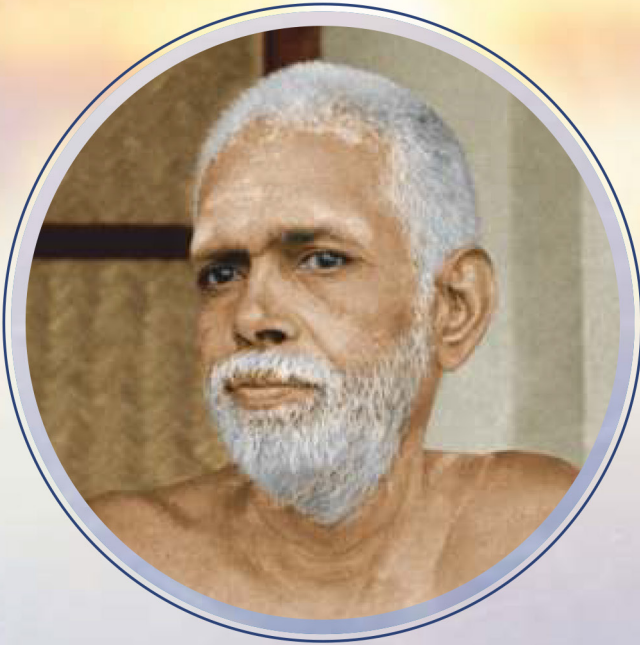


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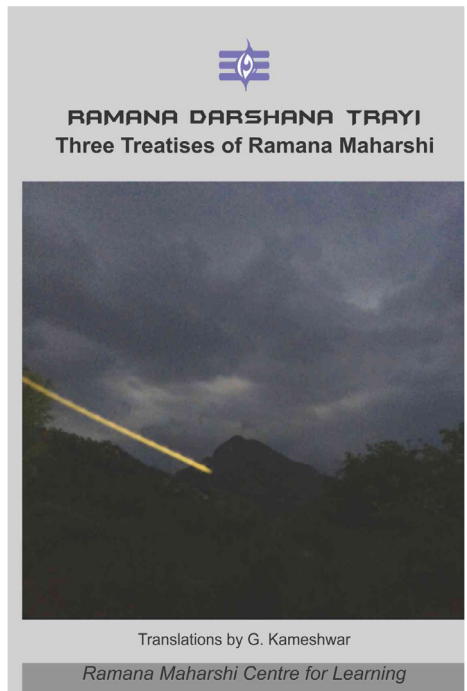
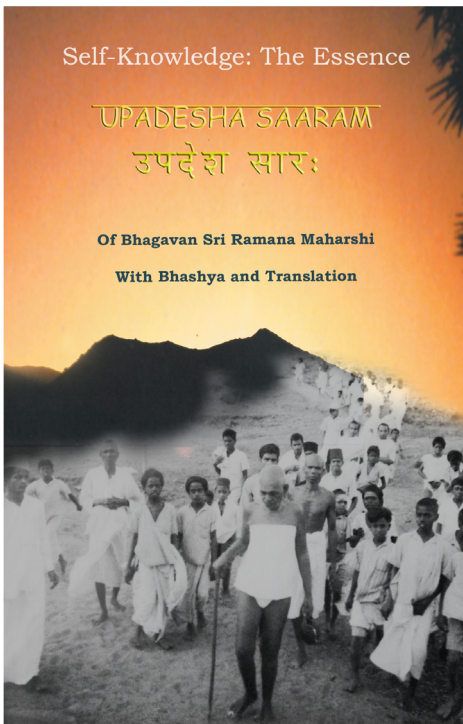
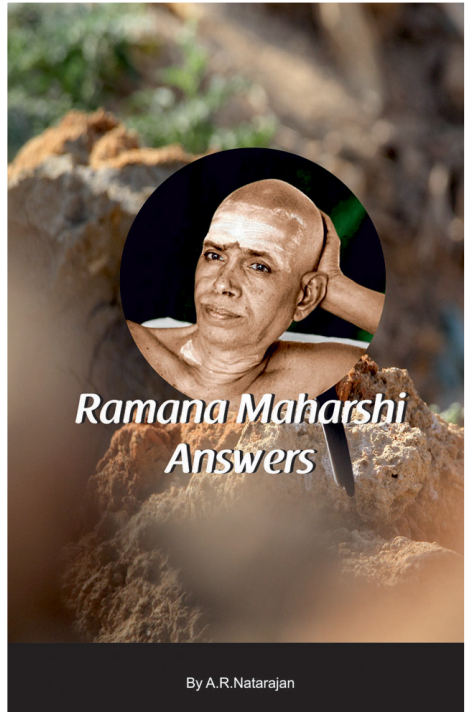
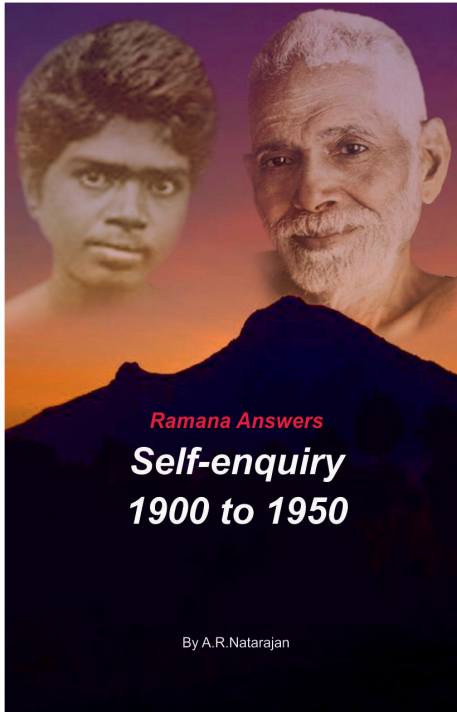


The Ramana way



A Monthly Journal published by
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Bengaluru

NEW Publications



THE RAMANA WAY

A Monthly Journal since 1981

*Celebrating
Ramana Rasa
Anubhava*



Editor: Dr. Sarada

Associate Editor: G. Kameshwar

Assistant Editor: Dileep Simha

*Brotherhood based on equality is the supreme
goal to be attained by human society*

- Ramana Gita X, 10

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Editorial*Dr. Sarada*

How easily we believe that it is easy to surrender! Or else we may claim that surrender is easier than self-enquiry. On the other hand some of us may think that self-enquiry is superior to surrender as a path to Self-awareness and Self-abidance. Can this be so? In truth Ramana's life is the emphatic proclamation for all times that there is no demarcation between devotion and knowledge, between bhakti and jnana. This is a clear indication that self-enquiry and surrender must go hand in hand to bring fruition to our journey to the Self if we may permit ourselves to call it a movement towards a goal. It is very important for us to understand the true import of surrender and the paramount significance of self-enquiry as the 'twin blades' to scissor the illusory identity.

Muruganar Swami, every pore of whose body called out the sweetness of Ramana's name, laid great emphasis on the diligent practise of self-enquiry. Sri V.Ganesan has recounted an instance when he was grappling with the import of self-enquiry. The great inner battle, 'the war of Grace' as Ramana calls it in his Arunchala Aksharamanamalai, is not easy to sustain. We could call it surrender and will have to face the question 'Who can remain to claim surrender?' at least at the end. We could call it self-enquiry and be ready to surrender every thought to the 'I'-thought and finally the 'I' to the Self with the question 'Who am I?'.

No matter what the apparent path we take, the battle must be fought. Unable to bear the heat of this war one day Ganesan, as he was chanting Ramana's 'Atma Vidya Kirtanam' suddenly saw a ray of light. Towards the very end of the composition Ramana declares, 'Arulum Venum' – 'Grace too is needed, Love is added, Bliss wells up'. With a great sense of relief Sri Ganesan rushed to Muruganar Swami's room and shared with him the thought that had arisen in his mind. 'Swami no matter how hard we struggle, unless there is Grace our sadhana will not find its fruition, is it not? Bhagavan himself has stated this in his Atma Vidya Kirtanam'.

Ganesan says that he least expected Swami's response. Muruganar became angry and red in face and said, 'Inda escapism ellaam vendam. Nee panrada pannu.' 'Don't use escapism in your practise. You need to put in your maximum effort'. In this manner Muruganar brought his attention to the fact that Grace is ever present and the best practise is surrendered effort which is bound to be continuous as there would be no expectation of result, not even a sense of struggle in the practise.

If indeed we are surrendered then why would we hesitate to put in any effort in our lives? Would we not then be fully aware that all effort happens only by Grace? Would we then complain that anything is difficult? Would we seek to make choices? If we make no choices, would we discriminate between an easy path and a difficult path?

A devotee once shared in our satsang the understanding of Ramana's statement that Grace is in the beginning, in the middle and the end. He asked, 'As Grace is always there what is it that could be preventing us from steadily abiding in the Self?' He then clarified, 'It is only lack of effort on our part to recognise the Grace.' Ramana's lines in his song are to bring our attention to the fact that what we call effort is also nothing but grace.

It is the experience of those who practise self-enquiry that with every step of the way true love begins to blossom in their hearts, love for the Supreme and love for all the manifestations of the Supreme as well. Nonetheless, one may set out on the path of self-enquiry even with no faith in the Supreme. But is there no requirement at all for faith on this path? True, self-enquiry makes practically no demands. However, there are the twin requirements, one, to have faith in one's own existence and second, to have a deep doubt about the truth of what one has assumed oneself to be, a doubt deep enough to make us adhere to the questioning till it is completely burnt in the fire of knowledge.

The object of one's faith in surrender is of course different. One cannot surrender without faith in the Supreme. Faith springing from great love is a pre-requisite. Further, the giving up of all

questioning is also a pre-condition. Who is to question anything that the Supreme bestows? And why would we question anything when we are so much in love with the Supreme? If self-enquiry is nothing but questioning then surrender is absolutely no questions asked. This equally means that no thought will arise for me as an independent entity.

Thought, as we know it, is desire. Thought for us is a need to hold on to something in our mind. It may be a need for action or simply a need to dwell upon something good or bad, something that I see as mine, belonging to me, my experience, my knowledge. Thought is the manifestation of identity, the primary support of identity. Without other thoughts the 'I'-thought cannot survive. Really speaking thoughts have no function to perform other than to support and sustain identity. Recognising this, in self-enquiry every thought is quelled with the question 'Who am I?'

If during the practise of self-enquiry every thought is seen to be a veil behind which the illusory sense of 'I' is hiding, a veil that needs to be cut away, in surrender each thought is seen to be the rise of doership and ownership. In the practise of surrender, therefore, every thought is quelled with the counter thought 'Who am I to think about this when Bhagavan has already decided and is taking care?' or 'Am I in charge? Then how can I assume a right to think?' Hence in surrender every moment is lived with absolute acceptance. The Will of the Supreme becomes one's own will because of pure love and not by any conscious effort to make it so. If the Sadguru advocates the practise of self-enquiry, then the practise would be undertaken with love, with no thought of whether is right or wrong, difficult or easy. If at all I exist, then 'Your Will is my command'.

