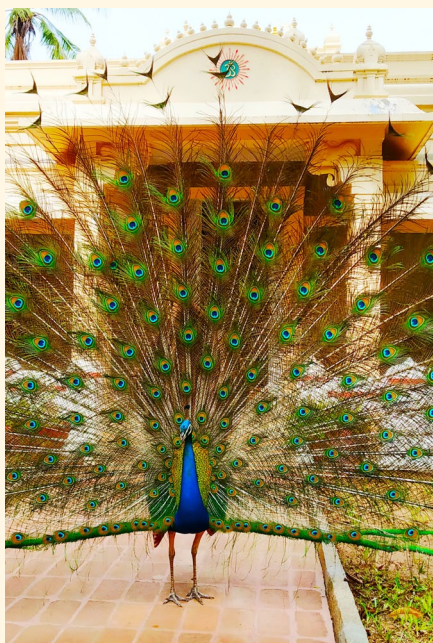
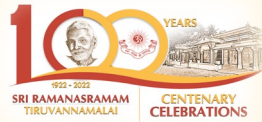


Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

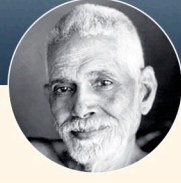
OCTOBER 2023
VOL. 17, NO. 10



Dr Carlos Lopez



Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE



Dear Devotees,

As the Ashram's Centenary Year is still officially in progress, Ramana Satsang events are taking place around the world, some of which are highlighted in the following pages.

We begin this October issue with the second part of the life story of Sivaprakasam Pillai, the poet and philosopher who came to Bhagavan in 1902. On one of his visits, he had a vision of a golden child issuing forth from Bhagavan's head. Pillai versified this and other of his experiences with Bhagavan and year by year grew into a devotee of true stature.

In this October issue we conclude the piece on the history of Tamil parayana in this third segment.

For videos, photos and other news of events, go to <<https://sriramanamaharshi.org>> or write to us at <saranagati@gururamana.org>. For the web version of this October issue, go to: <http://sriramana.org/saranagati/October_2023/>; see also, <<https://saranagati.arunachala.org/issues/>>.

In Sri Bhagavan,
Saranagati

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Calendar of Ashram Events

12th Oct (Thu) Pradosham
15th Oct (Sun) Navaratri Commences
22nd Oct (Sun) Viswanathaswami Day
23rd Oct (Mon) Saraswati Puja
24th Oct (Tue) Vijayadasami
26th Oct (Thu) Pradosham

28th-29th Oct (Sat-Sun) Full Moon (Grahamam)
8th Nov (Wed) Mastan Day
9th Nov (Thu) Annamalai Swami Day
12th Nov (Sun) Deepavali
17th Nov (Fri) Kartigai Festival Begins
26th Nov (Sun) Kartigai Deepam





IN PROFILE

Sivaprakasam Pillai (pt. II)

Born 7th August 1875 to Muthusami Pillai and Swarnammal, Saivites belonging to a farming community known as Kaarkaatha Vellalar, Siva Prakasampillai hailed from Idayanpalchori, a village near Chidambaram. In the last issue¹ we saw how Pillai had come to Bhagavan as a young man when posted to Tiruvannamalai District in the early 1900s. Though never a permanent resident of Virupaksha or Skandasramam, Pillai came regularly for nearly five decades. In between visits, he would remain in his native village and would

¹http://sriramana.org/saranagati/September_2023/>

contemplate on Bhagavan, writing long poems of devotion to the Master. These poems and collections of verses were found to be genuine and moving, so much so that four of them were chanted bi-weekly in Bhagavan's presence as part of the Tamil parayana.²

As Pillai's devotion to Bhagavan increased, the intensity of his vichara practice accelerated. He found himself unattached to worldly things, and eventually lost interest in his career. The death of his son and wife brought about huge changes in his life. Following this painful loss, he continued for a time in his profession but as a childless widower, Pillai wondered whether he should marry again and start a new family:

As I did not have sufficient money, I was confused and troubled and tried to think of a way to overcome my problem. 'There must be a God,' I thought. I will tell my problems to him. Thinking like this I wrote: 'God, the performer of all deeds, Siva, Lord, I have no refuge other than you. Forgive my misdeeds and grant me your grace either by writing the answer to the questions written on this sheet of paper before dawn, or by appearing before me and answering them. If you do this, I will act on your advice. If you do not answer, the only alternative for me will be to seek the help of Brahmana Swami of Arunachala.'

*I placed my request in a Vinayaka temple. My questions were: 1) What should I do in this world so that no suffering approaches and bothers me? 2) Can I marry the girl of my choice? 3) If not, why not? 4) If yes, how am I to get the necessary financial resources?*³

Addressing Bhagavan in verse, he continues:

*As I did not get a reply in any form, I approached your feet believing that you would help. I waited there for a few days [but received no direct answer. Although you were silent, I felt that you were instructing me as follows]: 'Not desiring anything, making the expanding mind subside, enquiring into the Self and abiding as the Self—this alone is the good path to attain what is beneficial.' You demonstrated this to me by abiding in that state. Thinking that it would be wrong to ask you my questions, such as how to get money, I was about to return home without singing your divine glories with devotion. Meditating on your golden body, smeared with white vibbuti, the colour of the moon, [I asked.] How will I get redeemed?*⁴

² Pillai's *Sri Ramanadeva Malai*, *Sri Ramana Pada Malai*, *Vinnappam*, and *Sri Ramana Sadguru Malai* were incorporated into the 15-day cycle of Ashram Tamil Parayana, a liturgical cycle that has been truncated to seven days at present.

