, and fruit.

Tejsthala Tiruvannamalai is auspicious for hosting *Athi Rudram*, because, among other things, the eighth section of the *Rudram* contains the phrase *Arunaya cha*, referring to Arunachala, the Holy Mountain-Linga of Lord Rudra said to be extant since the dawn of time. But in Tiruvannamalai at the feet of Holy Annamalai, where else to conclude such an auspicious event but on the linga of Athi lingas that crowns Bhagavan’s Samadhi. —





Why Do We Perform Athi Rudram?

[On the morning of Sunday 26th March, Brahmashri Tatvamasi Ganapadigal gave a discourse in Tamil on the meaning of Athi Rudram. The Ashram President, Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan translated into English for non-Tamilians.]

Thanks to the grace of Arunchala and Bhagavan, this auspicious event of *Athi Rudra Maha Yagnam* is going on as per traditional *agamie* practice. But why do we do *Athi Rudram*?

Everyone performs actions (*karma*) starting from the smallest all the way to Brahma. The aim of action as per the performer is thinking the action will lead to pleasure. But the on performing the action does not realise that actions in pursuit of pleasure only lead to sorrow.

Bhagavan did not perform any action because there was no need for him to do so. He had already finished his *prarabdha* and was in a state of perpetual bliss. For mortals like us, however, we are ever performing deeds in the quest for happiness, knowing all the while they only lead to suffering of which there are two classes: *vyaadhi* or bodily affliction; and *aadhi* or mental affliction.

There is no better proof for *purva janma* (previous births) than the shrine of Cow Lakshmi who is believed

by devotees to be the reincarnation of Keerai Patti, the lady devotee who served Bhagavan in the early days on the Hill. All of us are undergoing the *prarabdha* (destiny 'already commenced') from previous births. But because of the grace of the master, there are ways to eliminate *prarabdha*, one of which is *Athi Rudram*.

The significance of *Athi Rudram* is that it relieves the believer, the non-believer and anyone else from *papa* or *dubkha*. One does not have to be physically present. One does not even have to believe in it. The *Mahamantra* does the work and does not discriminate as to who will benefit just as the sun does not discriminate on whom it shines. Everyone is the beneficiary of the *Mahamantra* and its positive energy relieves them of impurities that lead to sorrow. In their recitation, Vedacharyas become inseparable from the power of the Vedas, performer and performance fused into a single whole.

In the olden days there was no need for conducting *Maha* or *Athi Rudra yagnas*. In those days, if just one *rudram* was chanted each day in each orthodox household, this would mean that among the 3% of the population of 140 crores, about two crores of *rudram* would be chanted every day.

Over the course of the *Athi Rudram*, the *Mahamantra* is chanted 14,641 times. If one *rudram* were chanted each day in each household, there would be no need for *Athi Rudram*. Unfortunately, this being Kali Yuga, people have forgotten traditions and the spiritual power they confer. Thus, there is a need for *Athi Rudram* to benefit mankind. Such recitation is not just for the benefit of those in Ramanasramam, or those residing in Tiruvannamalai, or for the citizens of Tamil Nadu or of India alone but for the whole world, all two-legged and four-legged beings.

Bhagavan did not need anything himself. He had transcended everything. But in his wisdom, he initiated a routine where the Ashram's Veda Patasala students would chant the *Rudram* twenty times each day.

In 2002, when Senthilnatha Ganapathigal assumed his duties as Veda Patasala teacher at Ramanasramam, he wanted to broaden the curriculum for the Veda Patasala students, introducing additional Vedic recitation. But the then President, V. S. Ramanan, insisted that anything started by Sri Bhagavan should be continued without fail and without alteration. Hence chanting of the *Rudram* in the Hall as in Bhagavan's time was maintained. We see





now how momentous this decision was that so many *Rudram* recitations have been, and continue to be, chanted each day, contributing to world peace and well-being for all. The *jnani's* foresight and wisdom are limitless.