Ramana allows us, though, to have one wish, the wish to be filled with more and more love for the Supreme. He says to Arunachala in his Necklet of Nine Gems, 'The day you governed me as Annamalai, you captured me body and mind. Can I have any complaint? Are you not my 'everything', my 'bad' and my 'good', my 'sorrows' and my 'joys'? Hence I do not think of any of these. Do as you please. But I have one wish that you must fulfil. Give me

ever swelling love for your feet.' Thus he has defined surrender for us beyond any doubt. It is asking for nothing other than for devotion to the Supreme.

In case his spelling it out in this and other poems of his is not enough to make clear to us what surrender is, Ramana lived every moment of his life surrendered to Arunachala. His journey to Arunachala in the month of August, reaching there on the 1st of September, is a thrilling story of love that many poets may well write epics about in years to come. Having reported to Arunachala 'Father, I have come', nothing further was said. Nothing needed to be said, everything was implied in those simple words. 'You asked me to come, here I am, now do as you please with me', was the implication of those words.

Thereafter, as per the command of Arunachala Ramana shaved his head and threw away all his belongings into the Ayyankulam tank, to wear thereafter only a loin cloth, never again to touch money, to accept and eat whatever was given whenever it was given, to stay wherever Arunachala permitted him to say. Food may be many days old gruel stored in a rusted tin can, it may be a feast provided forcefully at Eshanya Math, it may be the loving offerings of Keerai Patti, Mudaliar Patti, Echammal and others, it may be thoughtfully cooked by Mother Azhagamma or it may be that prepared by the 'kitchen disciples', it was all Arunachala's prasadam. Clothing may be a single loin cloth that had to be carefully and secretly re-stitched using a thread from the same cloth and a cactus thorn as a needle. Shelter may be the underground Patala Lingam Shrine infested with vermin and poisonous creatures, the shade of mango trees shedding cold dew, the Virupaksha Cave - the hot heart of Arunachala, the carefully built cottage-like Skandasramam Cave or the Old Hall at Sri Ramanasramam with a couch as seat and bed for practically twenty four hours of a day. It was all Arunachala's gracious gift, Arunachala's prasadam.

Would we protest that the standards set by Ramana are too high for ordinary mortals to follow? Is that not why he is hailed as 'Bhagavan'? To many of us he is the very embodiment of the

Supreme, in fact Arunachala Himself. How can our surrender ever be equal to His? If saying thus we push away the prospect of surrender and saying it is abstruse or abstract we set aside self-enquiry as well, would we not in fact be denying the very purpose of Ramana's life? For whose sake did he retain the body for 54 years after his enlightenment? For whose sake did he retain the body with hardly any food, no proper shelter and just a single loin cloth to wear? Only to do his Father's work, Arunachala's work. What is that work? It is to establish each and every being steadily, unwaveringly, in its true nature.

So we have the lives of the devotees declaring to us in equal measure the glory of surrender. We have the lives of Mother, Muni, Muruganar, Viswanatha Swami, Kunju Swami, Cohen, Chadwick, Osborne, Munagala, Subbaramayya, Sundaresa Iyer, Mastan, Ramanatha Brahmachari, Suri Nagamma, Echammal, Mudaliar Patti, Kanakamma... To mention these names is to err because it may give the impression that these are different from hundreds, no, thousands of others each of whose lives spreads far and wide the fragrance of Self-abidance and the infinite wonder of surrender. And by mentioning these names one has failed to list Ramana's animal disciples, Lakshmi the Cow, Jackie the dog, Valli the deer, Madhava the white peacock, Nondi the monkey king, the 'blessed' crow, many other unnamed beings, trees, reptiles, insects, and the numberless squirrels, all of whom were initiated by his voice, his look and his caressing touch.

Speaking of squirrels takes one's mind to a narration by Sri V.S.Ramanan, the third president of Sri Ramanasramam, who recently withdrew from his body in full surrender to the Master. He would narrate with a glow on his face, 'It is amazing how squirrels would run all over Bhagavan as if he was a tree and his arms were branches. And he would sit unmoving as they ran on his body.' This amazement at beholding the Supreme, this wonderment, is this not the beauty of surrender? And this wonderment grows into faith, a faith that is all encompassing and envelops the devotee in the fullness of surrender.

The lives of these devotees reveals to us that surrender is 'a many splendored thing'. It is as varied as there are people on earth, it is soft and vibrant, it is submissive and dynamic, it is expressed and silent, it is powerful and peaceful. If in Sri V.S.Ramanan we see the quiet flow of a river nearing the sea, in the earlier president, his father Sri T.N.Venkataraman, we see the rapids cutting through mountainous terrain.

A warrior king, as it were, wearing the armour of Ramana who 'surrounded him for sixty feet', almost single handed 'TNV' fought battles to make 'Bhagavan's Will' a reality and to hold for the Asram every bit of what 'belonged to the Asram and to Bhagavan'. His surrender rendered him fearless. Taking over the reins at the end of the war to begin the reign of peace, Sri Ramanan's surrender was quiet and sweet like his persona. He simply allowed the Master's power to percolate through his being and flow into everything that he did to expand and consolidate the Asram in various spheres and welcome all into its folds.

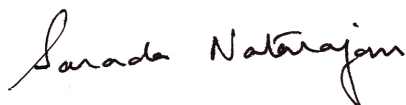
Describing the grandeur of a life of serving Ramana, Sri A.R.Natarajan points out that if we are not surrendered to the Supreme, we are in any case surrendered to innumerable people and forces on earth, serving a hundred masters. He calls this abject slavery. On the other hand, if one becomes a slave to the Master who is steadily abiding in the Self and hence is the Lord of the Universe, his grace would steadily immerse us in a boundless sea of bliss.

However, he wonders 'What kind of service can one render to one who needs nothing and is in fact showering us with infinite bounties?' And he goes on to answer his own question, "If only we serve his devotees, how pleased would Ramana be! In this regard Ramana's own life serves as a standing example. What motherly solicitude he would show in insisting on their having breakfast, lunch or dinner at the Ashram? Nearly always a new visitor's leaf would be laid close to Ramana's. Looking for opportunities to serve the growing world-wide Ramana family seems to be the obvious thing to do. Borrowing his own expression one has to be the 'devotee of his devotees'."

And this was the life breath of Sri V.S.Ramanan, to be a devotee to every devotee and to serve every devotee with devotion and love. Muruganar Swami uses in his poem 'Tirucchazhal' the format of a traditional riddle game. In that the friends of a maiden place a statement before her describing her lover which she must refute. Thus in Muruganar's poem, to refute false allegations or negative statements about her hero Ramana would be easy enough for the heroine. But how is she to refute a favourable statement about Ramana? Her friends say, 'Venkata, Ramana, is unparalleled in his penance, his glory'. How does the girl answer, what 'fault' does she find in Ramana? 'O my friends, what to say of this, unparalleled though his glory is, alas, he knows not his own glory.'

To one who was so surrendered that he was unaware of the glory of his own surrender, to Sri V.S.Ramanan, we dedicate this August 2020 issue of 'The Ramana Way'. I trust he will enjoy it.

It is said that even after a sandalwood tree falls to the ground, if it be burnt, its fragrance would spread for miles and envelop the whole forest. Thus, even upon dropping the body, Sri V.S.Ramanan, Sundaram Anna to the devotees, has spread the fragrance of surrender and evokes love in the hearts of all the devotees. I am grateful to the Master, Ramana Sadguru, for blessing us with numerous gems in this issue, the articles by Ramanacharanatirtha Sri Nochur Venkataraman, Sri K.V.Subrahmonyan from Sri Ramanasramam, Master Nome from Society for Abidance in Truth USA, Sri G.Kameshwar our Associate Editor, Dr.P.Natarajan from the Ramana Satsang Coimbatore, Sri N.Nandakumar the Director of our South Bangalore Centre and by Dr.Aruna Ramkumar, Smt. Mangalam Kalyanam, Smt. Saraswathi Ranganathan and others. Each contains many valuable insights and sharings that will draw us into the Self. We also carry again two of Sri Ramana's articles from a series that he had contributed to 'The Ramana Way'. It is indeed great Grace.



ENJOYING SERVITUDE*A. R. Natarajan*

We carry here an article by Sri A.R.Natarajan that is an apt homage to Sri V.S.Ramanan. Sri A.R.Natarajan was like an elder brother or a father figure. On his chair Sri Ramanan was to ARN the chosen representative of Bhagavan Ramana. ARN had complete faith in the Will of Bhagavan in which the progeny of Niranjananda Swami have been entrusted with the responsibility of Sri Ramanasramam's administration. ARN stood by the earlier president Sri T.N.Venkataraman through thick and thin because of this faith. And from the moment Sri V.S.Ramanan took over as president he would accept in totality every decision of his. Yet this did not prevent him from discussing the pros and cons of that decision before accepting it as he would do with TNV and with Professor K.Swaminathan or any of the senior devotees with whom he interacted. Outside of his office as president of the Asram, Sri Ramanan was the beloved Sundaram to ARN and Sundaram too had the deepest respect for ARN. The picture below beautifully captures their respective emotions.



Soon after ARN was absorbed in Bhagavan, Sundaram Anna shared the following anecdote with me. He said with tears in his eyes, 'Saradamma, out of my concern for Natarajan Mama's health which I felt was deteriorating and my love for him which made me feel he was working himself too hard I once told him a year or so ago 'Mama you have already written more than 60 books and covered all the important areas of Bhagavan's life and teachings. Why don't you stop writing now?' He got very angry with me. He told me, 'Sundaram, I will write till my last breath'. That was what he said emphatically.' At this point Sundaram Anna's expression changed to one of reverence, 'Saradamma, that is what Mama has done. Till a few minutes before he had his stroke he was at his table writing. What can I say of his passionate love for Bhagavan's service?' Below is another picture taken during the release by Sri Ramanan at Sri Ramanasramam of a book by ARN on the occasion of Bhagavan's Advent Centenary Celebrations. Here we see the three stalwarts together (ARN, TNV and VSR), each an amazing servant of Bhagavan Ramana enjoying servitude thoroughly.

- Editor



The very word servile is obnoxious. To lose one's dignity, to be reduced to mere doormats, is unthinkable. To serve human masters is bad enough. To obey the orders of their puerile and

capricious mind is anathema. But we often do so. Why? We are forced of course. Because fear of the consequences of disobeying them looms large. You cannot disobey your boss without fear of losing your increment, promotion or even your job if worse comes to the worst. So you obey and carry your resentments, secreted in the inner recesses of your mind adding to the load of hurts you have been harbouring.

