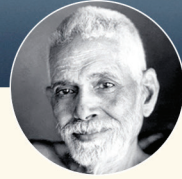
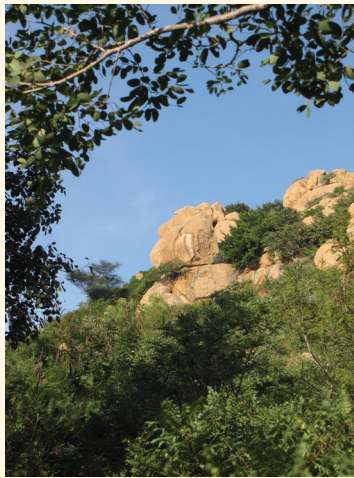


Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

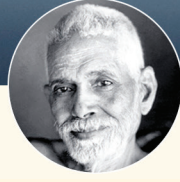
DECEMBER 2019
VOL. 13, NO. 12



Michael Highburger



Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

As we go to press, the Karthigai festival is underway with flag-raising ceremonies taking place in a light rain at 5.15 am this morning, 1st December.

In this issue, we continue reading the biography of Thelma Rappold, the American devotee who spent two years in Bhagavan's presence from early 1948-1950. Thelma took copious notes throughout her stay and compiled them into a large manuscript, segments of which are only now making it into print (see p. 3).

Also in this issue is a glimpse into the life of the renowned poet/actor/singer, Harindranath Chattopadhyay who regularly visited the Ashram in the 1940s and then spent two years living near the Ashram leading up to Bhagavan's Mahanirvana (see p. 7).

Finally, we take a look at the history of the Ashram Dispensary which began in the late 1920s and continues today with ever-improving outpatient care within the Ashram compound (see pp. 10-12).

For videos, photos and other news of events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at saranagathi@gururamana.org

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

1st December (Sun) Karthigai Festival commences
10th December (Tues) Karthigai Deepam Day
11th December (Wed) Full Moon
14th December (Sat) Punarvasu
10th January (Fri) Full Moon
11th January (Sat) Bhagavan's 140th Jayanti

14th January (Tues) Pongal
20th January (Mon) ChinnaSwamigal Aradhana
20 - 26th January Nochur Venkataraman Discourses
2nd February (Sun) Punarvasu
8th February (Sat) Full Moon
21st February (Fri) Mahasivaratri





IN PROFILE

Thelma Rappold: In Search of Bhagavan (part II)

In March 1948, Thelma Benn knew that she was where she needed to be and all other plans for pilgrimage in and around India dropped away. She settled in for the long haul and took careful note of her surroundings. Even if she was new to Ashram life and life at the feet of a Master, she took to it like a duck to water:

Four-thirty comes very early these mornings. Dressing in the dark is becoming a habit. It seems much easier than going through the struggle of trying to light the lantern. The privilege of being with Bhagavan is well worth all the effort of getting up early.

Everything is so quiet in the morning. In that "thought-free" atmosphere, Bhagavan's presence penetrates the very heart of the soul... [When hearing] the Veda Parayana, sometimes the boys are out of tune and off beat, but even so, the chanting steps up the vibrations and has a very quietening effect on the restless mind, especially in Bhagavan's presence. It was surprising to see so many turn out at 5 am in the morning. After Parayana, Bhagavan takes his early morning walk. Mrs. Osborne suggested going up the Hill to watch the sunrise – what a magnificent sight! We went barefooted, found a small [outcropping] looking out over the city below. The eastern horizon was a blaze of colour, eagles glided down the mountainside from their homes on sacred Arunachala and all was peace and quiet. It may appear as only a barren rock-studded hill but to sit quietly in meditation on the crest of one of its hillocks is to feel the fiery magnetism that pulsates from its innermost depths.

In the Hall

The daily round began to become familiar to her, centred as it was on hours in the Hall in Bhagavan's presence:

The morning hours with Bhagavan are always the best, followed by the hour or so beneath the Margosa tree. This being Sunday, large crowds came to see Bhagavan. Some of the townspeople gave money for a feast... At 8 am Bhagavan's radio is turned on for the morning news. From all indications the radio is there for the benefit of the devotees, as Bhagavan seems quite indifferent to it... In the meditation hall some people sit and watch Bhagavan, some appear to be more interested in what is going on around them, others close their eyes and sit in meditation, while still others read or write in his presence. I started to read Self-Realization, the story of Bhagavan's life. Being in his presence helps one to think more clearly and to understand better what is being read. Bhagavan says "Self-Realization is an easy thing, the easiest thing there is". If we were only fully aware of that fact, how wonderful!