Everything is Lord Siva starting from the inner *atman* to the external physical form of the body. The whole universe is Siva, that is, his *rupa*, his benevolent form. The Lord also has a fierce form (*gora rupa*) which should be appeased.

Thirst and hunger are human qualities which do not affect deities. The Devas are never hungry or thirsty. The same applies to Bhagavan who at Patala Lingam was unconcerned with hunger and thirst because he had conquered the senses. For the rest of us, we can see the Lord's displeasure (*gora rupa*) expressed in hunger and thirst. This also speaks to our contingent nature, i.e. the way we ever depend on the Lord's grace for our continuance.

Kavyakantha Ganapathi Muni recognised Bhagavan's divine qualities calling him 'Maharshi'. He saw that

Bhagavan was beyond the normal limitations of the body. He was Maha Rishi because he had conquered the human limitations that entrap us.

Bhagavan in his divine wisdom ensured that no devotee in Ramanasramam undergoes what he had to undergo. Thus there is always a warm kitchen here to allay devotees' hunger and thirst. But the very minute one enters the Ashram gates, bodily needs disappear.

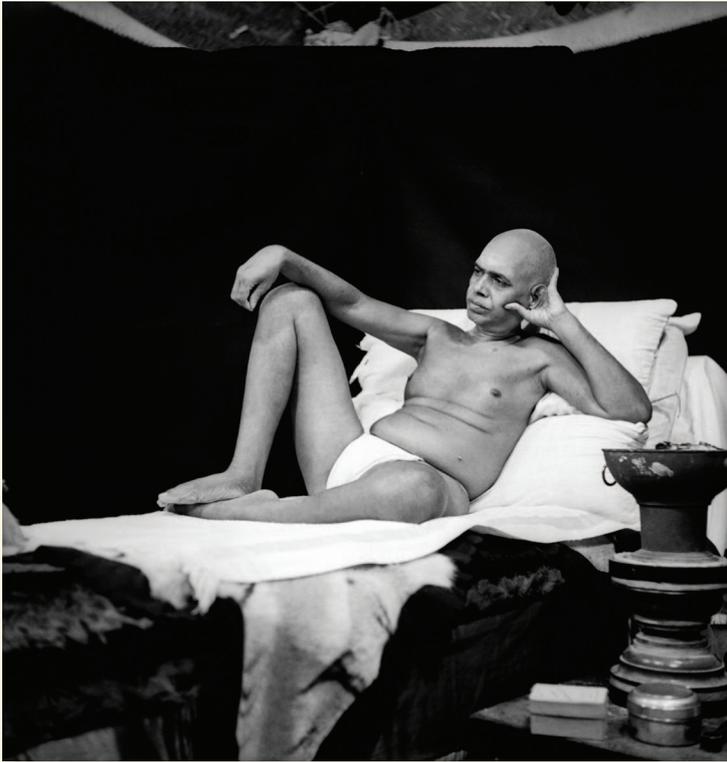
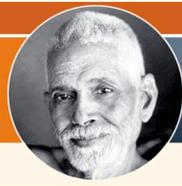
Thanks to the *Atthi Rudram*, the Lord's fierceness can be appeased, assuring well-being throughout the world.

The *sankalpa* at the beginning of the day's *Rudram* lasts for one hour, praying intently on behalf of every being in the world, every *janma nakshatra*, that there should be no sickness and that the Lord's every boon would be granted.

Thanks to daily recitation in our Veda Patasala, the Ashram completes one *Atthi Rudram* every five months, granting opportunities for spiritual growth.