Often our subordination in the hierarchical set up may be covered up, may be camouflaged, in so called meetings, discussions and so on. For one is always aware as to who wears the pants, who decides. One is also aware that one's own reservations about the wisdom of the decisions is of no consequence. Most people are cogs in the vast machine of industry, business and profession, servile not by choice, not voluntarily, but because that is the general set up in which one has to 'get along' in life. You slog away night and day for a few crumbs in the form of salary, perquisites and bonuses.

This makes one wonder if there can be a servitude, which is to be opted for, which is most welcome. There is one such. One might be surprised at this assertion. For, servitude and joy are seen to be opposites, poles apart. Where is one's much cherished love of freedom which is being trampled mercilessly, albeit with a velvet hoof? Yet there it is. This enjoyable servitude: It is the servitude to Bhagavan Ramana. Oh, for the joy of it. What nectarine bliss it is.

[A week before his passing ARN was heard calling out loudly in the Puja room at home 'My Master! I want to serve you!']

If one regards himself as Ramana's servant, still there is the ego-based relationship; Ramana the master and me the servant. That is how one might begin, casting himself in that role. If the self-made casting is to be perfect one should stand in attendance, looking out for an opportunity to satisfy every wish, let alone orders of Ramana. Should he not? But as soon as such an attempt is made one is straightaway faced with the problem of dealing with a master who has no wishes, no desires, and one who is ever content. Ramana's cup of happiness is full. His mind

is dead. He is Bhagavan, the very embodiment of plenitude. So we are at a loose end, in a fix to find a way to serve him.

There is another difficulty too with this master Ramana. He goes on giving, bestowing his bounties in endless succession, including the priceless treasure of an inner life. Instead of our pleasing him with our service he seems bent on pleasing us, on making us happy, showering gifts asked and unasked.

Now what is one to do? What is the way to serve him? It is only to attempt to glorify him even though really speaking he is beyond all glorification. This takes one back to the first Ramana Jayanti, the maiden celebration of Ramana's birthday. A group of devotees decided it was time that they expressed their feelings for Ramana, their love and devotion! So they decided to go ahead, in the quiet, least Ramana should negate any body-related celebrations. Ramana did protest but allowed himself to be overruled when the devotees with one voice said, "We want to have the joy of singing and dancing taking your name. Your birthday is just an excuse. Why do you protest? Why deny us this happiness?"

All modes of enjoyment given to man could be channelized, to talk about his sweet, exemplary life of wondrous detachment, to set to music and sing his compositions and the outpourings of Muni, Muruganar, Sadhu Om and others on him. To make it possible to visualize his enchantment through dance. To be joined in this service in common brotherhood with devotees, with seekers of truth, to broadcast his grace in all the eight comers of the world, would be an integral part of this mosaic of worship and servitude to Ramana. As Muruganar sang, 'His feet outspread he placed for worship and, for those who worship, grace'.

It is said that willing and unquestioning acceptance of the results of our action, of the realities of life is an article of faith if one has surrendered, if one is wedded to implicit obedience to the guru. This of course is a must. But it does not go far enough. "Thy will be done" we say. That of course is the law. It seems necessary that one has to take the self effacement even further and recognize that one is an absolute zero. The intelligence to

act, the sustaining strength and not only the results are Sadguru's gifts. Constant remembrance that he is the number one that adds value to the zeros which follow is needed.

If only we serve his devotees, how pleased would Ramana be! In this regard Ramana's own life serves as a standing example. What motherly solicitude he would show in insisting on their having breakfast, lunch or dinner at the Ashram? Nearly always a new visitor's leaf would be laid close to Ramana's. Looking for opportunities to serve the growing world-wide Ramana family seems to be the obvious thing to do. Borrowing his own expression one has to be the "devotee of his devotees."

But if a servant of Ramana stops with this would it be service at its best? Would it be enough if one washed his feet with tears of love? Is it enough if one feels his presence in one to his core? Seems enough. Does it not? But it is not enough. For Ramana himself has given the ultimate test. It is to become food unto him, which is to lose the servant-ego, to lose all identifications with the body, and with the mind. When this happens, these limitations cease, there is only the limitless ocean of consciousness, of intelligence, which the master is. Does this happen by chance or through steadfast, vigilant self-enquiry? When will it happen? One does not know. We know that it is only his grace, indescribable grace, which makes possible this culmination of the servitude to Ramana that one has opted for, by steadily immersing one in boundless bliss.

The Ray plunged into the Ramana Surya

Ramanacharanatirtha Sri Nochur Venkataraman

Who is Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi? Bhagavan himself answers this in one of his poems. He says Bhagavan is the Self, the Atman, in the heart of all creatures, not only human beings and creatures in the world, but in the heart of devas also, right from Vishnu, Siva and Brahma. A jnani is not a higher being but he is Brahman Itself. A knower of Brahman is the Brahman Itself says the Sruthi. And about Bhagavan we need not even say this. We know that whoever has lived with him has felt it to be so. From his childhood, from when he was a boy of 9, T.K.Sundaresa Iyer lived with Bhagavan, right from the Virupaksha days. He says they all used to run to Bhagavan as young boys and they never felt there is a human being sitting there or a sadhu seated there. They used to feel he was a deva who had descended on earth, a transcendent being.

From many of the recollections of Sundaresa Iyer we learn that Bhagavan used to sit for hours and hours without any movement. His body would shine like burnished gold. That seed of being with Bhagavan which was planted in the young boy Sundaresa grew to be a huge tree of Bhakti. He was called the shadow of Maharshi. He lived all his life with Bhagavan. This is not an insignificant happening. It happens because of innumerable lives of tapas.

And we know Kunju Swami to be one of those we call the 'old devotees' of Bhagavan, those who had lived with Bhagavan. Kunju Swami came to him while Bhagavan was in Skandashram. Swami lived upto his 90's. Kunju Swami says each and every tree and speck of dust in Ashram is blessed and they are all carrying the presence of Bhagavan's cells in them.

Once Kanakammal told me when I was speaking on Bhagavatam at the Ashram, she told me if you could speak to or communicate with each tree or plant and to the rocks in the Ashram each will tell you a Bhagavatam. All of them will have to

story to tell you, all of them have registered Bhagavan's immense presence in their heart.

So, this is Bhagavan's glory. And whoever has had even a glimpse of Bhagavan is really blessed. And what to speak of those who were born in his presence and who have lived upto 15 years or 17 years in his presence? Knowingly or unknowingly they have absorbed Bhagavan into their being and Sundaram Anna was such a blessed soul. Although he has left his body now, where could he go? He is like a ray who came out of Bhagavan, like kala and that ray has plunged into the splendour of the sun that is Ramana Surya.

My recollection of Sundaram Anna is right from my boyhood days. I used to run to Ashram with somebody or sometimes alone and when I was 19-20 Sundaram Anna had taken over as the President. Whenever he used to see me, he used to pinch my cheeks and tell Susheela Manni, "Kuzhandai vandaachu" – 'our child has come'. His loving presence was pure emotion, always touching. Many have felt it to be like that.

His Bhakti to Bhagavan was of the highest type. After becoming the President of the Ashram, I have seen him many times coming to Bhagavan's presence as if coming for the first time and going round the Samadhi, looking at Bhagavan, watching Bhagavan for minutes together.

There is one incident that I have to narrate here today. One day I was going around the samadhi of Bhagavan and I saw Sundaram Anna standing there with his eyes filled with tears. Nobody else was there. I asked him what had happened. He took me holding me by the shoulders to the window through which we can see Bhagavan's photo in the Old Hall. He took me there and said, "See, I was peeping through this window. It was dark, I could not see Bhagavan's photo there. So, I was straining my eyes to focus on his picture. Then suddenly I heard the voice – 'Sundaram, why are you looking from outside, come inside'. It stirred me deeply." Saying this he could not speak anymore. His eyes were full of tears. He was moved, thrilled. I held him closely

and said, "You are all carrying Bhagavan in your heart, your being. Whether you consciously recollect him or not, each and every cell of your body is made of Bhagavan's memory."

So, this was the President that we had. He used to say that he did not know much about Bhagavan's teachings, but like a school student he used to always sit with Bhagavan's Noolthirattu and read it and write it in his beautiful handwriting sitting at his table. One day I went inside and asked him what he was doing like a school student. He said he was writing Noolthirattu.

Even in his last days, when he had so much difficulty in moving, he attended every talk, every Satsang of Aksharamanamalai which I was sharing there in the Ashram. He fondly used to touch my chest and say 'You are not speaking, Bhagavan is speaking. The voice is Bhagavan's.' That was like a stamp of Bhagavan on me. That was the greatest ashirvadam, the greatest blessing from Bhagavan.

Sundaram Anna's love, his devotion to Bhagavan, his discipline and his softness all of us have experienced in great measure. Both Sundaram Anna and Susheela Manni were like father and mother to the Ashram devotees, practically spending all their time in the Ashram. Manni is even now untouched by the great sorrow that she has faced in life. She is seen going around Bhagavan's samadhi, singing in the presence of Bhagavan always living in Bhagavan's bhava samadhi. That is a great blessing. I don't think that they achieved the blessing through conscious effort. It is all Bhagavan's grace.

And in this tradition, we have our new president Anand. We pray from our heart that the tradition continues unbroken and Bhagavan's devotees be blessed through the management of the Ashram by such devotees of Bhagavan. Once Kanakamma told me about the administration. She casually remarked that Sundaram Anna's sons Anand and Ravi have moved closely with so many devotees of Bhagavan. So, we have no fear about the management of the next generation also. That is the greatest relief and we have to take it as Bhagavan's voice. We are all blessed to have the company of such great souls.



This is just an offering in the memory of Sundaram Anna, the sweet memory of Sundaram Anna. He has merged with the effulgence of Ramana.

Namo Ramanaya.

Ajata Shatru - V. Sundara Ramanan

K.V.Subrahmonyan, Sri Ramanasramam



Sundaram or Sundaram Anna as V. Sundara Ramanan was affectionately addressed, the late third President of Sri Ramanasramam (the first two being Swami Niranjanananda and T.N. Venkataraman - later Swami Ramanananda Saraswati), was peacefully Absorbed in Arunachala Ramana at about 9.40 a.m. on Tuesday the 21st of July 2020 at Tiruvannamalai. He was incontrovertibly one of those who can be called ajAtaśatrus. Who is an ajAtaśatru? He is one who has not a single enemy; literally, one whose enemy is not yet born.