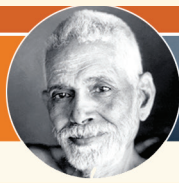
Raja announced that Dr. Sen would be returning on March 7th, and that I could have a room at Dr. Syed's place if that was satisfactory to me. Bhagavan knows that I want to stay and so surely something will work out despite the crowded conditions.

Light and Power

Thelma sat, observed and commented in her journal, shy to speak up and voice her own personal concerns:

Today was someone's birthday. A lady brought two big trays of prasad and was very much disappointed when it wasn't distributed in the hall. Lunch was a very festive occasion with





all sorts of delicacies. Whenever there is a special event, devotees bring large trays of goodies for Bhagavan because he won't take any unless all share alike. This afternoon one of the devotees started a very interesting discussion about light and power. He tried to get Bhagavan to declare himself on the subject which Bhagavan of course refused to do. It is interesting to watch Bhagavan's eyes light up like two pools of liquid luminosity whenever he gets into a discussion and to see how subtly he can subdue the most unyielding intellect.

Meeting Bhagavan

In time, the opportunity for a private encounter is made available to her and she does not pass it up:

Raja Gopal, one of Bhagavan's attendants said he would arrange a private meeting with Bhagavan for tomorrow while Bhagavan was on his afternoon walk. "No privacy" seems to be one of the prices of fame – Bhagavan can't even go to the bathroom without someone wanting to talk with him. Inasmuch as today is Sunday, there was a steady stream of visitors and so there was no opportunity to talk with Bhagavan alone.

However, her chance came the following day. Thelma makes the following entry:

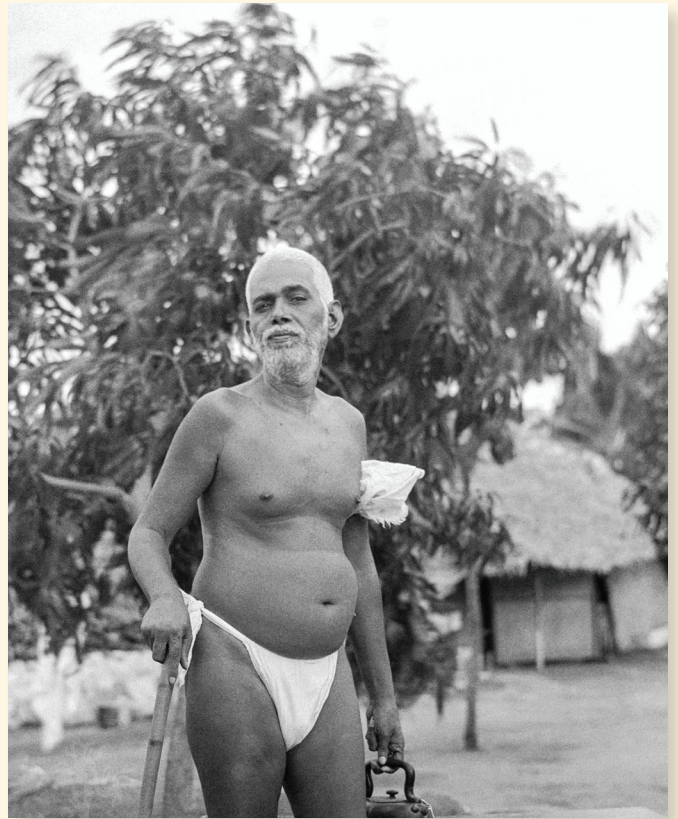
Raja Gopal took me out to the Post Office steps to wait for Bhagavan until he returned from his walk. Raja left me standing there while he hurried out to tell Bhagavan what I wanted to ask him. When Bhagavan came around the corner and looked at me and spoke to me in English, it was as though my entire being was enveloped in a sea of dazzling light – his compassion and love is so far-reaching. To feel Bhagavan's presence is to chase all thoughts to the four-winds.