On behalf of devotees, I would like to thank our Veda Patasala teachers and all participating Vedic scholars. —





RAMANA REFLECTIONS

Wisdom of the Ether

Resonance and the Harmonics of Being (part III)

We left off in the last issue with a scene from the Hall at the end of August 1936 where the Maharani Saheba sits before Bhagavan. Her Highness laments her destiny, feeling it to be permanently fixed, preventing her from taking the steps Bhagavan is calling her to. Bhagavan asks her, ‘What is destiny [after all]? — There is no destiny.’¹ Here Bhagavan would seem to be saying, there’s no karma. But from the Maharani’s point of view—and, for that matter, the rest of us stuck with the limited ego identity—there must be karma, otherwise, where would all this trouble come from?

¹ *Talks*, §244; *Gems*, p. 24.

From Bhagavan’s vantage point beyond the veils of ignorance, karma is related to the limited self. In glimpsing the ether—the resonant stillness beyond the veils—, this small ‘I’ is momentarily disengaged, and karmic afflictions linked to the small self fall away, allowing the world in its natural condition to reveal itself. Bhagavan urges the Maharani:

*Surrender, and all will be well. Throw all the responsibility on God. Do not bear the burden yourself. What can destiny do to you then?*²

In a voice choked with emotion, Her Highness replies, ‘Surrender is impossible!’ — And don’t each one of us know just what she means. How can we suddenly be free of the only world we have ever known, namely, this small self and its attendant encumbrances? How can this small self built on hopes, dreams, fears, worries, laments, distractions, regrets, confusion, and disappointments just be abandoned all at once? If the small self is the name we give to the collection of these endless, mostly disadvantageous, mental states, who would we be apart from them? With such an array of impurities in the heart and mind, who are we to aspire to such lofty heights anyway?

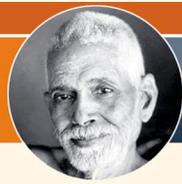
If we tell ourselves, ‘I am not worthy of the realm beyond the veils’, it may sound like we are being humble. But Bhagavan tells us that this way of seeing things is the veiling power of ignorance already at work in us, expressing itself as resignation.

Clear Vision

The Maharani acutely feels her inability to surrender. Bhagavan urges her to surrender incrementally, in other words, to look to see if an eyelet through the veils of inherited suffering and misery might offer a brief glimpse of their root. Though we imagine karma as fixed and permanent, for Bhagavan clear seeing is the way out of the karmic bind. The angels of our lesser nature thrive in darkness, i.e. in the unconscious, hidden from view, behind distorted perceptions and illusion, causing us willy-nilly to stumble into further karmic liability. But that which is brought into the light of awareness under the open sky of clear vision can no longer harm us.

² *Ibid*, §244.





Clear seeing is a force-multiplier—a little investment brings a big return. Here we use less effort to achieve the same task. Clear seeing multiplies our ability to adjust to conditions and enhance our resilience in the face of life’s hardships. This is discoverable in numerous ways, but none so evident as in expanding our capacity to drink deep from the well of Being. What does this mean? It means that stillness beyond the veils, even if glimpsed only momentarily, brings happiness unlike any we have known before. Inner happiness surpasses momentary pleasures gained from the body and mind. It is purifying because it tempers the veils and calms the agitating influences of the mind. More than that, spiritual happiness is cumulative—it sharpens and grows with use. It brings added depth, meaning, and fulfilment, causing us to lose interest in the world and to shed hollow seeking in externalities. More importantly still, spiritual happiness sets the stage for deeper stillness in turn giving rise to clearer seeing, which allows for a further rolling back of the veils in order that we gain insights that are transformative and lasting.

The Agglomerations

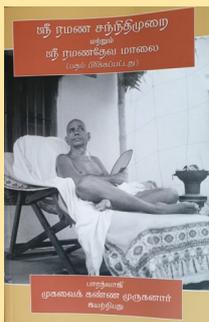
For Bhagavan, clear seeing begins in overcoming the illusion of a small self. But if there is no small self, then to whom do these mental states belong? The true Self has no will or wants, Bhagavan tells us, is not given to ups and downs, has no preferences and is free of every form of reactivity and desire. What then are these fleeting feeling states? They are states born of *samskaras*, Bhagavan tells us. What are *samskaras*? Here, *samskaras* (‘putting together’) would mean formations born of volition that spawn thoughts, images and feelings in the mind and heart. Reinforcing the strength of the