Sundaramji was indeed loved wholeheartedly by everyone who knew him. Christopher, editor of The Mountain Path, who is always terse in his expression, emailed me from Kodaikanal saying "(Sundaram) He was a good man." Can anyone ask for a better epitaph? Is there anything better than goodness? Is that not why Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh chose as his main motto for his disciples the words 'Be good', J. Krishnamurti stated the aim of his schools to be to help their students to flower into good human beings and Bhagavan Ramana said 'Be yourself'? For, our own true nature is absolute goodness. Said the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius, 'When a child is born, it is completely good.'

Everybody, including habitual carpers, called Sundaramji good because natural goodness was his most striking, unmistakably true trait. He knew that all human beings, he too was fallible and let Bhagavan, the infallible, perfect One, to run the Ashram and chose to just be his instrument. To him, Bhagavan was not just a granduncle whom he knew and whose affection he received in his boyhood but a Guru who is saakshaat Parabrahma. Nothing short of ekabhakti (undivided devotion) to him would do for Sundaramji. Still waters run deep. Sundaramji's bhakti rarely took a verbal form. It was seen in every moment of his life. He never ever belittled other Masters but, like Swami Niranjanananda, Mastan Saheb, Muruganar Swami and others, he knew only Bhagavan. Taking off from Madhusudana Saraswati, the great Advaitic devotee of Krishna, Sundaramji could have said 'Ramanaat param kimapi tattvam na jaane' (I don't know any Truth beyond Ramana).

When I was at Uttarkashi during 1996-2005, Sundaramji once wrote to me in anguish that an article had recently appeared in The Mountain Path laughing at people who had ekabhakti for Ramana, who wanted Only Ramana. That was the title of that piece of writing. I wrote back saying that I had read that article and I too wanted Only Ramana because only Ramana was teaching me to see only Ramana in everything. However, ekabhakti is not so easy. Bhagavan himself said total surrender is not easy. I may say, echoing the words of David Frawley, Bhagavan is the ultimate Guru but I am yet far from the ideal of ekabhakti. Sundaramji was much closer to it. While Bhagavan was in the words of Swami Chidananda Saraswati, disciple of Swami Sivananda, the supreme symbol of the Advaitic state and paragon of Aparokshanubhuti (direct experience), he also exemplified total surrender.

One may not have śatrus (enemies) but there will be mitras (friends) who take the freedom to criticize. How well did Saint Kabir sing: Nindaka mitra hamara (the critic is our friend). He adds, if you find one, don't let him go, find a place for him in your home. Sundaramji had his share of critics because it is inevitable when you hold the very responsible position of heading an internationally well-known Ashram. He had to say 'No' when necessary and he did so graciously with his winning smile.



One cannot be all things to all people especially in an Ashram where the aim of the mumukshu (those desirous of spiritual liberation) devotees is not to acquire any worldly gain but to be free from ego which Bhagavan described as a phantom, thief, impostor, etc. Bhagavan did not even touch any money, nor did he let the Ashram ask for money but he brought into being a colossal empire of Grace. He said that the Guru does not see what a devotee does but sees whether he is free from the sense of doership. The devotees help one another by refraining from mutual ego massaging. Sundaram who had a sattvic temperament was not well endowed with ego. Who can be totally free from that phantom and the inert body like Bhagavan? But we have to keep trying in all earnestness. Sundaramji was unostentatious in devotion which was very deep. He was ever conscious that Bhagavan was total impersonality and tried to be as impersonal as possible.

Sundaram moved with devotees as one of them, never ever as one with authority, not even as *primus inter pares* (first among equals). Like his siblings and children, he had a fine intellect. He had an engineering degree and retired as a high official in the Government with a clean record of service. One might have thought that he was a tad obstinate, loth to reverse a decision

once taken but it was his prerogative and often he was found to have been right which was more because he had surrendered to Bhagavan subjecting his judgment to Bhagavan's Will.

To my knowledge of Sundaramji spanning more than three decades, he was completely bereft of braggadocio. He was unflamboyant, non-aggressive, non-assertive but politely firm, never swerving from his principles. He never cared for praise by Bhagavan's Grace. Once when I pointed out a minor foible of his, he graciously said that he would correct himself. It is a trait rarely found even among spiritual aspirants.

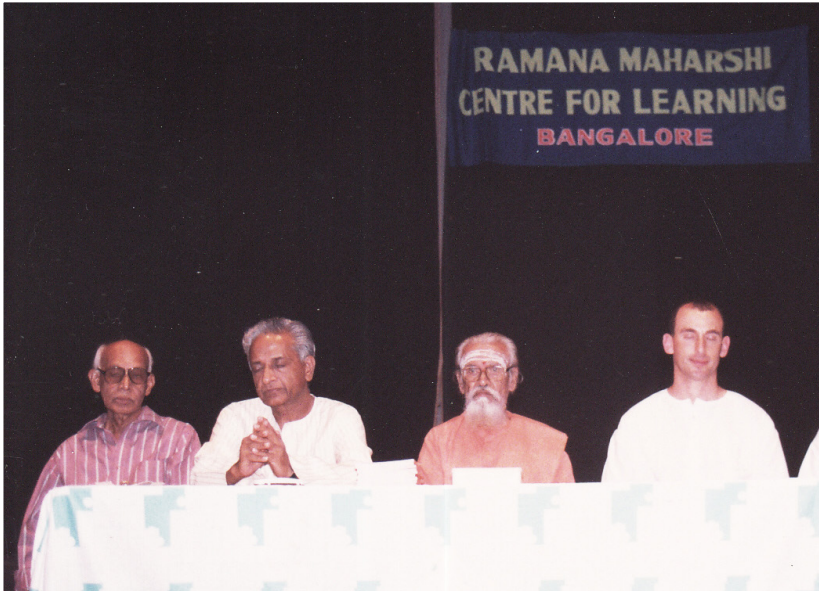
Sri D.N. Anand, who retired as Deputy Auditor General of India some 25 years ago, has messaged that 'Sundaramji was very great in all respects. Nobility exuded from every part of his body. His ever-radiant smile was a source of strength to all of us.' Yes, smile was the man if one can say à la the French saying 'Le style c'est l'homme même' (Style is the man himself.)

Bhagavan's Ashram is the freest place I know and Sundaramji saw to it that it remained so. If his father whom he succeeded as President, often said 'Bhagavan is always 60 feet around me,' Sundaram seemed to say 'Only Bhagavan is there.' Both of them followed to the hilt Bhagavan's upadeśa to his devotees not to aspire for guruhood for people would expect much and one would have to playact. I have never seen Sundaramji or his brother Maniji or their father talking about jñana or bhakti to others. They are all fine karmayogis. Bhagavan told Annamalai Swami while building the samadhi for Valli the deer, karma is not different from jñana.

Sundaramji was very lucky in his life-partner Sushilaji, a paragon of courage, surrender to Bhagavan, devotion to her husband and affection for all devotees, in his siblings and children. His son Dr Anand, who has succeeded him as Ashram President has, with his razor-sharp intellect, humility and total devotion to Bhagavan and grasp of his teachings, what it takes to be a worthy successor to Sundaramji. May Bhagavan richly Grace him and guide his steps.

Absorbed in Sri Bhagavan

Master Nome



Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

That which is about to be expressed here at the request of Dr. Sarada shines clearly as self-evident to devotees of Sri Bhagavan. One such devotee, very much revered, whose selfless service to Sri Bhagavan as the president of Sri Ramanasramam is well known, is Sundaram Anna.

Endowed with a warm smile that radiated his peaceful humility, his deathless devotion ensured his absorption in Sri Bhagavan. Such was Sundaram Anna, dear to all.

Now, his bodily form is no more, yet he remains absorbed. Absorption is in the infinite and the eternal, the indivisible and the changeless. Such is Sri Bhagavan, the one Self of all.

In absorption, grace and Self-knowledge are not separate or distinct. Absorption is the undifferentiated state. If one is of

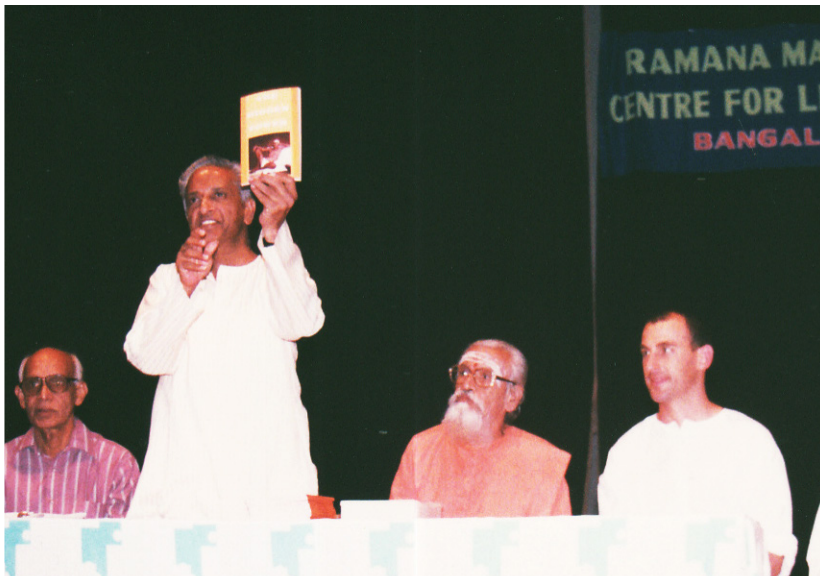
another nature, how could absorption ever be complete? If one is of the same nature, separation is nonexistent, and undifferentiated Being is the truth of absorption. That is immortal. Abandonment of the idea of embodiment and the relinquishment of the supposition of individuality yield the realization that the absorption is the only state that actually is. Sundaram is absorbed in Sri Bhagavan.

Before the birth of the body, absorption is. During the lifetime, absorption is. After the death of the body, absorption is. He is absorbed in the one in whom he absorbs himself. Sundaram is absorbed in Sri Bhagavan.

In time, memories will fade and anecdotes will be forgotten, but, transcendent of all, the Self of the one who is devoted to Sri Bhagavan never perishes. Sundaram is absorbed in Sri Bhagavan. Absorption in Sri Bhagavan fulfils all hopes and yearnings, allays all fears and sorrows, destroys all ignorance and illusion, yields lasting peace and perfectly full bliss, and reveals Reality, the One without a second. Sundaram is absorbed in Sri Bhagavan.

Who is absorbed in whom? Sundaram is absorbed in Sri Bhagavan.

Om Sri Ramanarpanamastu



On Surrender in Surrender Talks as Guidance to Self-enquiry

N.Nandakumar

Meditating on this 'Talk 208' from 'Talk with Sri Ramana Maharshi' is an apt dedication to Sri V.S.Ramanan, our previous President of Sri Ramanasramam, and what he exemplified in his life.

Talk 208.

It is enough that one surrenders oneself. Surrender is to give oneself up to the original cause of one's being. Do not delude yourself by imagining such source to be some God outside you. One's source is within yourself. Give yourself up to it.