Elsewhere, she describes an encounter with Bhagavan this way:

To try and describe Ramana Maharshi in words is most difficult, because the essence of what Ramana is cannot be described. When he comes into the Ashram after lunch or returns from his daily walk, I feel that someone has suddenly turned on a bright light. If I open to that I am in a state of relaxation. In front of me is this tall man with nothing but a little loincloth on, whose eyes melt away all problems... His face and eyes are luminescent. He tries to show me the reality of who I really am. Just sitting there, I am awed by the light in his eyes and by his being.

Sivaratri Pradakshina

On March 9th, Thelma celebrated her first major feast day in the Ashram:

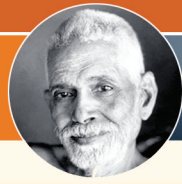


When I arrived at the meditation hall at 5 am this morning, it was so crowded I had difficulty finding a place to sit. Later someone said it was Sivaratri, a very auspicious day. This is the day the year's supply of holy ash is prepared, the basic ingredient being cow-dung. For breakfast we had a variety of special sweets, in addition to the standard items of fresh peppered ground nuts and idlies.

Sivaratri called for a special puja in the temple. Siva was decked with garland upon garland of flowers. The temple was dazzling with lights. Even the meditation hall came in for its share of the little oil lamps. On this big occasion women can remain an extra hour in the hall with Bhagavan and everyone ate dinner at the same time. These occasions are such a treat as they give one the added joy of eating another meal with Bhagavan. Major Chadwick was drawn out of his solitary but for the event, but he didn't appear to be enjoying the meal. Ordinarily he never eats anything at night... Raja suggested my joining the group going around the Hill tonight. Whatever wish is made on this night Siva is supposed to grant.

At 8:30 pm all the pilgrims assembled ready to make the pradakshina. Raja said it was customary to first get Bhagavan's permission and blessing before starting, so he went with me to the Hall. Except for the attendant Bhagavan was alone when we went in. As so often happens in his presence, a feeling of





Thelma with Ethyl Merston and Alan Chadwick on his veranda

child-like awe came over me, and I shyly asked, as one might ask a paternal father, "Bhagavan, may I go around the Hill tonight?" He chuckled and laughingly pointed to me and said to the attendant, "Look she asks ME if she may go around the Hill." All had a good laugh as I stood there blushing from head to toe.

Elsa Lowenstern and I walked together, always keeping well in back of the others so that we couldn't hear their constant chatter. We both had the same idea of remaining silent. It was a beautiful starry night. The new moon had already gone to rest and so we took a hurricane lantern to light our way. It was a thrilling experience. As we sat at the Ashram gate, waiting for the rest of the group to catch up, feeling sorry for our tired aching bodies, a blind swami who makes the trip around the Hill twice every night passed us with lightning speed with only a cane and his inner eye to guide him. He really put us to shame. He sleeps in the temple in town during the day and spends his nights walking around the Hill.

Setting Up House

The time came for Thelma to leave the Ashram and set up a more permanent living quarters and she felt blessed to be invited by Dr. Syed and Mrs Syed. She writes:

At 3 am, I cut across lots to go to Dr. Syed's tea. He is a Mohamedan and a retired professor from Allahabad University. He also invited Miss Merston. He said he would have taken me for a Kashmiri lady, but certainly not for an American, because I seem much more like an Indian lady than a Westerner. The tea was made from the tulsi plant which is supposed to have many curative qualities. It is also supposed to be the most sacred plant in India. The infinite varieties of Indian delicacies are always a pleasure to the palate. Much as I enjoyed the tea, I hated to miss spending that time with Bhagavan.

The Syeds have a lovely view of Arunachala from their place. With the 6 pm dinner comes the Lamp Lighter's Serenade. One of the devotees brings in a lighted lamp and places it alongside the leaf-plate. It seems a little foolish to walk down the open road in broad day light with a lighted lantern, but that is country life in India.