³ *Anugraham*, reproduced in English translation in *The Power of the Presence*, vol. 1, p. 44.

⁴ *Sri Ramanadeva Malai*, reproduced in English translation in *The*





Back in his home village, the loneliness Pillai felt in this period following his wife's demise persisted and he was somewhat conflicted by the thought of a second marriage. He seemed to know deep down what Bhagavan was calling him to and sought the strength within to resist the temptation to remarry. Even after several years, the problem persisted, and he appealed to Bhagavan in verse:

*Though I have become old and have suffered from various diseases, I have not destroyed the desire for women. The ghost of my mind desires to see their beautiful faces, to converse with them and to listen to their honey-like speech. Even though I give advice to myself, [this longing] does not subside but wanders after them. Ramanadeva, when will this delusion end and my mind become firm?*⁵

In time, Pillai came to see that he should devote himself more fully to *vichara*. Renewed efforts in practice caused him to feel like his career and workplace were less relevant. He began to understand what being 'ruined by God' meant, namely, that he was no longer suited to life in the world. He therefore contemplated resigning his government job.

A fellow resident of Idayanpal Chori village was one Manikkam Pillai, some twenty years Pillai's junior, for whom Bhagavan had appeared in a dream. In the dream, Sri Bhagavan encouraged Manikkam to look after Pillai. The youngster took the dream to heart and served Pillai with great diligence, even till the end of Pillai's life. Witnessing Pillai's behaviour during the period prior to handing in his resignation, Manikkam made the following observations:

*Pillai used to get into a state in which all physical and mental movements were completely stilled. He experienced the same state at the office. Objective awareness would cease, his mind would automatically turn towards the Self, and all physical and mental movements would stop.*⁶

Such occurrences made it clear that it was time to leave his job and in 1910, Pillai handed in his resignation. He immediately made the journey to Arunachala to inform Bhagavan of the decision. When Bhagavan responded to the news with silence, Pillai took it as the guru's tacit approval.

⁵ *Power of the Presence*, vol. 1, p. 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷ From Manikkam Pillai's account reproduced in footnote 14 of *The Power of the Presence*, vol. 1, p. 49.

Now free from professional obligations, Pillai stayed on at Virupaksha. But after a time, his family began to worry that he might not return but would remain indefinitely with Bhagavan. His maternal aunt thus made an appearance at the Ashram and told Bhagavan that she had come to take her nephew home. Bhagavan gave his assent.

Back in Chidambaram District and still free of work obligations, Pillai made use of these freedoms and a period of fervent sadhana in his prayer life ensued. Manikkam narrates:

*Pillai stayed alone in the outskirts of his village in a Vinayaka temple, or sometimes in the nearby woods. He persevered in constant vichara. During this period his state suddenly changed. He started laughing for no apparent reason, chanted Tiruvachakam and other hymns loudly, did namaste, wore a long loincloth with a vibbuti bag tucked into it, smeared his entire body with vibbuti, carried a staff, forgot all caste restrictions, and often frequented the cremation grounds and the areas inhabited by out-castes. During this period, he visited the Murugan temple at Vayalur near Tiruchi, walking the entire 100 miles. When he saw the deity, the spear in the God's hands appeared to move. Marvelling at this, he sang praises to God with great devotion. Then, while returning, he accepted gruel and soured food from anyone who gave it. Because he had walked such a long distance, the cloth worn around his waist turned brownish and appeared to be like the ochre cloth of a sannyasin. After his return from Vayalur, he regained his normal state. He resumed his vichara and began to observe mauna. From then on, he visited Bhagavan three to four times a year and stayed for about ten to fifteen days on each occasion.*⁷

Now determined to forego the married life and lead a life of celibacy, Pillai considered monastic robes. While on one of his visits, he raised the question with Bhagavan in a tactful way. Manikkam relates the interaction:

Thinking of following [Bhagavan's] advice of obtaining food by begging, Pillai shaved his head and went before Bhagavan. Realising the intention behind this act, Bhagavan made the remark, 'It is good to grow a tuft of hair'. Pillai knew what this meant, namely, that Bhagavan did not approve of the move [toward sanyass]. Bhagavan told him, 'Stay at home and do self-enquiry in all the spare time you have'.⁸

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.





Golden Child

Something extraordinary happened in the Maharshi's presence during another visit. It took place on 4th May 1913 up at Virupaksha Cave. Sitting with devotees before Bhagavan, Pillai had a 'vision' of the Lord in the person of Bhagavan and saw 'a golden child issue forth' from Bhagavan's head and then just as suddenly re-enter Bhagavan's head again. In a verse later addressed to Bhagavan, Pillai highlighted this experience:

You granted me this vision two or three times. Having convinced myself [by it] that there is a God, I wept with uncontrollable joy and told the other devotees nearby [what I had seen]. They all ridiculed me in various ways and said [that my vision] was due to the ganja [cannabis] I had taken.⁹

Nowhere is there any elaboration about *ganja*, but if indeed *ganja* had been involved, it would seem to have had little to do with Pillai's vision because the following day, 5th May, he experienced a similar event:

The next evening, I had another vision while sitting before you. Can this ignorant one describe it? All around you I saw an incomparable effulgence like the splendour of many full moons. Your divine body shone with the light of the sun, belittling the lustre of shining gold. Your beautiful eyes were shedding divine grace. In you was the majesty of the Lord of Lords, along with the power of giving bountifully. A little later I saw your whole body smeared with white, bright, sacred ash. My stone-like heart melted and became like water. I saw these visions, but those near me did not see them. I did not ask you about them, nor did you speak to me about them.¹⁰

And then a third:

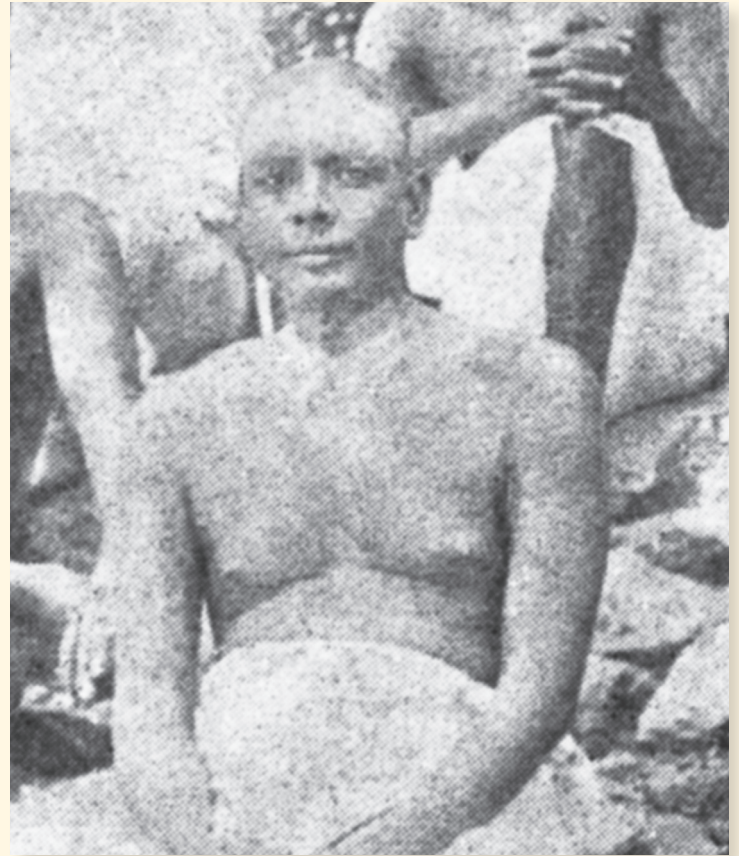
Two days later, while I was doing japa of 'Om Subramaniam' in your presence, your body dazzled like a superb crystal. I felt blissful but was afraid of losing such bliss. [But] you showed me your effulgent form many times in both the waking and dream states. Is it possible to describe your supreme grace? I am a sinner who has committed sins that make good people shudder: lust, anger, drinking alcohol, eating meat and uttering lies. In every way I deserve to be condemned and thrown away. Please subdue me so that I do not fall into wrong ways again. May I hold on to your beautiful feet and thus redeem myself. Please grant me this blessing.¹¹

Pillai returned home and by everyone's estimation had the appearance of a holy man. Though not a formal

⁹ *Anugraham*, reproduced in English translation in *The Power of the Presence*, vol. 1, p. 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.



Sivaprakasam Pillai at the age of 40, behind Virupaksha Cave (ca. 1915)

sannyasin, being perpetually absorbed in Ramana devotion and *atma vichara* left him God-intoxicated. Like the boy in Sankara's *Hastamalaka* who had no likes or dislikes, nor took interest in the things of boys his age, Pillai was no longer interested in the things of the world and was thus in no position to tend to practical matters. His brother, Sri Kunjithapadam Pillai and sister-in-law, however, were keen to look after his material needs, and his devoted disciple, Manikkam Pillai, attended on Pillai loyally. While family members, friends and neighbours held him in high esteem, in his poetic outpourings to Bhagavan, Pillai only ever recalled his defects:

Ramanadeva! Although you have never stated overtly that you have accepted me as your slave, when you heard about this fool's troubles, you affectionately consoled me. Furthermore, through your grace you soothed me by showing [me in a vision] your glorious form, and through some other deed, which should not be revealed, you indicated your attitude towards me. You know that my qualities and character are poor. You also know that among the ignorant, full of defects, I am the worst. You know that I have not attained perfection in





*any of the four sadhanas that are meant for the eradication of bad qualities. Though you knew all this, you still sought me and took possession of me. Ramanadeva, how can I explain this wonder?*¹²

The respect Pillai garnered locally led to an honorary appointment as a juror in the Manjakuppam Sessions Court. But Pillai did not perceive this as a boon but rather a disruption to his devotions. He thus lodged a light-hearted complaint to Bhagavan in verse saying, ‘Do you think it justice to think of sending me to a court of justice?’ But Pillai acquiesced and fulfilled the task before him with alacrity and joy.¹³

His dialogue with the Master through the medium of prayer and verse was ongoing and by pen and paper he beseeched Bhagavan’s assistance in making him a better devotee:

*O Munificent One! You yourself sought me and took me over. You are bearing all my burdens. But instead of staying in a firm state, this lowly creature thinks many thoughts all the time. Not being courageous enough to stop this restless mind, I wander behind it as its slave. Ramanadeva, one who does not make his Master’s will his own, is he really fit to be called a devotee?*¹⁴

Conclusion

Pillai continued his visits to Bhagavan but in the last year of his life, owing to poor health, he was unable to make the journey. He lamented not seeing Bhagavan and poeticized his predicament, though ultimately drawing a cheerful conclusion. He coached himself out of despair by reasoning with himself in the following vein:

Without understanding what Ramana-darsanam really is, why are you disconsolate longing for Ramana-darsanam? Ramana-

12 *Sri Ramanadeva Malai*, v. 11, reproduced in English translation in *The Power of the Presence*, vol. 1, p. 48.