veils, *samskaras* function as *agglomerators* giving rise to thought, mental images and feeling states. Originating as agglomerating impulses of the mind, they are born of wants and intentions conditioned by unresolved past actions. Bhagavan says, *samskara is samsara*.³ What does he mean? He means that wanting and willing born of predispositions are the roots of further action. Doing and the doer are only real this side of the veils. In stillness, there can be neither doer nor destiny. This may be experienced directly even in beginning meditation practice during occasional periods of intense stillness where *wanting* and *wanter* seem to drop away.

All agglomerations whether of thought, images, feeling states, mental states, or the veils, are born of intentional actions from the past. Nevertheless, they are unaligned with anything like a self. The yearning contained within unassimilated karmic residues takes the form of mental states and is perhaps an expression of *prarabdha* trying to overcome the non-acceptance we show it. In other words, disadvantageous mental states are orphaned fragments of a psyche longing to be whole and integrated. Karmic residues which have always been resisted and denied, now seek their release through surrender. Until their release comes, wanting and resisting will likely be present in the mind and heart, fertilising the ground for further veils to arise, making inner stillness difficult.

But karma cannot be permanent, Bhagavan says, unless we give our assent through ongoing non-surrender. He tells the Maharani: ‘Complete surrender is impossible in the beginning [but] partial surrender is

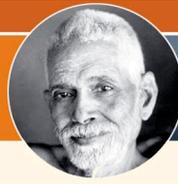
³ *Talks*, § 290. In this connection we remember that *samasara* means ‘to keep moving’.



Announcement: Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai

The complete *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* in Tamil has been released by the Ashram. This new edition also contains the shorter work, *Ramana Devamalai* and contains final corrections made by Bhagavan and Muruganar. It also includes reproductions of Bhagavan’s handwritten copies of pages from Muruganar’s magnum opus. The 600-page edition was to sell for Rs. 375 but thanks to subsidies from devotees, is being offered for Rs. 150. —





certainly possible for all'.⁴ In other words, everyone is capable of knowing Reality free of *samskaric* filters and the distorting influences of unresolved past actions. Destiny is thus alterable. They continue:

*The Maharani: Partial surrender, can it undo destiny? Bhagavan: Oh, yes! It can. The Maharani: Is not destiny due to past karma? Bhagavan: If one is surrendered to God, God will look after it. The Maharani: This being God's dispensation, how does God undo it? Bhagavan: All are in Him only. The Maharani: How is God to be seen? Bhagavan: Within. If the mind is turned inward, God manifests as inner consciousness.*⁵

The veils of ignorance, *avarana*, are so named because they 'cover' and are born of non-seeing.⁶ If neglected or resisted through non-surrender, they complicate things by adding to the karmic accumulation. The job of the veils is to *conceal, hinder, darken, and delude*. Our job is to *penetrate, inquire into, shed light on, and see with perfect clarity*.

Whatever has the power to deceive also has the power to enchant, it has been said.⁷ This means that we sometimes conspire with the veils. We imagine we want nothing more than to overcome them, but very often we cling to them. The veils insulate us from the discomfort of having to behold the utter insubstantiality of the one we imagine ourselves to be. Not only are the veils familiar to us, we imagine that they *are* us. Additionally, they bring momentary satisfaction which in this state of non-clarity seems better than no satisfaction at all. Veiling and the 'I' are thus related: when veiling is strong, we say 'I'; when veiling recedes, only stillness remains. Bhagavan comments:

*Veiling is a characteristic of ignorance. It is not of the Self. It cannot affect the Self in any manner but can only veil the jiva. The ego is insentient. United with the light of the Self, it is called jiva. But the ego and light cannot be seen as distinct from one another. They are always united. Avarana or veiling does not hide the jiva entirely. The jiva knows that he is, only he does not know WHO he is.*⁸

The confusion comes from the agglomerating power of the *jiva*, namely, *samskaras*, which have a kind of self-

⁴ *Talks*, §244.