Implications:

Surrender is a complete sadhana. It brings about Self Realisation. Surrender does not mean a defeat by the world or by another individual, it is the offering of both success and failure and the ego to the original cause of one's being. The source is not outside but within. When one surrenders the 'mine' completely, one finds one's own 'I' too is absorbed by the Self within.

I would like to share here the meditation by Sundaram Anna through a Talk given in New York on September 8th 'Advent at Arunachala'. This is a wonderful and concise exposition of the meaning and practise of surrender.

Sundaram Anna says:

“The whole life of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is a commentary on saranagati (surrender). When he left Madurai for good, he took just the train fare to Tiruvannamalai, threw away the packets of sweets given to him by Muthukrishna Bhagavathar's wife and was not anxious for the morrow. He tore off from his dhoti only a strip for a kaupina (loin cloth) and he did not even think of using the remaining cloth as a towel. This is total surrender.”

"It is interesting to note that Sri Krishna says, "Do not grieve." After surrendering yourself totally to God, you should not even worry about your own shortcomings or flaws. For if you think you have to improve yourself after surrender, then it indicates a residual ego in you. Hence, don't grieve about your flaws after surrender. It only shows your surrender is incomplete. Bhagavan says after getting into a train, nobody carries the luggage on his head. He keeps it on the luggage-rack. Likewise, after surrendering, do not continue to carry your mental luggage. Leave it totally to His care."

"After surrender you should not have: 1) worries, 2) fear, 3) doubt, 4) sorrow, 5) the inclination to test whether surrender is effective or not and 6) aberrations (conflicts)."

"The devotee who has surrendered is like a lump of clay in the hands of the potter. The lump never says, "Make me a pot! Make me a cup, etc." It leaves it to the potter to mould it into whatever shape he wants it to become."

Extraordinary insights from an extraordinary exemplar in humility.

Namo Ramana



The Lineage Beautiful

G Kameshwar

I would like to pay my homage to Sundaram Anna by recalling an excerpt from my series on Mother Azhagamma in the Ramana Way. It is the section where I have narrated how Sundaram Anna was named by Bhagavan. But before that I would like to pay my personal homage to him.

Remembering Sundaram Anna

To me, Sri VS Ramanan was Sundaram Anna. That's how I was initiated in my knowledge of him – Sundaram, the eldest brother. We were all Bhagavan's family, and Sundaram Anna, our elder brother. He was the son of the President of Sri Ramanasramam, and became, later, the President himself. And therefore, he was worthy of all reverence.

I knew him as a quiet dynamo, shy of the camera. Externally he seemed like a rock of Arunachala. But one could sense the furnace of Bhagavan burning inside him. He was a man of few words, the words being – 'Bhagavan Sri Ramana'.

He was focused on Arunachala Ramana, 24 X 7. In his early years as the President, he would go on Giripradakshinam every single day – in the wee hours of the morning. This was truly awe inspiring. In the evenings, every single day, we could see him sitting in the Parayanam, chanting the sacred works of Bhagavan. During lunch time, we would see him serving 'ghee' personally, to one and all in the dining hall. As the President, he was the first among devotees, himself. To my mind, he personified the service that Bhagavan speaks of the Aksharamanamalai verse:

*anbOTun nAmanKE Lanparta manparuk-
kanpanA yiTavaru LaruNAchalA*

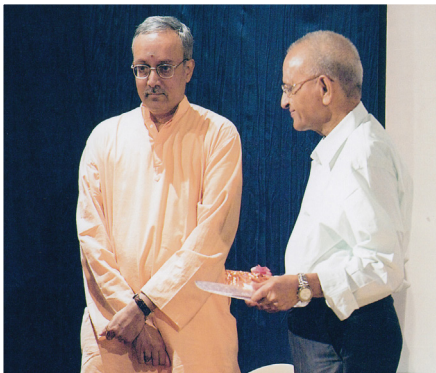
*To be a lover, me allow, of the lovers of those who love,
To hear your holy name, Arunachala!*

On a personal front, each time I visited the Asram, I was sure to be welcomed by his beautiful smile. On a few occasions, he shared some news and memories. For instance, he mentioned to me about the miraculous way in which the reconstruction of the guest houses in Morvi compound was initiated by Bhagavan. The way he narrated it was so pure, so full of childlike joy. It was the sharing of a marvel, of someone to whom it was so clear that it was Bhagavan who was running the whole show.

Another time, he mentioned his childhood memory of Bhagavan. How, once, as a young boy, he had stayed overnight in the Asram. Early next morning, he went to see Bhagavan, who was in the kitchen, preparing some chutney. Seeing young Sundaram, Bhagavan gave him some chutney to taste. When Sundaram extended his hand for one more helping, Bhagavan smilingly ticked him off saying – ‘why are you asking a second time?’

He mentioned how, when he heard ‘Upadesha Saram’ being chanted in the old hall, he would drop everything and run there, to be present in the presence of Bhagavan and prostrate to Him, when they chanted ‘*na karmana*’....

He also would tell me of his memory of my grandfather’s visits to the Asram. My grandfather, Sri K Vaidyanathan, was a school teacher and scout master from Vellore, devotee of Bhagavan, who let go no opportunity to come for Bhagavan’s darshan.



Sundaram Anna encouraged my interest in Ramana literature no end, and gifted me with a complete set of Ramanasramam books, English and Tamil. I was happily surprised when he told me he had read my first book of Ramana, the translation of Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swaroopananda Saraswati’s Hindi commentary on Sat

Darshanam. He kept this book, and my later books, in his personal bookshelf in his room in the Asram. This was a matter of silent happiness for me.

When my father-in-law, Sri AR Natarajan, Founder-President of RMCL, passed away in 2008, Sundaram Anna came with me personally for the immersion of Sri ARN's ashes. Sundaram Anna came with me personally for the immersion. His sitting down on the steps of the waterbody, hands folded in prayer to Bhagavan is a memory that is etched in my mind. And then later, in 2016, when Smt Sulochana Natarajan was in her last days, Sundaram Anna and Sushila Manni drove down from Tiruvannamalai to Bangalore to visit her. And after she passed away, he again came with me for the immersion of the ashes.



What can I say about the affection that he, along with Sushila Manni, have always showered on my family. They came for *griha-pravesham* of our new home in Chennai in 1995. And when we made a home in Tiruvannamalai in 2019, he and Manni blessed us again with their visit on the *griha-pravesham* day, and gifted us a dress sanctified by Bhagavan's samadhi.

With what words is one to express one's gratitude to Bhagavan and his votaries? My reverential prostrations to Anna, in Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

And here I conclude with the excerpt from my article on Mother Azhagamma ...

Mother Azhagamma – A study (Part 12)

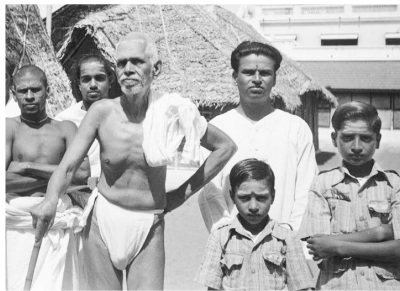
It is indeed interesting to see the way Bhagavan interacted with his biological family members. He was as natural as one might expect any person interacting with his family! He cared for his mother as only a sage can, delivering her from the bondage of birth-death endless transmigration. His younger brother Nagasundaram took refuge in his holy presence, renounced worldly life, and dedicated his whole life to serving him. Nagasundaram's son was cared for by Bhagavan's sister Alamelu. Indeed, in terms of nurturing the lineage of this first-family of Sri Ramana, Alamelu indeed took on the mantle of Azhagamma. Having brought up Venkitoo and conducting his marriage with her mother's niece Nagu, she continued to care for Venkitoo and his family.

After his wedding in 1929, Venkitoo took up a job in 1931 in Kunrakkudi. And the same year, Picchu Iyer, his foster father, suffered heavy losses in business. They had to wind up their interests in Kunrakkudi and they moved to Kaaanaadukaathan, in Chettinad. Venkitoo took up a job with Chettinad bank there, while Picchu Iyer took up a job in the estate of Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar.

Venkitoo's first child, a son, was born on 29th of May, 1934, in Kizha Pashalai, the village of Mother Azagammal.

Alamelu and Venkitoo brought the newborn child to Ramanasramam to take Bhagavan Ramana's blessings. The baby was brought to the Old Hall and given into the hands to Bhagavan. When Alamelu asked Bhagavan as to what name should be given to the child, Bhagavan looked up and his eyes fell upon Sri

Sundara Arya, a humble Ashram inmate, who happened to walk in at that moment. Seeing him, Bhagavan said “Here! See, how our Sundara Arya is coming here, as if telling us to keep his name for this child!” And so, the child was named as Sundara Ramanan, a combination of the name ‘Sundara’ and Bhagavan’s own name. It is to be noted that the name ‘Sundara Arya’ is the same as ‘Sundaram Iyer’, which was the name of Bhagavan’s father. Incidentally, the child was born just a week or so before Mahapuja of Mother Azhagamma. Considering that a baby is named on the eleventh day after birth, it is possible that the baby was brought to Ramanasramam during Mahapuja festival.



The second child, also a son, was born on September 19th , 1936. When he was brought to Ramanasramam, Bhagavan said – “To choose a name for this child is very easy. For he has been born with a name!” The reasons for this remark was that the child was born on Ganesh Chaturthi. He was named Ganesan.

In 1938 February, Venkitoo shifted along with his family (his wife, two children, and his foster parents Alamelu and Picchu lyer) from Chettinad to Tiruvannamalai.

His third child, also a son, was born on February 9th, 1939.

When the baby was brought to Bhagavan, he smiled and said “There is no difficulty in naming this child! Is he not, after all, the younger brother of Ganesha?” The child was named Subrahmanian, who is called as Mani by one and all....



For Us to Rejoice

Shyam Sunder

It is for us to rejoice. One should be happy that Sri Sundara Ramanan is merged in Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.



"Let your will be my pleasure. Oh Arunachala!
As soon as you did claim me, my body and soul became yours.
What else can I desire?"

-The Necklet of Nine Gems. Verse 7.

"Nothing whatever is born or dies anywhere at anytime. It is
Brahman alone appearing illusorily in the form of the world."

Nothing can be separate from the Self.

It is "I" which separates itself.

All is good when "I" begins to connect itself with the Self which is
universal truth.

My favourite verse

*V.S.Ramanan, President, Sri Ramanasramam**

27th, June, 2008,
Sri Ramanasramam.

Dear Sarada,

Yesterday, during the Tamil Paryanam, your request to send you my ‘favourite verse’ from Bhagavan sprang up within me, pointing out the following verse which always attracted me:

Uditta viDattil oDungi yiruttal
adu kanmam baktiyum undIpaRa
adu yOga jnAnamum undIpaRa

hrutsthalE manaha swasthatAkriyA
bhaktiyOgabodhAScha niSchitam

Absorption in the Heart of Being
Whence we sprang,
Is the path of action, of devotion,
Of union and knowledge.