13 *The Mountain Path*, April 1988, p. 114.

14 *Sri Ramanadeva Malai*, v. 22, reproduced in English translation in *The Power of the Presence*, vol. 1, p. 51.

*swarupa is itself my own swarupa, (and hence) Ramana-darsanam is only knowing myself.*¹⁵

Though frail and ailing, unable to travel, Pillai continued his fervent prayers to Bhagavan in poetic form:

*Since I have no other refuge other than your feet, please give me a word of encouragement. Even if the body suffers from various diseases, let it suffer. Even if the limbs lose their function, let them. Even if the eyes lose their sight, let them. Even if death is to follow, let it. There is not the slightest use in my trying to prevent these occurring. Therefore, whatever happens, let it happen. I can only be, seeking your grace. Whatever misery I experience, I must think that it is also your grace and bear with it. Whoever torments and tortures me, instead of hating them in anger, I must humble myself by considering [their actions] too to be your gracious act. Truly, Sadguru, this is what I pray to you for.*¹⁶

On Tuesday the 12th of January 1948, Bhagavan received the news about Pillai’s demise. On reading the telegram Bhagavan said, *Sivaprakasam Sivaprakasamanar*, i.e. ‘Sivaprakasam has become the light of Siva.’^{17*} —

(series concluded)

15 *The Mountain Path*, April 1988, p. 114; <<https://sriramana.org/ramanafiles/mountainpath/1988%20II%20April.pdf>>. In this segment, Michael James writes: *When a devotee once asked Sri Bhagavan, ‘Sivaprakasam Pillai, who is such a good man, such an ardent devotee and a longstanding disciple, has written a poem saying that Sri Bhagavan’s instructions could not be carried out by him effectively in practice. What can be the lot of others then?’ Sri Bhagavan replied ‘Sri Acharya (Sri Adi Sankara) also says similar things when he composes songs in praise of any deity. How else can they praise God?’. That is, if one adopts the jiva bhava (the attitude of being an individual soul) and praises God, one cannot but sing of the limitation and shortcomings of one’s individual existence, as can be seen even from the hymns sung by Sri Bhagavan Himself in praise of Arunachala.*

16 *Vinnappam*, v. 36, reproduced in English translation in *The Power of the Presence*, vol. one, p. 71.

17 *The Mountain Path*, April 1988, p. 114; see link in footnote 15.

* For safe-keeping Manikkam Pillai donated Sivaprakasam Pillai’s notebooks to Ramanasramam Archives. (See footnote 23 of *The Power of the Presence*, vol. 1, p. 56).



Announcement: The October *In Focus*

For live streaming of the Tamil Parayana and Vedaparayana each day, Mon-Sat, 5-6.45 pm IST, go to: <<https://youtube.com/@SriRamanasramam/videos>>.

For the September *In Focus*, see:

<<https://youtube.com/embed/EV0pF2JK9Ws>>





Centenary Celebrations on Advent Day: Modern Senior Secondary School, Chennai



As part of the Ramanasramam Centenary Celebrations and Advent Day on September 1, 2023, Ramanasramam President, Dr Venkat S. Ramanan gave a talk in Modern Senior Secondary School, Nanganallur, Chennai. In his address to the 200 students gathered there, the President emphasized the portability of self-enquiry which can be practiced anywhere and brings calmness. He said Bhagavan never encouraged anyone to give up life in the world but rather only to give up the thought that 'I am the doer' and dwell in the 'I-am'. Thus, renunciation of the sense of doership is the

only valid renunciation and offers the greatest solace to seekers. The President clarified how worldly activities can be performed effortlessly while abiding in the Self. He quoted *Yoga Vasistha* from Bhagavan's *Ulladu Narpadu Anubbandam*:

O Hero, having enquired into all the states, which are of various kinds, play (your role) in the world always clinging firmly with the mind only to that one which is the supreme state devoid of unreality. O Hero, since you have known that (Self) which exists in the heart as the Reality of all the various appearances; therefore, without ever abandoning that outlook, play (your role) in the world as if (you have) desire. O Hero, being one who has seeming mental excitement (or rising) and joy, being one who has seeming mental anxiety and hatred (anger), being one who has seeming effort or initiative but being as one who is (in truth) devoid of (all such) defects, play (your role) in the world...