⁵ *Ibid*, §244.

⁶ *Talks*, §579.

⁷ Plato's *Republic*, Chap 3.

⁸ *Talks*, §579.



veiling effect. A form of ignorance that was not there before agglomerates as 'I'. Bhagavan continues:

*Mind is consciousness which has put on limitations. You are originally unlimited and perfect. Later you take on limitations and become the mind. To whom is this avarana? It is [just] ignorance, ego or the mind.*⁹

The devotee then inquires, who is obstructed, and how does obstruction arise? Bhagavan adds:

*The limitation is itself obstruction. No questions will arise if limitations are transcended.*¹⁰

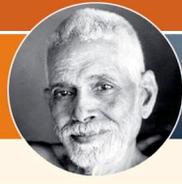
Bhagavan's Stillness Beyond the Veils

In the modern era, we are pressed to live in ways that prevent us from knowing stillness beyond the veils. In seeking happiness in worldly experience, the veils are continually reinforced. Each time we sit on the meditation cushion to gain stillness, the veils rear their ugly heads as distraction. For some, stillness comes easily; for others, not so easily. If we find ourselves in the latter category, it is a wake-up call to do due diligence in the meditation hall, applying ourselves patiently to the practices Bhagavan gave us. What Bhagavan's inquiry and Bhagavan's surrender are asking of us is successive efforts at exposing the apparent solidity of the veils, discovering first-hand through direct experience their true character as fleeting mental

⁹ *Talks*, §473.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, §473.





states. When we compare them with the stillness on the other side, their hold on us diminishes. What does this stillness look like?

The standard is very high if we consider Bhagavan in his early days at the Big Temple. We recall how the young Brahmana Swami stayed variously at the *Thousand-Pillared Hall*, *Patala Lingam*, *Gopura Subrahmanya Shrine* and under the temple's *iluppai* tree, lost in meditation. After he took up 'residence' at the temple plantain grove (*Vazhai Thottam*), he fell into protracted states of trance and the need for food and sleep vanished. Each morning, devotees from the town came to the temple for *darshan* and when passing the young sage absorbed in the Self, noticed his depleted form. Naturally, they felt called to bring food. But as his meditational stillness was very deep, he could not be roused, and it was thus not clear how their offerings were to be given. Concerned parties began thrusting food into the mouth of the motionless figure. On occasion when a 'meal' was to be given the following day, the donor discovered that so deep had been the boy's absorption that the offering of the previous day had remained overnight in his mouth, unswallowed.¹¹

We can only speculate about what might be going on in the heart and mind of one in such a state. To be sure, the veils are not active, and in the case of Bhagavan

11 *In the Kitchen with Bhagavan* (manuscript), p. 21.

Sri Ramana, would never be so again. Here complete stillness is also complete surrender, and no trace of resistance whatsoever remains. In such a state, we might imagine the full operation of the divine at work in the *sadbhava's* heart without interruption.

As for the rest of us, we content ourselves with partial surrender and partial stillness. Daily efforts at meditation start by making the physical form unmoving. This is easy enough, but the mind carries on incessantly whether or not the body is still. Here we may watch the breath or recite verses to gradually slow the wheels of the mind. As we move toward inquiry, we remember that Bhagavan tells us there is no small self instigating the perpetual thought chain, and that the Self is not governed by any compulsion whatsoever. We are then bound to ask, *to whom do these thoughts arise and whence do they come?* Such *vichara* questions lead us to see that the mind has its own internal laws. If there is no *who*, i.e. no ego, and if the thinking compulsion does not issue from the Self, then *what is driving the process?* Inquiring into this *what* is the beginning of stilling the mind, Bhagavan tells us.