This single verse, if only we care to live by every word of it, will surely take our outgoing mind inward, where its source is. As Sri Bhagavan says in Ramana Gita, in the source the whole story comes to an end.

Affectionately
Sundaram

*[From July 2008 issue of ‘The Ramana Way’]

*24th, July, 2008,
Sri Ramanasramam.

Dear Sarada,

As I was pondering on some of my favourite verses of Bhagavan the 104th verse of Bhagavan's "Arunachala Akshara Mana Malai" came to my mind and reminded me of my love for it.

anbODu un nAmamkEL anbartam anbarukku
anban AyiDa aruL aruNachaLa

Let me be a loving servant
Of the devotees of those devotees
Who hear your Name with love,
O Arunachala!

You may ask me why this verse is so special to me. Of course, because it speaks of the glory of Bhagavan's Name. His Name is so magnificent and powerful that even the servant of those devoted to His devotees gets the benefit of its liberating energy.

The second more intimate reason for this verse being one of my favourites is that Bhagavan has given me the role of being a servant to all his devotees. How can I not wonder at his boundless grace, which has assigned this role to me? I therefore constantly meditate upon this verse of his.

Affectionately
Sundaram



*[From August 2008 issue of 'The Ramana Way']

Play in the World, O hero

Dr.Aruna Ramkumar

Dr. Aruna Ramkumar is the daughter of Sri V.S.Ramanan.



Ulladu Narpudu Anubandham

26. Having investigated the various states of being, and seizing firmly by the mind that state of Supreme Reality, play your part, O hero, ever in the world. You have known The Truth which is at the heart of all kinds of appearances. Without ever turning away from that Reality, play in the world, O hero, as if in love with it.

27. Seeming to have enthusiasm and delight, seeming to have delight and aversion, seeming to exercise initiative and perseverance, and yet without attachment, play, O hero, in the world. Released from all bonds of attachment and with equanimity of mind, acting outwardly in all situations in accordance with the part you have assumed, play as you please, O hero, in the world.

Those were appa's favorite verses on how to live in the world as if in love with it. Asai pol vilaiadu veera...

What can one say about a father who taught me everything worthwhile in this life. He taught me how to fall asleep listening to a sound of a ceiling fan, how to apply “vanishing cream” on my face by applying tiny dots and blending it, for if you apply too much you would look white like a ghost, besides being wasteful. He taught me to love books, great coffee, and Bharatiyar’s visionary songs/poems. Most of all, he taught by example, that if I did not love Bhagavan and serve his devotees, none of these worldly things mattered.

As I continued to reminisce on the day of his passing, I heard messages from devotees and relatives that pretty much said the same things I would miss about appa. One said that he sent to her home the original version of Count of Monte Cristo when he heard she was reading the abridged version. A child asked his mother to write that he would miss the smile of “chocolate thatha”. Appa kept a stock of all kinds of chocolates in his office desk drawer and in his shirt pocket ready for the next child he might encounter anywhere in the Ashram, even during live Parayanam. He remembered that thatha would give him 2 teaspoons of ghee in the dining room while it was customary to serve 1 teaspoon per person.

Another devotee wrote that he would always say “you have come for Sadhana, let that be your goal in Ashram. Ashram is there to take care of you”. Another sister devotee who considered appa to be her own father said that she can never forget these words of his, “the best thing that has happened to us is we are all at Ramanasram”.

Many devotees may know or have heard about appa’s deteriorating health over the past 3-4 years. He developed gradually worsening gait and walking, slowing of speech, and quietness. This was happening to a man who could complete Giripradakshina in 2 and 3/4 hours and work a regular day, who climbed up and down steps skipping a couple at a time, whose handwriting was praised by Bhagavan and who was trilingual (Tamizh, English, and German). I would have expected him to get impatient, angry, and frustrated from my experience as a physician. However, appa exuded an accepting calmness, never ever complained, and as we say in America, “took it all like a man”. He was so easy to care for. Communication became more meaningful and effective.

Until COVID struck and the Ashram closed down, he was in the Ashram in the morning and evening, until Parayanam was over. His attendant Sukumaram knew where he would stop to offer his prayers en route to the shrine (Golakshmi, Nirvana Hall, New Hall), and would be ready to hold him if need be.

As for the love he had for Sri Ramanasramam and Sri Bhagavan, what words can I use? He was always quick to point out how, once Sri Bhagavan picked up every grain of rice that had spilt accidentally between the kitchen and storeroom, stating he was answerable to Arunachala. I am sure you all have similar experiences to share. Such is the life of a Surrendered Sadhak — everything, even the smallest details of one's life is meticulously watched over by the caring eyes of the Satguru and his Grace.

Appa's last moments were peaceful with Anand, amma, Mani chitappa, Sarasa athai, and a few devotees including Sukumaram by his side. Anand held him close chanting "Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya" and he merged peacefully with Arunachala Ramana. "During his cremation Aksharamanamalai was chanted across the world", writes Darlene from Nova Scotia. What more can we ask for from the Satguru?

Eulogy for Thatha

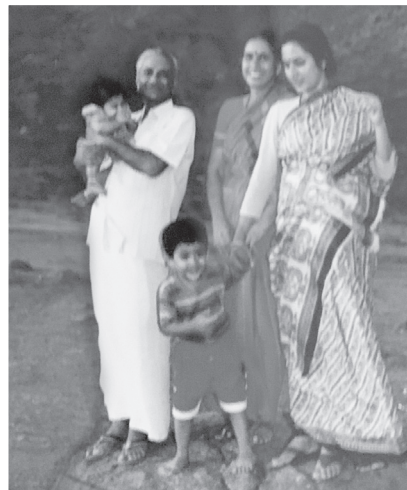
Siddharth Ramkumar

Siddharth Ramkumar is the grandson of Sri V.S. Ramanan, son of his daughter Dr. Aruna Ramkumar and Dr. S. Ramkumar.

Ever since I was a small child, I can recall Thatha's lovable greetings, especially "Tit Tat Tu" and "my GS 1". He never wavered from his love and affection and every time I would see him (even into my 20s), he would give me continuous kisses and affection like I was the most important person in his life. These were the hallmarks of a truly selfless and loving human being.

Furthermore, I had the privilege of spending many occasions in the Ashram with him. In every one of my experiences spent with him, Thatha greeted every guest regardless of background with the same smile, warmth, and presence as his own family. Even in his final years in 2019 where I traveled with Thatha to Pune and back to Tiruvannamalai, I could feel the love in Thatha's eyes and smile, both of which transcended his diminishing health.

Thatha's presence will be clearly missed by all those who have had the fortune to be in his presence. Yet, the reassurance is that there is no doubt that he is resting in Bhagavan.

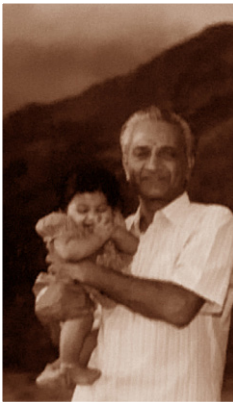


Aroma of Love

Swaroop Ramkumar

Swaroop Ramkumar is the granddaughter of Sri V.S. Ramanan.

There are many things that bring me comfort when I think of my thatha. There were a handful of stories from my childhood that he would regale me with repeatedly, like how if he didn't have my milk ready and heated at the perfect temperature at 3 AM when I awoke as a baby, I would immediately start to cry. He would touch my cheeks to show me where the huge tears would flood down my face, laughing lovingly at the memory.



Perhaps the most comforting demonstration of his love was how he made me coffee every afternoon, whenever I visited India. There was something so soothing about waking up to his smiling face, pouring a mixture of coffee, milk, and sugar from one cup into another repeatedly, until the end product was a warm, delicious, frothy cup of coffee.

Every time I sip a cup of coffee I think of him, and it brings me comfort to think about someone I got to share my life with – someone who was unwavering in his demonstration of love, often in the form of a beverage heated to the perfect temperature.



The First Servant of Devotees

Mangalam Kalyanam

Smt. Mangalam Kalyanam is the third younger sister of Sri V.S. Ramanan.

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

My elder brother Sundaram anna was the oldest of us 7 siblings.



Growing up I would hear stories about his birth from my father Sri T.N. Venkataraman (later to become Swami Ramanananda, after taking up Sanyas). As a new born baby he would turn blue whenever he cried, so his worried caregivers took great efforts to keep him comfortable. By Bhagavan's Grace, the child soon out grew this and went on to become stronger.

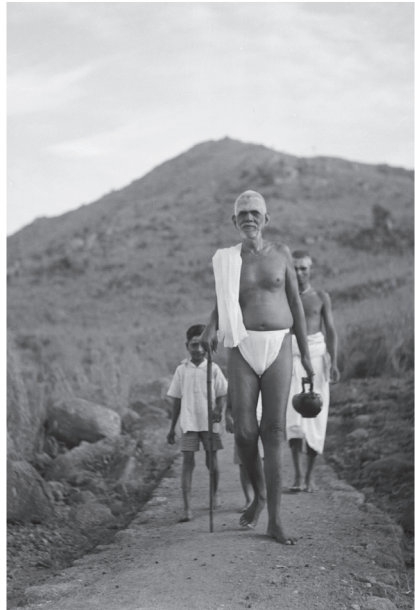
We brothers and sisters had a truly blessed childhood growing up in Tiruvannamalai. The ashram was a natural extension of our home and we grew up basking in the love of Bhagavan devotees. As a boy, sometimes Sundaram anna would spend the night at the Ashram. On such occasions the Sarvadhikari, Sri

Niranjanananda Swami would make sure that anna would sleep next to him and that we was well taken care of. What a blessing! I see this as Bhagavan's way of preparing him for the future role of care taker of the Ashram and His devotees.

Sundaram anna's love of books and reading is well known. One thing my sisters and I fondly remember is how anna encouraged us to read more during our school years. Every time he would come home from college during vacations he would ask each of us what new book we had read. My mental image of him is always with a book or two in his hands.

Sundaram anna embodied honesty, was absolutely straight forward in his ways, and treated everyone equally. In 2006 when my poorvashrama father, Swami Ramanananda was unwell, I spent a few months in Tiruvannamalai looking after him. As per rules usually only ashram guests and people working in the ashram are served meals in the dining hall. One day as I was entering the dining hall for a meal, Sundaram anna greeted me at the steps leading to the hall and said, you may eat here Mangalam only because you are taking care of the former President of Sri Ramanasramam. That was my Sundaram anna: he steadfastly believed that the rules of the ashram applied equally to everyone.