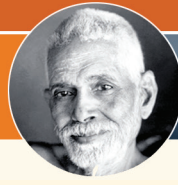
Thelma took a room from the Syed's and shifted on 21st March 1948:

Moving day! The new quarters at Dr. Syed's could hardly be put in the same category as the Ritz, but they are reasonably comfortable. There is a rope cot, a small table and a chair and even an electric light in the larger of the two rooms. The combination kitchen and bath didn't fare so well, however, it has only a single wooden plank for an all-purpose shelf; no lights and just one tiny window. The thatched roof and side walls don't meet, leaving an open invitation to mice, rats, cats, snakes, etc. Looks as though I am due for an invitation into the real Indian way of life. But Mrs. Syed is very accommodating and helpful and has even offered to teach me Hindi. After the evening meal at the Ashram, Yogi's children were waiting to escort me to their house. Mother Yogi had made sweets for the occasion. She gave me a charcoal stove, a generous supply of tins, and other miscellaneous things to start me on my Indian housekeeping adventure.

Thelma's entries pertaining to Tiruvannamalai's environs in the 1940s communicates the rural beauty and simplicity of a less complicated time in history:

Sleeping on the roof terrace of Dr. Syed's new home is perfectly wonderful. Awakened several times during the night just to enjoy





the view of Arunachala and the star-canopied heaven. The moon too was so pretty as it slowly made its way across the sky. Went to Yogi's for breakfast this morning and for a lesson in Indian cooking. Mr. Yogi was busy with the daily home spinning while breakfast was being prepared. He spent twenty years with the Congress Party before taking up Bhagavan's "cause" as he calls it. He proudly tells of the time he spent in jail for his country's cause. The children don't go to school, but he instructs them daily. Dr. Syed left for Allahabad today which means Mrs. Syed and I will have the compound to ourselves.

Breakfast with Bhagavan

Though till now she had been sleeping in Sujata Sen's *kutir*, she had been allowed to eat at the Ashram each day. But the move to the Syed's signalled her willingness to take up cooking and provide for her own food needs in light of the space and resource limitations in the ever-growing Ashram:

This morning I had my last breakfast with Bhagavan and so I took special care to thoroughly enjoy it: No rushing this time. Today Sakur, Mrs. Syed's servant, did some marketing for me. When he returned Mrs. Syed spread a mat on the ground in the back yard and Sakur (who looks like six years old but is actually twelve) spread out all the purchases and then came the

fun. It was really amusing to see the procedure. He had bought some things for Mrs. Syed also and so the reckoning was a bit complicated for his little head. However with his Tamil figures, Mrs. Syed's Urdu figures and my English ones everything tallied perfectly which brought a gleam of satisfaction to Sakur's eyes. He is a bright little fellow with plenty of initiative. He bought several extras which I hadn't asked for but which he knew I would be needing. Child-like he bought himself a half anna toy which was all Mrs. Syed would allow me to give him for all his trouble.

Accepting Whatever is Offered

Though now some blocks away from the Ashram, Thelma continues the daily round which includes morning meditations at the Ashram and darshan with the Maharshi:

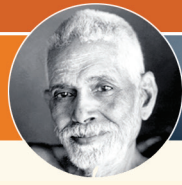
These are glorious days attending the early morning Veda Parayanas, followed by an hour's meditation beneath the favourite Margosa tree in full view of Arunachala, the never-changing One. Days fly by like minutes in Bhagavan's presence. When I sit in Maharshi's presence I feel that my little ego has slipped back someplace, and I open my heart and let those beautiful waves enter me. I feel willing to accept whatever is offered me. —
(to be continued)

Announcement: Uma Sahasram Audio CD Release



Uma Sahasram dedicated to the Universal mother Uma was written in gratitude for the *upadesam* Kavya Kanta Ganapathi Muni, Nayana, received from Bhagavan at Virupaksha Cave in November 1907. Nayana composed the 1,000 slokas in 20 days, from Tuesday, 26th November to Sunday, 15th December 1907. A professional audio recording by studio vocalist and music director K. Prabakar of the first 300 slokas of Uma Sahasram was released in October. On Tuesday, 26th November, the anniversary day Nayana commenced his composition, the following 400 slokas were released with puja at Bhagavan's Shrine. The remaining slokas are being recorded and will be released on Sunday, 15th December 2019, the anniversary day Nayana finished the work in 1907. —





IN PROFILE:

Harindranath Chattopadhyay

[Younger brother to the famous freedom fighter, Sarojini Naidu, Harindranath Chattopadhyay was born in Hyderabad to a Bengali Brahmin family in 1898. Having a father who was a respected scientist and philosopher and a mother who was a renowned poet-singer afforded the youngster contact with great figures from an early age. He began to write verse as a young boy and revealed an innate gift for the stage. By his 21st year, he was studying at Cambridge, and while in England, established himself as a published poet and playwright. His Tukaram was performed in the Little Theatre, London, in 1928, and around the same time, his Five Plays was produced by Fowler Wright in London, receiving on its front cover an imprimatur from Rabindranath Tagore. Harindranath would go on to publish more than two hundred books and distinguish himself as a singer, songwriter, painter and Member of Parliament. He would also gain notoriety as an actor, his most famous roles in

Seemabaddha and in Bawarchi (The Chef, 1972), and cameos in three Satyajit Ray films. Harindranath Chattopadhyay was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1973.]

Harindranath Chattopadhyay visited the Ashram regularly in the 1940s and spent two years at the Ashram from 1948 up until the Maharshi's Mahanirvana. When the auspicious meteor streaked across the sky on 14th April 1950, it was Harindranath who shouted to Henri Cartier-Bresson, 'Mark the time, mark the time!' Bresson bellowed: 'Thirteen to nine!'

The same night, Harindranath penned his renowned, 'The Golden Master' and sang his verses of lament for those gathered in mourning, the first lines which read:

Grief hath grown silent with its own excess/ And will not weep lest it betray his trust. / Even in this dark hour of dire distress, / He lights the flame of knowledge through our dust.

Harindranath very often composed poetry spontaneously and would sometimes sing the lines as he composed them. He wrote "The White Peacock" in Bhagavan's presence in honour of the rare bird presented to Bhagavan by the Maharani of Baroda. Madhava, as he was called, was thought to be a reincarnation of Bhagavan's Malayali attendant, Madhava, who had died a few years earlier. The noble pheasant was the only one of his species that ventured into the meditation hall and was shown a great deal of solicitude by Bhagavan, regularly receiving food treats from Bhagavan like groundnuts and slices of mangoes.

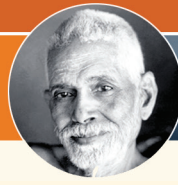
Bhagavan's Darshan

Harindranath came and went from the Ashram and was blessed to have Bhagavan's darshan on various occasions, some of them which included memorable exchanges. Devaraja Mudaliar records the encounter of June 5, 1945:

Myself, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, G.V. Subbaramayya and T.P. Ramachandra Iyer were sitting in the front row just opposite Bhagavan in the hall and G.V.S. said to H.C.: "I recently came across a typed copy of some of your verses made at Aurobindo Ashram, with Sri Aurobindo's notes on the margin highly commending some of the verses.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya then told Bhagavan how he had stayed at Aurobindo's Ashram for two years and composed 4,000 sonnets and various poems, one of which consisted of 50,000 lines. Upon





request, Harindranath recited some of his poems before Bhagavan, much to everyone's satisfaction. When Mudaliar asked him to perform an act from one of his plays, he took up the part of a "dock-labourer groaning under his work", and to great effect: "all saw how moving a good recitation could be".

Not long afterward, Harindranath asked the Maharshi, "How is it, Bhagavan, we sometimes feel choked with tears in Bhagavan's presence?" Bhagavan smiled and kept quiet.

Mudaliar spoke up: "It is a good thing if one's tears gush forth like that and even of Bhagavan it is recorded that when he used to go and stand before the image in the temple at Madurai, tears used to flow involuntarily, not as the result of any joy or pain, but purely out of devotion."

Bhagavan then added: "Even after coming here, such [things] happened on reading or hearing touching passages from books. Apparently, a stock of emotional tears is latent in all of us, so that at opportune moments or upon the slightest provocation, they well out beyond our control."

Bhagavan also told of an incident that occurred in the early years at Virupakshi. He was sitting on a rock outside the cave and a boy of about eight or nine appeared, looked at Bhagavan and, not being able to bear the sight of someone taking up such a hard life of penance, was moved to compassion and started to sob violently. Bhagavan said, "Who could say what was the reason for his sobbing and why tears flowed out of him merely at his seeing me?"