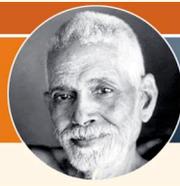
One may say, 'I am a selfish person' or 'I am an angry person'. We then ask, *who is this one that is selfish or angry?* It cannot be the Self since Bhagavan tells us *the Self is the ground of Being beyond all conditioned states*. It



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: The Athi Rudram Flash Flood

A heavy rainstorm hit the Yagasala one afternoon and the pandal flooded in short order. Pundits took shelter in the Old Dining Hall where they continued the afternoon's *Ekadasa Rudram*. The full measure of *Rudram* could be appreciated in this confined setting where 190 pundits sitting in tight formation belted out the *Mahamantra* in full voice. The reverberations were so robust that it was as though the thick heavy granite stones of Bhagavan's Old Dining Hall were vibrating. Thanks to this needed precipitation, devotees got to hear *Rudram* at close range and upon standing again following the programme, could hardly keep their feet on the ground. —





cannot be the ego since Bhagavan tells us *there is no ego*. Selfishness and anger are phenomenal states related to *samskaras* and only manifest according to conditions. If we alter the conditions, they cannot arise. What are these conditions? They are nothing more than the veils of ignorance born of past actions. Uprooting them begins in surrender and stillness. In other words, negative mental states such as anger and selfishness are just meditation problems.

Over time we become diligent in investigating experience. We look for what lies beneath each mental state, emotion, memory, or regret, uncovering hidden causes and bringing the light of investigation to illumine what had earlier been murky. If at times, inquiry and surrender leave us exposed, it is because we are no longer willing to divert our attention from the starkness of reality. Disenchantment may side-track the earnest seeker who mistakes it as an indication of having gone astray. Here the temptation to rush back to the familiar *samsaric* way of conducting our mental life asserts itself. When the mind settles into stillness, it gains an intimacy with the world never known before, and elicits the poignancy of the world's inherent ephemerality. Disenchantment, though disagreeable, is a necessary feature of the curriculum Bhagavan is recommending to us.

Their conversation continues:

*The Maharani: God is in all the objects we see around us. Bhagavan: God is in all and in the seer. Where else can God be seen? He cannot be found outside. The consciousness within, purged of mind is [seen] as God. The Maharani: Is [that] the soul? Bhagavan: Soul, mind [and] ego are mere words. There are no entities of the kind. Consciousness is the only truth. Soul and God are only mental conceptions.*¹²

Borderlands

Surrender and inquiry support each other. Surrender teaches us to cultivate non-resistance to what comes our way. Inquiry uncovers the karmic residues influencing our responses. Karmic residues need to be dealt with, but Bhagavan urges us to deal with them through non-resistance. If resistance causes their perpetuation, proliferation, and increase, surrender facilitates their healthy assimilation. Bhagavan's instructions could not be simpler. He wants us to give ourselves over to karmic burdens through non-resistance so that their nature might be known first hand. This does not mean we allow unprofitable feeling states to run amok but rather, in facing them frontally and penetrating their surfaces, we might find out what is going on deeper down. If resistance is the chief means of nourishing the

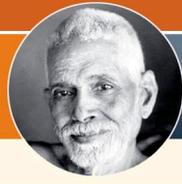
¹² *Talks*, §244.



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Athi Rudram Chanting in the Past

On 15th March 2009, an eight-day *Athirudra Maha Yagnam* organized by Nallicheri Jambunaatha Ganapaadigal, Senthil Ganapaadigal and Trustees was commenced at Sri Ramanasramam. More than 150 students and their teachers from various patasalas in Tamilnadu and Karnataka took part. The Yagnam was held at the Yaga Sala constructed just west of the old Dining Hall. Two years later on June 18th, an eleven-day Athi Rudra was commenced in the Oyaa Madam (in Tiruvudal St.) and the consecrated *kalasa* were transported to Ramanasramam for *kalasala abhishekam*. —





veils, then non-struggle or what Bhagavan calls *suffering what comes our way*¹³ allows us to see them for what they are. We greet each obstruction like a patient mother caring for her problem child. When the infant cannot be placated and throws a temper tantrum despite her best efforts, what does the patient mother do? She simply continues caring for the distressed child. Ever yielding, all-conquering, her love is a force of nature and can turn an upside-down world right-side up.