For the full video coverage of the event, see: <<https://youtube.com/embed/aaeuz3VTspE>>.] —

Events at Arunachala Ashrama: Advent Celebrations



The online celebration of the 127th Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala was celebrated and broadcast live on Sunday, September 17, 2023 by Arunachala Ashrama, NY from 5.45 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. (EST) and included presentations by Ramana Satsang groups from Australia, U.K., France, Canada and U.S.A. Sri Ramanasramam President Dr Venkat S. Ramanan talked live from Ramanasramam about Advent day, the day of self-surrender by a 16-year-old Sage who came to the 'lap of his father from the comfort of his mother,' from Madurai to Arunachala to open for all the direct path to self-inquiry and *mukti*. He went on to say that Ramana did not come to this Earth to show how great he was but to make us all Ramanas by simply giving us his highest teachings in a nutshell. The

President remembered Advents gone by such as the Centenary Advent celebration of 1996 where Dennis Hartel and other devotees re-enacted Bhagavan's Advent journey. For full coverage of the Advent Day global online celebration in 2023, see: <<https://youtube.com/live/3AguZU2rt7g>> <<https://www.youtube.com/@ArunachalaAshrama>> and <<https://archive.arunachala.org/ashrama/events/2023/advent/ww-program>>. —

Announcement: Delhi Talks

For the August public lecture at Teen Murti House, New Delhi by Dr Venkat S Ramanan, President, Sri Ramanasramam, see: <<https://youtube.com/embed/Um1TpLiziwQ>>. —





Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Samvatsara Abhishekam

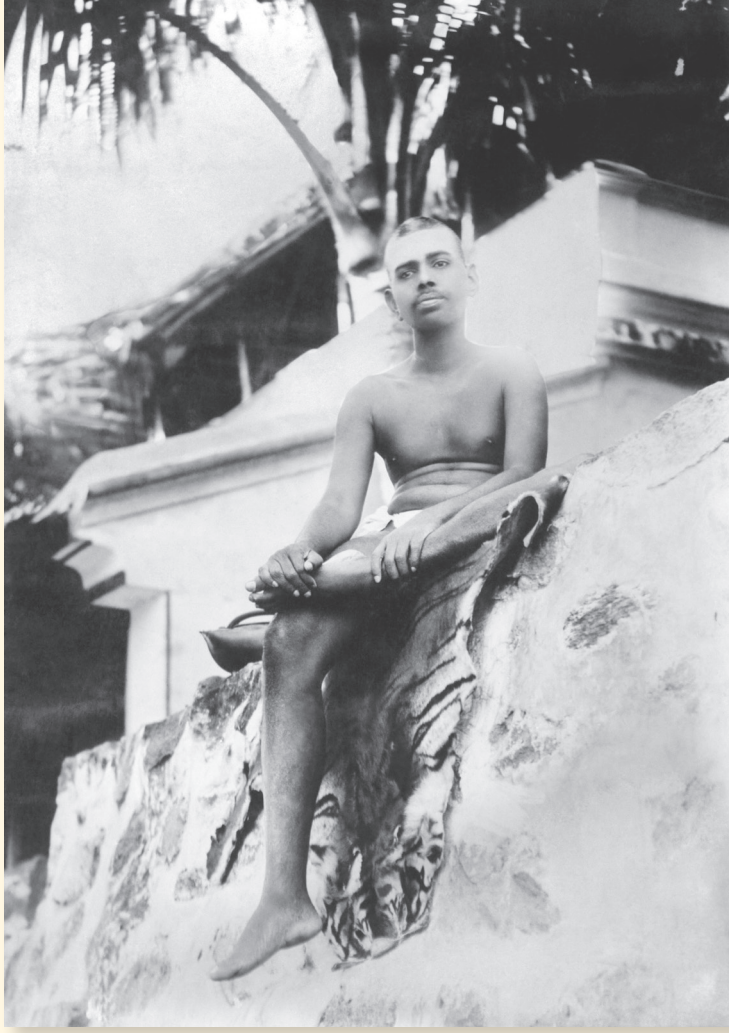
On Sunday 3rd Sept, marking the tenth year since Ramanasramam Kumbhabhishekam on 25th August 2013, special puja and homa were performed in the New Hall. Rites included Punyahavachanam, Mahanyasam, Rudram, Sukthadhi Japam, Ganapathi Homam, Bhagavan Moolamantra Homa, Durga-Sri Suktha Homa and Purnahuthi followed by arathi and procession. Mahabhishekam was performed to all the deities in both shrines followed by Maha Deeparadhana. —

Events at Arunachala Ashrama: Ramanasramam Centenary Celebrations



On the morning of Saturday, September 30, 2023, Arunachala Ashrama, NY celebrated Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary at the Hindu Temple Society of North America. Guests of Honor included Swami Sarvapriyananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of New York, and Dr Anand Ramanan, President, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai. For video coverage go to Arunachala Ashrama's YouTube page at < https://youtube.com/embed/EHDDc9vrK_k>. —





ORIGINS

The History of the Ashram Tamil Parayana (part III)

In the last couple of issues of *Saranagati*, we saw how Bhagavan initiated chanting of various texts in the early days on the Hill, which included Bhagavan's own compositions. He prized recitation of sacred teachings as an 'aid for eradicating thoughts and the predispositions remaining in seed form'. Bhagavan said that if our recitation is 'performed with an uninterrupted current of attention and with due faith', and if in the process

'the mind is deflected from its operations regarding the objective world, one will attain the Atman.'¹

When Kunjuswami came to Bhagavan in 1920, Bhagavan's mother was reciting devotional songs each morning at Skandasramam and afterward, other devotees would chant *Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*, *Appalap Paattu* and Bhagavan's Tamil rendering of *Sri Dakshinamurti Stotram*. In the course of time, Bhagavan composed new works which were incorporated into the daily chanting repertoire. By the late 1940s, the parayana cycle had grown to fifteen days and consisted of more than thirty works, among them poetic works of Sivaprakasam Pillai (see footnote 1 on p. 3 above). In 1987 the daily Tamil parayana cycle in Ramanasramam supervised by Kunjuswami was portioned out in a weekly cycle following the order of the Tamil *Collected Works*. In the last two issues of *Saranagati* (July and August) we read about the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday parayanas. In this segment we are looking at Thursday, Friday, and Saturday parayana.