Early Encounters

Harindranath was drawn to Bhagavan following a small miracle early on in his life. One day while he stood in Mount Road, Madras without a single paisa

in his pocket and the summer sun blazing down upon him 'like a ball of fire', the only thing he wished for was to reach his destination:

I called out silently to Bhagavan for help. Just then a car passed by and stopped before me. The gentleman at the wheel looked out and asked where I was going. He was a perfect stranger, stopping his car for me and wanting to know where I wanted to go. I said, "Nungambakkam". The gentleman said, "Get in. That is where I am going". We soon found we were both bound for the same street, the same part of the same street, and finally, we were bound for two houses that stood just opposite each other!

This was his first experience of prayer and led to an eventual visit to Ramanasramam. Another noteworthy event occurred at the Ashram. Harindranath tells the story of the devotee who "wanted to see Bhagavan's 'real form'". When the devotee found nothingness on the couch, he was overwhelmed. The poet writes: "I had a similar experience one morning at the Ashram":

I came late to the dining hall one morning and called out for coffee. Someone brought me coffee. [As I reached to take it], suddenly I saw a pair of legs. I lifted my head and saw Bhagavan standing before me. Ecstatic, I promptly fell prostrate at his Feet. From Bhagavan to nothingness for the other devotee, but for me that day, something quite different!

Devotees knew that Harindranath had stayed at Aurobindo Ashram before coming to Bhagavan and wanted to know his opinion of Sri Aurobindo. A visitor piped up, "Sri Aurobindo is a mighty personality" to which the poet casually remarked, "So what, Bhagavan is a mighty impersonality."

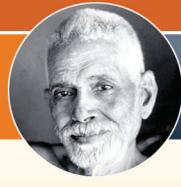
Another time when recalling lines of a Victorian poet, Harindranath said: "If Keats wrote, 'Oh! what a power has white Simplicity!', Sri Ramana is the white Simplicity holding infinite power."

Events in Tamil Nadu: Mastan Swami Day



Mastan Day was celebrated at his samadhi in Matam (near Desur) on 8th November with devotees in attendance —





Picnic at Seven Springs

In late January 1948, Bhagavan learned of Gandhiji's assassination from Harindranath's radio broadcast. Not long after this, Harindranath came to stay at the Ashram for an extended period. In April that year, he and family members along with a few devotees, among them Thelma Rappold, made their way up to the summit of the Hill. Following their ascent, they came down to Seven Springs (named 'Seven Wells' in the following account) and there they prepared a meal. Thelma Rappold comments:

We could see many miles in every direction. Weary and warm we searched for water, thinking that would be a nice spot for lunch. No water anywhere. The only thing to do was to descend to the Seven Wells to do the cooking... We were nearly famished by the time lunch was ready. It was a full-fledged Indian picnic. No wonder it took the boys until 2:30. They had boiled rice and made a very delicious curry. We had forgotten to bring plates and so two of us used pot lids, two used the cooking pans and another used a rock for his plate. When the chores were finished, we all took shelter in the lovely cave overlooking the wide expanse below. In that quiet, inspiring atmosphere, Harin immortalized our arduous climb. This was the first experience of seeing the birth of a poem, coming from such a prolific pen. It flowed forth with effortless ease.

Thelma had paper and noted down the lines as they were being composed, a process of a few short minutes. It was a poem that never made it to the published page and would have otherwise been lost. Jotted down hastily and perhaps missing appropriate punctuation, it

appears this way in the journal apart from backslashes which have been added for readability:

Today at early break of dawn/ While stars were slowly being withdrawn/ And heaven blushing into glows/ Upon the Hilltop in repose/ As pilgrims, tired with sense of time,/ Six pilgrims, we began to climb/ Arunachala, mystic Hill/ So very stubborn, very still/ So very ancient, very young/ Its every peak, the mother tongue/ Of our own spirit, full of ache/ Only in moments wide awake./ Ah! Each one needs must climb the Hill/ So often, much against his will/ For feet that hunger travel rich/ However, tardy throb and itch/ For heavenward travel soon or late/ For life's tall hilltop cannot wait/ And will not, until it has wed/ Its hoary silence within tread./ Rock after rock, stone after stone/ Climbing with zest we made our own/ Until each footfall seemed to strike/ Such music as the hilltops like/ Music as seems to press and crush/ The myriad grapes of hilltop hush/ Flowed to an essence brimming up/ Each being's flame rimmed empty cup./ As we ascended higher and higher/ Our consciousness grew to a fire/ Purging the dross of lesser living/ Cremating little self and giving/ Every cell and every pore/ Rapture of the evermore/ The ecstasy of life divine/ Which doth intoxicate like wine/ Which brimming like intensest flame/ Burns up all number, form and name/ Drawing the Spirit unto the heights/ Where darkness blushes into lights/ And colored senses grow intenser/ And body changes to a censor/ Swinging through the firmament/ Until eternity is spent /And fleeting hours no more enmesh/ The restless dim insensate flesh/ Dissolved to Spirit, until we/ Grow portions of eternity. —

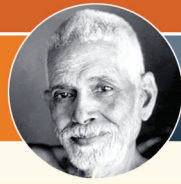
[Harindranath Chattopadhyay passed away in June 1990 at the age of 92.]

Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai: Desika Padigam §10

விருத்தமாம் இரண்டு வினைகளின் பயனாய்
விளைந்திடும் கொடுமை சால் பிறவி
வருத்தமே மருவா வாழ்விடை அமர்ந்து
மனமகிழ் அடைந்தினி திருப்பப்
பொருத்தமா ஞானப் பூவையை எனக்குப்
புதுமணம் புணர்த்திடின் வாழ்வேன்
திருத்தமாம் பொழில் சூழ் திருவணா மலை வாழ்
தேசிக ரமண மா தேவே.

Rid of this existence cruel, fruit
Of two conflicting kinds of actions (sowed since ancient times),
I feign would live a new life filled with joy,
And such life is mine forever
If at this instant you wed me
To this fair, fresh bride, pure jnana,
Guru Ramana, Siva, dwelling
On lovely grove clad Aruna Hill. —





HERITAGE SITES

The Old Ashram Dispensary

Health services started in the Ashram in the late 1920s with Dr. M. R. Krishnamurthi Iyer. In 1933, the doctor took a posting at the Tiruvannamalai hospital and settled in a house in town, thus making it possible to visit the Ashram regularly. Known as the

‘town doctor’, Dr. Krishnamurthi became the first doctor of the Ashram Dispensary. Though working daily at the town hospital, Dr. Krishnamurthi came to have Bhagavan’s darshan each Sunday at 2 pm, leading devotees to call him “Sunday Doctor”. Whenever he would arrive, Bhagavan would say, “Oh, today is Sunday.”

In those days, medical procedures were conducted in makeshift facilities. But in the early 1940s, construction began on a proper Ashram dispensary and in 1942, the new dispensary, one of the Ashram’s earliest buildings, was inaugurated. This was where Bhagavan underwent various medical procedures beginning with a surgery in March 1949 by an eminent medical team from Chennai.

A young medical student sat by while the surgery was performed and witnessed the excision of tissue from Bhagavan’s left arm. The procedure took place, according to Bhagavan’s wishes, without the use of a general anaesthesia as is normally prescribed for such a large-scale surgery. The student watched with great attention for inevitable signs of the pain that would attend such a procedure without general anaesthesia. But after an initial ‘ouch’, the student was amazed to observe Bhagavan making casual jokes to lighten the tension for those who looked on in disbelief. The young student came out from the surgery remarking that in this dispensary sat ‘none other than God Himself’.

After Bhagavan’s Mahanirvana, the dispensary continued to serve devotees under Dr. Krishnamurthi’s guidance. In time, services were opened to the general public. A new dispensary in Korangu Thottam was inaugurated in 2010 to address growing medical needs among aging devotees, and for the local poor who could not afford transport to the government hospital in town. —





The Sri Ramanasramam Free Dispensary

The need for a larger dispensary was born of a growing community. Though in the planning for two decades, the project was delayed for want of a plot of land inside the ashram near the main road. The new dispensary with a ground floor of 2,000 square feet, front veranda, foyer with reception, nurse's desk, waiting room, two consultation rooms, pharmacy and spacious treatment hall with toilets attached was inaugurated on

16th April 2010. The first floor was used for treating emergency cases requiring IV injection or use of nebulizer. Adjoining the facility are quarters for resident physicians. The facility's supporting staff includes qualified nurses, pharmacists, lab technicians, a physio therapist, receptionists and support personnel.