If we chance to observe a mother coming into Bhagavan's Hall with a differently abled child, say, a teenage child with Down's syndrome. We watch as the child manifests behaviours that are not in

¹³ 'Encounters with Bhagavan', Part II, T. R. Kanakammal, *The Mountain Path*, July 2006, pp. 31-32.

alignment with socially accepted norms, and how the child's mother, though feeling the eyes upon her, just continues tending her child with ceaseless care. We observe how everyone in the hall is humbled by her tender affection and composure. So utterly moving is the scene that no one feels like the silence in the Hall has been interrupted. The contrary. Her forbearance shines as an example of the path forward.

When encountering our own problem children in meditation, namely, the unruly veils, incessant thinking and the resistance which keep us from stillness, and when we feel *surrender is impossible*, to use the Maharani's words, we focus on the image of this mother in the Hall.

Our efforts toward stillness must be unremitting and ongoing, refusing to give up even in the face of endless frustration and every fear of failure.

Suffering and Acceptance

Suffering what comes our way does not mean giving up. It means that what comes to us, comes by way of karmic affliction, and must be actively worked through. Neither God nor guru can spare us this work. This is why Bhagavan never went out wandering around the cities of India healing people since he understood that such help would be superseded by the inexorable law of karma. The suffering of those 'healed' would return over time and would have to be reckoned with from within. Here suffering is seen as an asset. In this connection we recall how Bhagavan once said emphatically, *suffering is the way*.¹⁴

¹⁴ Talks, §107.

Sri Bhagavan's Ayurvedic Recipes: Vikkal Marundu

Vikkal Marundu

Sukkoḍu tippili kaḍukkāyc cūrṇaṅ
carkkarai tēṇuṅ cārnda davvaṇaṅ
sukkuḍaṅ vellam tōynda tāmivai
vikkalai neṭṭi viraṭṭuva dāmē

Sukkoḍu tippili kaḍukkāyc cūrṇam
carkkarai tēṇum cārndadu avvaṇam

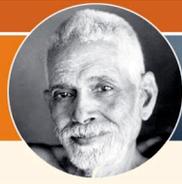
sukkuḍaṅ vellam tōyndaṭām ivai
vikkalai neṭṭi viraṭṭuva dāmē.

Ingredients: dry ginger, pippali, myrobalan nut.

Preparation: Grind all three evenly and mix well with sugar or honey.

Benefits: Remedy for hiccups.





The first step in responding to suffering is accepting it. But then, Bhagavan urges us to cross over, if only at first by fits and starts, making use of *vichara* and surrender. Intermittent periods of stillness free of the veils are discovered to have a blossoming effect on the heart. The withering effect, by contrast, is born of defeatism which has the unintended result of sustaining the karmic double bind. Accepting our suffering is not the same as resignation. What makes *prarabdha* appear chronic and irredeemable is our refusal to face it. In trying to wish it away, we forestall its resolution.

Suffering what comes our way means allowing every aspect of discomfort within to be met with an alive and sensing heart. We do not turn away from suffering but register it fully in the moment and the place of its arising. We honour *prarabdha*, all the while aware that *prarabdha* is not permanent or fixed but can be worked with. We allow it to ripen and mature.

We remember that we can only implement what we first envision. Therefore, we accept Bhagavan's words and trust that stillness is possible, and destiny is pliable. Only then is the practice of *suffering what comes our way* made workable. We override the impulse to embellish the facts about our lives, forgoing the project of cultivating a favourable self-image. We maintain clean action and speech in our dealings with others remembering that objectionable behaviour or any form of equivocation scrambles the mind with regret and remorse, blocking stillness and flooding the heart with distraction. We see that the veils have something to teach us if we are patient enough to inquire into them.