Thursday Parayana: Anma Sakshatkara

Anma Sakshatkara is the chapter on *Self-Realisation* in an *upaagamic* text known as *Sarvajnanottara*, 'The Pinnacle of all Knowledge', translated from the Sanskrit original into Tamil by Bhagavan on the spur of the moment in 1933. It consists of instructions in the path of Self-knowledge given by Lord Siva to his son Guha — Lord Subrahmanya² — and serves as an apt supplement to Bhagavan's teaching.

Bhagavat Gita Saram (The Song Celestial)

In 1940 while Bhagavan was speaking with a visiting pandit about the merits of the *Bhagavat Gita*, a devotee complained that it was difficult to keep all seven hundred verses in mind and asked if there was one verse that could be remembered as the quintessence of the *Gita*. Bhagavan thereupon mentioned Chapter X, v. 20: 'I am the Self, O Gudakesa, dwelling in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all beings.'

1 *Ramana Gita*, Chapter III, <https://sriramanamaharshi.org/resource_centre/audio-2/ramana-gita/>.

2 In traditional texts, Lord Siva's interlocutors will typically be one of the following: His son, Subrahmanya, His wife, Parvati, or His guardian-devotee, Nandi.





Later, at G. V. Subbaramayya's request, he selected forty-two verses, including this one, and arranged them in an appropriate order. He also prepared Tamil and Malayalam versions of these verses. The translations follow closely the Sanskrit, which are in the form of couplets, while Bhagavan's Tamil translations are in a four-line *venba* form.

Friday Parayana: Translations from Sankaracharya

When the Hindu dharma was in decline, the great teacher Sri Sankaracharya was born. In the course of his short life (32 years), he re-established Vedantic teachings and won over Buddhists, Jains, and adherents of diverse sects. He wrote beautiful *stotras* praising the great avatars such as Rama, Krishna, and Narasimha as well as deities Meenaksi (Madurai), Nataraja (Chidambaram) and Jagannatha (Puri), among others. He integrated the land of Bharat by virtue of his numerous *padayatra*s during which he established *maths* in various locations. He consolidated the code of sannyasins, initiated the tradition of priests and wrote sublime advaitic works stressing the presence of the Atman in every being.

Centuries later, Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings would come to reflect and amplify those of Sankara. From time to time, he translated Sri Sankara's works, either of his own accord or at the request of devotees.

Sri Dakshinamurti Stotram

Through the power of thought Brahma created four sons, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatsujata and Sanatkumara. He asked them to attend to the work of creating the world and preserving it. But, having been born completely detached, they were not interested. They wandered about in search of peace and tranquillity. As they were dispassionate and therefore fit to receive spiritual instruction, Siva manifested before them as *Dakshinamurti* (the south-facing god³) under a banyan tree. He sat silently absorbed with his right hand in *chinmudra*.⁴ The four were drawn to him like iron to a magnet. They sat before him and,

³ The name can also be translated as 'formless power', the Lord who has come in the form of the formless.

⁴ *Chinmudra*: the 'hand gesture of consciousness' is indicated by making the thumb and the index finger touch each other and extending the three fingers.



like him, became absorbed in the Self. Even advanced spiritual seekers cannot easily understand this state of silence. The world, the seer and the awareness which enables it to be cognized, stand as obstacles in their way. But since it is the single power, *shakti*, which manifests itself as these three and again withdraws them into itself, everything is that power which is the Self. Sankaracharya expounds this truth in this hymn.⁵

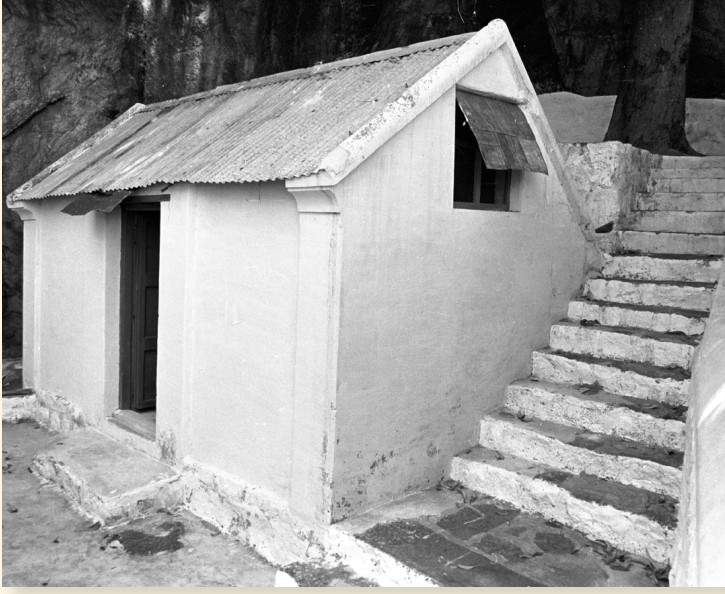
Anma Bhodam

Sometime in 1948 a Muslim devotee sent a Tamil translation of this poem to Bhagavan. Bhagavan perused the text for some time and then set it aside only to open it again. Just when devotees could discern in his face a compulsion from within, Bhagavan asked his attendant Venkataratnam to fetch the Sanskrit version from the library. Going through it, he wrote two *venbas* and then put it aside. But when Bhagavan showed the two verses to G.V. Subbaramayya, the latter urged him to reconsider. Bhagavan was not persuaded. But two days later, he had written a few more verses and made the following comment: "Each time I try and leave off writing, the thought of continuing to write keeps appearing before me. It does not look as if it will leave me alone!" Within a few days all 68 verses were completed.⁶

⁵ This introduction and those of *Guru Stuti* and *Hastamalaka* are from Bhagavan, <https://sriramanamaharshi.org/resource_centre/audio/nul-tirattu/> and <<https://archive.arunachala.org/docs/collected-worm/hastamalaka>>.