The new dispensary offers free out-patient care for devotees, the local population and surrounding villages and treats about 120 patients per day. Recent improvements include a blood lab equipped with a cell counter for haematological analyses and a semi-auto analyser for biochemistry analyses, enabling renal function, liver function and glucose testing. A new physio lab equipped with a cervical and lumbar traction machine, interferential therapy, a shortwave diathermy, ultrasound and a muscle stimulator, enables treatment of paralysis, lower back pain, neck, shoulder and knee pain and cerebral palsy in children.

Expansion and upgrading became possible with a new scheme for providing medications. Till recently, pharmaceutical medicines given to patients free of cost were purchased from local pharmacies at standard retail prices. But now, under the auspices of a philanthropic drug company, many of the medications are packaged in the name of Sri Ramanasramam, reducing costs by 90%. The savings from this adroit new initiative allows for expanding and improving the facility's medical technology.

Important operational changes have also taken place. For example, digitalisation allows staff physicians to access digitally stored treatment histories for fuller clinical pictures and thus better evaluate continuing patients. This cloud-based network allows the various stations within the dispensary compound to coordinate patient information. For example, a patient's basic biodata

Announcement:

Nochur Sri Venkataraman's January 2020 Discourses

In consideration of Bhagavan's 140th Jayanti falling late this year (11th January) and being followed very closely by the Pongal celebrations, Sri Nochur's *Aksharamanamalai* discourses in English have been moved up to 20th-26th January 2020.





logged in at the reception desk is supplemented by vital sign data, i.e. blood pressure and pulse rate, at the nurse's station. The entire digital file is available to the treating physician, who may want additional testing such as blood work and will in such cases send the patient upstairs for a blood test. Lab results are then logged into the digital patient file. If medication is required, prescriptions are logged into the file and the patient goes to the pharmacy to collect prescribed medications. All transactions are digitally retained for future reference.

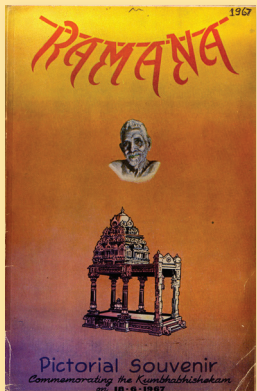
Another important operational change has been the introduction of patient education. Outpatients are briefed by staff as they await their consultations. Instructions centre on the local community's current health challenges, some of which are seasonal. Patients are given basic tips about hygiene, the importance of clean drinking

water, negotiating heat stroke during the hot season and methods for reducing the occurrence of mosquito-born infectious diseases during the rainy season, for example.

The Ashram Dispensary is situated in the Korangu Thottam near the Ashram's back gate and is open Monday thru Saturday from 8.30-11.30 am and 12.30 pm-3.30 pm. It is staffed by two employed physicians, Dr. Lakshmi and Dr. Vijay Kumar, and additional volunteer physicians including a paediatrician.

Every third Sunday of the month, an Ayurveda/Siddha camp offers free consultations and treatment by respected ayurvedic and siddha physicians. Monthly orthopaedic camps and monthly diabetic camps are ongoing as is a once-in-three months asthma/allergy camp. During the winter months, an acupuncturist is on-duty M-W-F for free treatments. —

Announcement: Archival Souvenirs Available for Free Downloading



Over the decades, numerous souvenirs have been released to commemorate special occasions e.g. Jayanti, Advent and Maha Kumbhabhishekam. Though containing valuable articles, photographs and testimonies of general interest to devotees, such collections have disappeared from public notice owing to limited editions. The Ashram would like to make such material available and is thus uploading pdfs and audio recordings onto the Ashram website (in the sources and audio sections). The 1965 *Jayanti Souvenir*, 1967 *Ramana Pictorial Souvenir*, 1969 *Ramana Jyoti Souvenir*, 1974 *Venkatoo 60 Souvenir* and 1996 *Advent Centenary Souvenir (Tamil)* are now available for free downloading at: www.sriramanamaharshi.org