Increasing meditational stillness allows us to take inquiry to the next level. It aids us in cultivating a healthy sense of moral shame and a beneficial fear of wrongdoing, steering our thoughts, speech, and

actions. With a heightened sensitivity to pangs of conscience, our hidden intentions and motivations are identified more readily, bringing a change of heart. The way we conduct our lives is thus gradually altered and our capacity for stillness increases. By such means we access the subtler dimensions of the *samskaric* inheritance, allowing it to find a place of rest.

If we imagine we are permanently handicapped by adverse karmic conditions and thus incapable of the feats of saints and sages of old, we remember that Bhagavan tells us that wisdom is inherent in every human heart and that the ether is our *very own Self*. As defilements are dispensed with through surrender, the heart's innate brightness reveals itself and adverse conditions moderate.

To be in the will of Bhagavan means greeting life's vexations with non-resistance and freely giving ourselves over to the natural course of things. To be in God's Will simply means letting go of having to have things be different than what they are.

When we see ourselves pining for something, we know this is a state of non-surrender. Through deep listening and attunement, we discover that the distracting forces of the veils are only born of habit patterns which can be overcome.

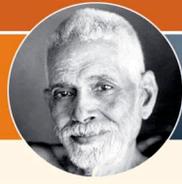
Conclusion

We experiment with sitting in Bhagavan's Old Hall, allowing the addictive dimensions of our preoccupations to reveal themselves. If on such a day following our early morning meditation, we amble a little way up the Hill behind the Ashram at dawn, we may find ourselves stunned by the silence in the air—the stateliness of the trees and the unshakable firmness of the stones—as though Arunachala were apprenticing us in the art of stillness. Here we

Announcement: Daily Live Streaming

Ramanasramam is live streaming the Tamil Parayana and Vedaparayana each day, Mon-Sat, 5-6.45 pm IST. To access Ashram videos, go to: <<https://youtube.com/@SriRamanasramam/videos>>
To subscribe, go to: <https://youtube.com/@sriramanasramam?sub_confirmation=1>





remember what the *sastra* says about Lord Rudra as *sound and echo, intangible vibration, and the infinitesimal substance of every particle of dust and foam, immanent in verdant trees and the soft green grass, the rustling withered leaves and the silent dead.*¹⁵

Here on the slopes of Arunachala, we behold His presence in an immense resonant field, alive and pulsing, each and every thing having its own being, each and everything in intimate contact with everything else.

Our task, it would seem, is figuring out how to harmonise with it all. If wisps of non-surrender arise again, we greet them in an even-tempered

¹⁵ *The Mountain Path*, July 1982, p. 204.

way, favouring what is greater than ourselves. In that moment we see that this vast field of knowing called *chidakasa* is our very own Self, and we recall the name the Sage-poet used when he versified the following appeal on our behalf:

*Might I become like the ether and reach Thee, subtle of being, that this tempest of thoughts may end? Might I, thy prey, surrender unto thee and be consumed, and so have peace, O Arunachala!*¹⁶ —

(series concluded)

¹⁶ *Aksharamanamalai*, §57, 28.



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Athi Rudram Evening Events

On Saturday evening the 25th of March, Sri Ramana Balachandhran gave a veena concert performing compositions by Dandapani Desikar, Thyagaraja, Gopalakrishna Bharathi and others, as well as a song called ‘Oliyaev Vandhu’ composed by Ramanasramam resident K. V. Subrahmonyan. On the evening of the 24th, Brahmasri Tatvamasi Ganapadigal gave a discourse. On two other nights, Thevaram music was performed, first by Sri Balachandra Odhuvar and on the final night, by Sri Ganesa Odhuvar. —