⁶ This story is from T.R. Kanakammal





Guru Stuti

When Sankaracharya was going about the country debating with the exponents of the various schools of thought, he came to the town of Mahishmati in the north, where Mandana Mishra, the exponent of Vedic rituals lived. Sri Sankara challenged him in debate and triumphed. But the pandit's wife would not concede defeat until she was also defeated. So Sankaracharya debated with her as well, excelling in all subjects but one. Being a celibate monk, Sankara was defeated by her on the subject of conjugal relations. He asked for a respite of one month, after which time they would meet again to debate the subject. Shedding his body

in a cave under the custody of his disciples, he entered the body of a recently departed king named Amaruka. Now as king, and a husband, he sported among the king's hundred queens. Meanwhile the disciples grew anxious as the period specified by their guru had ended. Fearing that he had forgotten his true identity, they went to the court in the disguise of minstrels and sang this hymn to remind him who he was.

Hastamalaka Stotram

Once when Sankaracharya was travelling on the West coast of India and successfully debating with the expounders of various schools of thought, he came to a village known as Srivali. When a Brahmin of the village named Prabhakara heard of Sankara's arrival, he went to see him bringing along his thirteen-year-old son. He prostrated before the Master and made his son do likewise. He then explained that the boy had been mute since childhood, that he had no likes or dislikes, nor any sense of honour or dishonour, and that he was completely indolent, not taking interest in the things of boys of his age. The guru then posed to the youngster the questions that introduce this hymn. The verses that follow are the boy's reply.

After hearing his son's exalted response, the father was rendered speechless. But the Acharya said to him: 'He has become your son because of his incomplete austerities. This is your good fortune. He will not be of any use to you in this world. Let him come along and stay with me.' Sri Sankara, bidding the father return home alone, took the boy along with him.

Sadhu Natanananda's Upadesa Ratnavali § 5

See the direct intuitive power of Iswara shining in the heart

The uninterrupted shining of the Self, the life of life, as the natural consciousness 'I-I' in the heart is the nature of God's giving unbroken upadesa to the worthy disciple.

— Guru Vachaka Kovai, §504

Ishwara spontaneously and perpetually shines as the heart of hearts in the form of I-I in all Jivas. This is the meaning of a statement made by the learned that *The Guru called 'Atman' constantly instructs the disciple called 'Jiva'*. How does this instruction take place? — At all times, whether the Jiva realises it or not, 'the shining of I-I in the heart' continues directly without any cause. —





Sankaracharya's disciples later asked how the boy had attained the state of Brahman without hearing the teaching. The guru replied: 'Once, before bathing in the river with some women, the boy's mother left her two-year old son in the care of a great and highly accomplished yogi who was practising austerities on the bank of the Yamuna. Unfortunately, the child toddled towards the water and drowned. Out of compassion for the disconsolate mother, the sadhu forsook his own body and entered that of the child. That is how this boy has attained this high state.'

Saturday Parayana: Five Hymns to Sri Ramana

The author of these songs, Satyamangalam Sri Venkataramayyar, came to Bhagavan when he was at Virupaksha Cave. He composed the first four songs while at Virupaksha, one each day of his stay, and the fifth, *Sri Ramana Satguru*, he wrote later and

sent to Bhagavan. Among the earliest songs (1910-11) in praise of Bhagavan, these hymns are rich in allusions to scriptural lore. Exquisitely simple, they have a wonderful freshness, being the outpouring of a soul in its first blossoming in the presence of the Master. As Saint Kannappar worshipped Siva for merely a week and yet won His grace, so too the author of these songs stayed with Bhagavan only one week. But it was a week filled with devotion and grace so much so that devotees, viz. M. V. Ramaswami Iyer and others, 'all crazy chaps', according to Bhagavan⁷, danced around Bhagavan in rapture as they performed *Kummi Paattu* and other songs of this collection. —

⁷ See *Day by Day*, Jan. 1, 1947.

Bhagavan's Ayurvedic Verses: Sukhabhedhi Churanam

Sukhabhedhi Churanam

Sukhabhēdit tūlkēḷḷḇḇ dṛaraippa lantāṇ
Sūrattu nilāvārai yōmañ cukku
tagumiḷagi ṇoḍuvāyu viḷaṅgam rōjā
tarumok kaindumvagaik kōrpalamē kūṭṭit
tagavulartti yiḍittunaṅgu calitti rāvīr
trāṇorumū virarpiḍit tūlukku nērāy
miguṇāṭṭuc carckkariyum vāyiliṭṭu
vennīruṭ kolḷamalam veḷiyām pārē.