He never thought of himself as the President of the ashram but always insisted that he was the first servant of Bhagavan's devotees. As many readers may recollect, anna would serve ghee to devotees during meal times at the ashram. Whenever I saw him doing this, it would seem to me that this was his way of fueling the 'Gnyana-agni' in each of us. Under anna's leadership the ashram has flourished as a beacon for Gnana marga and his legacy will continue to guide generations to come.



Sundaram Anna's Sarasa Thangam

Saraswathi Ranganathan

(as narrated to Dr.Sarada)

Smt.Saraswathi Ranganathan, known in family circles as Sarasa and Sarasa Akka is the youngest sister of Sri V.S.Ramanan. After the retirement of her husband from service, she and Sri S.Ranganathan settled down at Tiruvannamalai at Ramana Nagar. She spoke to Dr.Sarada from her residence there.

"When Sundaram Anna was in his early twenties and studying in Engineering College at Chennai, then Madras, I was only a child of five. There is a gap of fifteen years between us. He would always call me his 'ponnu', his daughter. He would say I am his first daughter. Even when he introduced me to people at the Asram he would do saying 'My daughter'."



"He used to call me 'Sarasa thangam' 'My golden Sarasa, my darling Sarasa', very endearingly, *chellamaa*. He would tell me 'Whenever I returned from college you would be at the gate. You were cute and chubby. You would come directly to me and say 'Enna konjam tookkikkoyen, please lift me up and hold me'. He would share this with everyone, I was such a 'pet' for Sundaram Anna to use the Tamil way of saying it. I too am very fond of him.



He had a pleasing personality. Look how charming he looks in the photograph that I have just sent to you."

And I add, 'Yes Sarasa Akka, Anna was very charming indeed. I will send you a picture of his during the Kumbhabhishekam of Bhagavan's temple during the birth Centenary Celebrations. In that picture Ranganathan Athimber and my father are also there.'

Sarasa Akka continues, "He was the eldest of our family. We are seven siblings. He was the first, the eldest. I miss him. When I made the *pindam* (the ball of rice) as part of the last rites and placed it in Anand's hands I was overcome by sorrow." Saying this Sarasa Akka's voice chokes.



"But we know that spiritually this is not the truth." She controls her emotion and says, "My mother, Nagalakshmi, Nagu Mami to you, had told us clearly that we must grasp only Bhagavan's feet and nothing else. But at the same time we must play all our roles in life holding on to viveka, to discrimination. I feel this may be important for everyone but more so for ladies, for householder women like me. Further, my mother said that normally most of the good people in the world also hold on to God. What is the difference between their lives and our lives, we who have come to Bhagavan? They would give themselves 80% to their worldly pursuits and 20% to God. Not only should we have the attitude of viveka towards all that we do, we must give 80% of our time to Bhagavan and only 20% to activities of the world. This is what she taught us."

"That has become so ingrained in me that I do feel light at heart even now. There is the natural movement of the senses outward. We see beautiful things, we taste a well prepared dish, we enjoy beautiful music. It is there, this natural movement of the mind. But when we hold Bhagavan tight, everything falls into place, nothing else matters. Yet can we say that we hold on to Him? We can only sing '*Ramana deva devarkke enna kaimaaru taane*' What recompense can we offer to the Lord of Gods, Ramana?"

She smiles and continues, "Sundaram Anna was so loving." She says this word with great emphasis 'lovvvv' she says, 'Evvalavu priyam'. "Whenever a book was released he would give me a copy. He would write on it '*Ramana Bhagavan Perarulai vEnDi, Sundaram*' 'Praying for the abundant Grace of Bhagavan Ramana (to fill you), Sundaram.' He wouldn't write 'Ramanan' as he did when it was a formal signature. He would write 'Sundaram' for me."

“He would often share with me his interactions with Sri T.K.Sundaresa Iyer. Sundaresa Iyer had totally surrendered to Bhagavan after having seen Him even from Bhagavan’s early days on the Hill. Sundaresa Iyer was working as a school teacher at the boys’ school in Tiruvannamalai and was a teacher to all my brothers. So he used to be referred to by them as ‘vadyar’ or ‘teacher’. Because he was their teacher he had a great impact on their lives. Children always have great faith in their teachers and huge love for them as well. What he received from Sundaresa Iyer was therefore of great importance to Sundaram Anna.”

“What did Sundaresa Iyer teach Sundaram Anna? He told him “Hold on to only one mantra ‘Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya’ for japa. Hold on to only one Veda, the ‘Ramana Nooltirrattu’ (‘The Collected Works of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi). Hold on to only one God, ‘Bhagavan Sri Ramana’.” And this Sundaram Anna would repeat to me very often. This became an upadesa from Sundaram Anna to me. So in my life also there is no mantra other than the Ramana Mantra, no God other than Bhagavan. *Parpadellaam Ramana paadam*, everything that we behold is the Feet of Ramana.”

“Sundaram Anna was in that state of devotion to Bhagavan to the exclusion of all else. I think this made his heart overflow with love. It is difficult to find a loving soul like him. It was not that he was loving towards me alone. I believe that in the last few years of his life he beheld everyone as his children. Each and every person who interacted with him was seen by him as his own child. Of course, towards children he had a special love. He would carry chocolates to give to them. “

“Yes, he loved everyone, he loved children and he loved the Asram parayanam, the evening chanting of Bhagavan’s works. He never, never missed it and never turned his attention away from it even for a moment. Even if the District Collector were to come, *collectore varattume*, he would not get up from the parayanam and go to greet him. He would finish the parayanam and then go and meet any dignitary who had come to the Asram at that time. If by chance I did not attend the parayanam on any day he would notice and he would ask me why I did not come for the parayanam. If I said that I had got late he would enquire as to why it was so.”

“One evening after parayanam as we were going round Bhagavan’s Shrine together in pradakshina Sundaram Anna stopped near the window through which we can see the Old Hall. He told me, ‘A few days ago at this place Bhagavan Himself asked me why I don’t come into the Old Hall. Somehow, until then I never thought of going to the Old Hall. I would come to the office, come here to Bhagavan’s Shrine, attend the puja and parayanam, do pradakshina, but never thought of going to the Old Hall. From then I am going to the Old Hall and spending some time every day.’ I was touched that Anna shared this with me.”

“Somebody has sent us a picture of Sundaram Anna as a child. The former President of India Dr.Rajendra Prasad seated next to Bhagavan in that picture. And the former President of Sri Ramanasramam, our Sundaram Anna is seated at Bhagavan’s feet.”



The devotee, sending us a cropped version of this picture, has said that Anna has now merged into Bhagavan’s feet where he sat all his life. How true this is.”



The Handwritten Gift

Aparna Kannan

Smt.Aparna Kannan is the daughter of Smt.Saraswathi and Sri S.Ranganathan, youngest sister and brother-in-law of Sri V.S.Ramanan and is seen in this picture being carried by her mother.



Sundara Mama was a very affectionate person and was always attracted to children. His loving words and soft demeanour can never be forgotten.

He was very particular about children studying well and scoring high marks in their examinations. A strict disciplinarian with regularity in reading Bhagavan's works, he was very healthy too.

Duty bound, he used to complete Giri Pradakshinam within 2 and a quarter hours, not to be a minute late for serving breakfast at the Ashram.

He was a person with a flair for reading.



He had an impeccable handwriting and has gifted many of us with Bhagavan's compositions, hand written by him! He revered Bhagavan's works (Sri Ramanasrama Tamizh Parayana Thirattu) like the Holy Bible and would not travel anywhere without it.

Sundara Mama will always be remembered fondly by one and all.



Azhagu Sundaram – The Beautiful Being

Dr.P.Natarajan

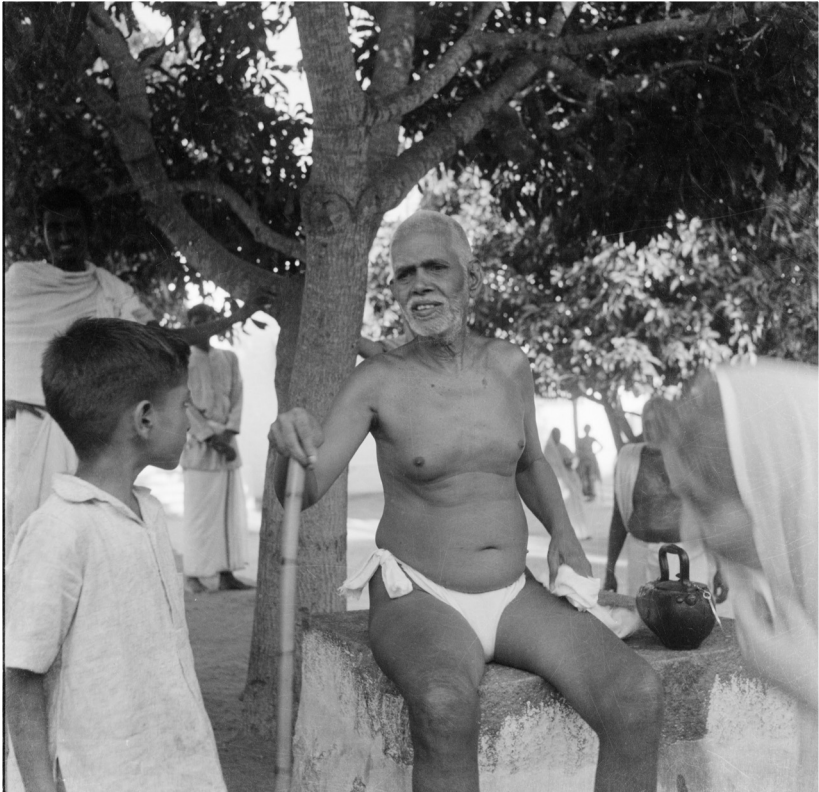
Dr.P.Natarajan heads the Ramana Satsang, Coimbatore. He has been closely associated with the renovation of the Palghat Ramana Asram and Sri V.S.Ramanan had personally entrusted the overseeing of that task to him.

Sri Sundaram Anna - thinking of him what spontaneously comes to our mind is 'Azhagu Sundaram'. For Bhagavan's devotees body doesn't matter much, it is Anma or the being that we are. The beauty of Sri Sundaram Anna's being could be felt by all and we can say he was a very beautiful soul, full of kindness, loving, lovable and loved. His love, affection, humility and compassion overflowed from him and enveloped all the visitors to the Asram.

He never exhibited himself as the President of Sri Ramanasramam. Rather, he was always the humble devotee of Bhagavan, serving Bhagavan's devotees with a loving heart and smile. Who can forget his loving greeting with folded hands at the entrance to the dining hall at each meal and the loving dollop of Ghee that he would personally serve the devotees... That was probably his only mission as I could see.