Sukhabhēdit tūlkēḷḷ onḍṛaraip palantāṇ
Sūrattu nilāvārai ōmam sukku
tagu-miḷagiṇoḍu vāyu-viḷaṅgam rōjā
tarum'mokku aindum vagaikkōr palamē kūṭṭit
taga-ulartti iḍittu-naṅgu salittu irāvil
tāṇoru mūviral-piḍi tūlukku nērāy
migu-nāṭṭuc carckkariyum vāyil-iṭṭu
vennīr uṭkolḷa-malam veḷiyām pārē.

Ingredients: surath nilavarai (1.5 phalam); ajwain, (1 phalam); dry ginger (2 varagan); pepper, (1 phalam); false black pepper, (1 phalam); rose flower, (1 phalam);*

Preparation: Dry the herbs and grind them well. Take three finger pinches of this powder with the same amount of brown sugar and drink hot water for ease of motion.

*Benefits: Cleanses the bowel. (*1 phala=50ml)*





Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Muruganar Day

On Thursday 14th September, devotees gathered to observe Muruganar Day at his samadhi shrine. The event began on the 12th with three days of Muttrothal, namely, the recitation of the whole of Sri Muruganar's *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*. Before arati on the 14th, *Aksharamanamalai* was recited as the elaborate puja proceeded. Arati was followed by the distribution of prasada. As the day also happened to be Muruganar's Advent Centenary year coming to Bhagavan (21st Sep, 1923), devotees processed from the Big Temple to the Ashram with Bhagavan's and Muruganar's photos. —

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>





Obituary: Dr M.S. Swaminathan (1925-2023)



The Ramana devotee and world-renowned plant geneticist Dr M.S. Swaminathan had once been a member of Sri Ramanasramam's Board of Trustees. He was the nephew of Prof. K. Swaminathan's wife, Visalakshi. The late Mahalakshmi Suryanandam (Maggie-ma) was fond of reminiscing about her childhood memories with MS, the two having been born the same year just one month apart and having grown up in the same household. Both Mahalakshmi and Swaminathan had been greatly influenced by Gandhi-ji who sometimes visited their family home. In his late teens, M.S. Swaminathan had decided to follow the path of his surgeon father and study medicine. But not long after a famine in Bengal where millions perished, he was moved by Gandhi's appeal to 'the god of bread' and he changed his mind and took up agricultural research. He thus did his bachelor's degree in agriculture and then postgraduate studies in plant genetics in Europe and in 1952 earned a Ph.D. from Cambridge.

Once back in India, he worked as a crop geneticist at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute where he learned of the high yield wheat varieties being tested in Mexico under the supervision of Dr Norman E. Borlaug. Dr Swaminathan persuaded the research institute's chief executive to invite Dr Borlaug to India and in 1963, the two scientists toured small farms in Punjab and Haryana. The rest is history. The meeting with Borlaug inspired Swaminathan to genetically modify and produce high-yield rice paddies. In 1966 he persuaded the Institute to import 18,000 tons of Mexican wheat seeds, a project which, under Dr Swaminathan's care, would bring a harvest three times beyond what had been expected. India thus became self-sufficient in wheat and rice within eight years. In another eight years, by the year 1982, Indian wheat production reached 40 million metric tons, more than triple the harvest of the early 1960s. Dr Swaminathan's research saved tens of millions of lives in India and earned him the moniker, 'the father of India's Green Revolution'. He once said, 'If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go right in our country.' When Dr Borlaug was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970, he credited his collaborator in the following words: 'To you, Dr Swaminathan, a great deal of the credit must go for first recognizing the potential value of the Mexican dwarfs. Had this not occurred, it is quite possible that there would not have been a green revolution in Asia.'

Dr Swaminathan would go on to serve as Director of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Director General of ICAR and Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Acting Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission and Director General, International Rice Research Institute, the Philippines. He was awarded the first World Food Prize in 1987 and he made use of the prize money to set up the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in Chennai. He was conferred the *Padma Shri*, *Padma Bhushan* and the *Padma Vibhushan*. He was also the recipient of the *H. K. Firodia* award, the *Lal Bahadur Shastri National Award*, the *Indira Gandhi Prize* as well as several international awards including the *Albert Einstein World Science Award*.

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the United Nations Secretary General once called Dr Swaminathan 'a living legend who will go into the annals of history as a world scientist of rare distinction.' And US President Ronald Reagan addressing the scientist directly said, 'Many in the global food and agricultural community have known for a long time that your efforts have made a dramatic and lasting impact on improving world food supply.'

On Thursday 28th September 2023 Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued the following statement:

We are deeply saddened by the demise of Dr M.S. Swaminathan Ji. At a very critical period in our nation's history, his ground-breaking work in agriculture transformed the lives of millions and ensured food security for our nation. Beyond his revolutionary contributions to agriculture, Dr Swaminathan was a powerhouse of innovation and a nurturing mentor to many. His unwavering commitment to research and mentorship has left an indelible mark on countless scientists and innovators. I will always cherish my conversations with Dr Swaminathan. His passion to see India progress was exemplary. His life and work will inspire generations to come. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti.

Dr Swaminathan lost his wife Mina in 2022. On the morning of 28th September 2023, he followed her and passed away peacefully in their family home in Chennai at the age of 98. Dr Swaminathan is survived by his three daughters, Soumya Swaminathan, Madhura Swaminathan, and Nitya Swaminathan.¹ —



Borlaug&Swaminathan, 1963

¹ Segments in this selection are borrowed from *The New York Times*, obituary for MS Swaminathan, published, 28th September 2023.