How can he be otherwise? Right from his birth, he was with Bhagavan and Bhagavan's grace on him (*Nayana Diksha*). He was growing in Bhagavan's *Arul Samrajiyam*, the kingdom of Grace. Is there anything beyond that? Such is his childhood, with abundant grace and blessings of Bhagavan. As psychologists say, it is the childhood which determines one's life. Sri Sundaram Anna was blessed to have a divine childhood and that reflected in his ersonality. What else is there to write about?



I'm totally humbled to write about the third President of Sri Ramanasramam, Sri Sundaram Anna. As I always tell my friends, the President of Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, is the President for the entire planet. Like Bhagavan's grace, which has no border, no limitations, Bhagavan's devotees are spread all over the world. Such is the leadership of the President of Sri Ramanasramam. Sri Sundaram Anna's silent leadership was magnanimous and ever

embracing of all the devotees. The Asram witnessed spectacular growth in all aspects like publications, infrastructure, modernisation, etc, during his tenure as the President.

I have seen him encouraging and inspiring youngsters towards Bhagavan's teachings. My daughter is one such example. He would support Ramana Satsang activities outside Tiruvannamalai as well. He travelled extensively not only in Tamil Nadu, but to other states and other countries to spread the life and teachings of Bhagavan.

His heart was full of gratitude. During our conversations, he would share the history of the Asram, the difficult times and how some ardent devotees like Sri A.R. Natarajan, Prof. Swaminathan and others have helped the Asram by their unwavering and staunch support in those troubled times. He used to express so much of gratitude to them and he mentioned that many may not know all these things. He personally expressed his gratitude to Professor Swaminathan by lovingly taking his granddaughter Nithya into his own family as his daughter-in-law. And his love for Sri A.R.Natarajan he showed amply not only by being a part of every personal event in their family but by being integral to every event at Ramana Maharshi Centre, Bangalore and blessing it in every way.



I'm one of the fortunate devotees along with my family, who's known him for more than three decades and had the rare privilege of interacting with him closely. The very word Bhagavan will ignite him. To him Bhagavan's devotees are always a priority. During his couple of visits to Coimbatore, Anna chose to stay with us in our home. To us it was Bhagavan himself gracing our home! I'm totally humbled and overwhelmed by his kind gesture.

During our visits to the Ashram, my granddaughter as a child would accompany us. Anna always had chocolates for her. Even today, she fondly refers to him as "Chocolate Thatha". His fondness for children was such a delight for us devotees to witness.

Sivam derives power from Sakti. Smt.Susheela Amma's devotion and support to Anna, no doubt played a significant role for his success in all endeavours.

A divine Amma, knows nothing except serving Bhagavan and Anna, inspiring and motivating Asram lady devotees in their *sadhana* with unassuming leadership. I have witnessed Amma's divine activities during the Navarathri festival, busy at all times, guiding and making the Navarathri in the Asram a spectacularly divine event.

Bhagavan once said at the time of his Maha Nirvana, "Where can I go? I am here." Our Sundaram Anna, where can he go? He is in the Asram guiding us and blessing us as always every step of the way.

Om Namo Bhagavathe Sri Ramanaya.



Bathed in the Glance of Grace

Dr. Sarada

Sundaram Anna would often tell me in his natural, affectionate manner that the very first time he saw me was when I was a toddler, probably less than three feet tall, wearing a small 'long skirt' and blouse – 'pavadai chattai'. He said that whenever he saw me thereafter it was only that 'kutti Sarada' he saw and related to. Such was his love. Indeed everyone remembers him as being most loving and affectionate. That is the first thought to rise in the mind when one refers to Sundaram Anna, the next is his warm smile and the third is his absolute simplicity and surrender to Bhagavan.

My own memory of Anna does not go back as far as his memory of me. As he was away at Baroda we did not see him very often in our early visits to the Asram. My first memory is of the time he visited us at Bangalore during Bhagavan's birth centenary year. Although he was very much a part of the Kumbhabhishekam that preceded it, he had missed the big event centred on the Centenary Day at the Asram. Only Susheela Manni had come for the three day event. And I recall how deeply moved he was that he could not make it. On the other hand, he had tears of joy and love in his eyes as he participated in the activities of the Ramana Maharshi Centre. From then onwards he became an integral part of all our events. He would attend every major event at the Centre even before he took over as President of Sri Ramanasramam.



And after he took over as president he came with Manni for the Centenary of Enlightenment celebrations, the inauguration of Ramana Maharshi Centre's new auditorium and practically for every annual National Seminar as well. He would place the bouquet in front of Bhagavan to inaugurate the Seminar and would then address the gathering. Invariably he would release the new books and cassettes that were published on the occasion.



Even as recently as a year back when Susheela Manni travelled to Chennai to bless our mega production on Bhagavan's life, the 'Gnana Kaandam – Arunachala Ramana', Manni said he expressed his desire to travel with her. She reported that he said, 'As Sarada is presenting this, I would like to come'. She went on to say that he gave it a thought and after a few minutes said, 'No. I cannot go now.' For the third part, the 'Yaattirai Kaandam' centred around Bhagavan's epic journey to Arunachala, Susheela Manni said she wouldn't come. The reason was, she said, 'Anna adores that part of Bhagavan's story. I don't want to witness the depiction of that leaving Anna behind here at Tiruvannamalai'.

I deem it a great privilege that we could play the first two parts of the production at Sri Ramanasramam and Sundaram Anna witnessed them and blessed us. I vividly remember his being helped up the steps in the new library Auditorium where we performed. Each step was difficult for him to take. But what surrender he did it with. Surrender, surrender, surrender was what Sundaram Anna embodied in every moment.

In recent years, whenever I arrived at the Asram, even if I caught his eye from a distance when he was seated in Bhagavan's Samadhi hall he would give me a smile filled with love. And whenever I went up to him he would take my hands in his hands with deep affection. No words were needed and none were spoken.

In earlier years very sweetly Sundaram Anna would sometimes call me 'Saradamma' and sometimes 'Saradamba' as Ganesan Anna had once christened me. There were some personal moments that Anna has shared with me and some deep spiritual insights as well. He had great love for his family, for his wife, whom we call Manni, and the children. He once told me, 'Before meeting Susheela and getting married to her I had first been taken to 'see' another 'girl' as the custom is called in Tamil. As you know Saradamba, in those days eligible bachelors were taken to meet their possible bride to be. A large retinue from the 'boy's' house would go to the 'girl's' place. The girl would be 'shown' to us for a few minutes when she came out and placed some eats before us and prostrated to the elders.'

'What can one discern about a girl in that time? But, I 'rejected' that first proposal and said I didn't want to marry that girl. I don't know why I did so. I am sure there was nothing wrong with her or dislikeable about her, but somehow at that moment I did not feel that I liked her. However, after saying 'no' I was filled with great remorse. I thought that my action had been very cruel and would have caused hurt and suffering to that young girl. Then and there I made up my mind that no matter who the next 'girl' was whom I was taken to see, no matter how she looked or how she behaved, I would say yes. I would agree to marry her.'

At this point of the narration Anna stopped and said with a naughty and affectionate smile looking at Manni who was somewhere across the room, 'The next girl I was shown was Susheela'. Through this incident Anna showed me how soft hearted he was, that he would melt easily at the thought of someone's sorrow and at the same time how surrendered he was as well. He had chosen for himself the path of total acceptance and Bhagavan brought him a gem of wife who would not only be deeply devoted to him but also absolutely surrendered to Bhagavan and the service of His devotees.

His own surrender to Bhagavan was deep and his faith unshakeable. He told me, 'Saradamma, you know, when I was in service I did not really have any clear concept about money'. And he smilingly added, 'I do not think even now I have any thought or

knowledge about money. In those days I did not have the faintest idea as to what it takes to run a household or to celebrate a major event in the family. I would simply give my entire salary to Susheela and she would run the household month on month and probably set aside the money required for our travel and other needs as well. On her part she never asked me for anything more than what I gave her. It was at the time when Anand was to get married when Susheela told me that we would need forty thousand rupees towards expenses for the wedding [this amount is my memory of what Anna told me – it may be something around that].’

‘I was flabbergasted. I had no savings and no source from which I could raise that kind of money. I left it to Bhagavan to show me the way. The very next day while I was at work I was asked to prepare to leave in the next couple of days on an overseas assignment. When I returned after the assignment I was paid a special remuneration of forty one thousand rupees and some change after deducting taxes. Can you believe this? Bhagavan gave me the exact amount that Susheela had needed from me for the event. I brought home the money and handed it over to Susheela for the marriage expenses. Right then I knew that Bhagavan takes complete care of all our needs.’

‘Because this faith was so strong in me I never ever wondered about expenses at the Asram. Even so, on one occasion when a need came up for some unforeseen expense a thought came to my mind, ‘Wherefrom are we going to find this money?’ It was not a very large sum of money, just that it had not been planned for and hence I wondered about it. That very night a donation came in for the exact sum of money needed. At that moment I felt as if Bhagavan was literally giving me a tight slap and asking me, ‘Are you providing for anything here?’ If at all my faith had been weak, Bhagavan made it absolutely unshakeable from then onwards.’

‘Even when the renovation of the whole Morvi Complex was proposed I did not put my mind to the financial implications of the project, which were large. On the very day the proposal had been made, before I could sign the documents to begin the project, a huge donation came in covering exactly what was needed for

the first phase of the project. This made it doubly clear to me that Bhagavan had blessed the project. What can we say about Bhagavan's power?'

This conviction was so natural that he never swerved from it even when he was giving advice to someone. It is said that when woken up from sleep one speaks only in one's mother tongue which comes naturally. Similarly even if he were to be woken up from sleep and a problem were to be presented to him I am certain Anna would say, 'Bhagavan will take care.' I know how genuinely concerned he was about my having to shoulder the administrative responsibilities at Ramana Maharshi Centre after the passing of my father Sri A.R.Natarajan, the founder president of the Centre. Sundaram Anna was aware that I was treading entirely new ground. At one point in those early years I wrote a personal letter to him saying 'Anna, I am not able to manage. I am unable to take care of the running of RMCL in a suitable manner. Please let Ramanasramam take over the Centre.' When I wrote this I did not consider the legal possibilities or the appropriateness of such a move. I was simply expressing my own acute sense of diffidence at that moment. In his prompt reply in his own beautiful hand Anna too did not make any reference to these aspects. His reply was most emphatic and a great spiritual lesson for me. 'Saradamma, neither am I running Sri Ramanasramam nor do you run Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning. Bhagavan alone runs both the institutions. Where is room for us to worry about anything? Let us serve as guided by Him.'

About his attitude towards service he once told me in confidence, 'Let me share a secret with you Saradamba. While at Baroda I sometimes used to wonder why Bhagavan had given a special place to our family. Why had He willed that His brother's progeny should have sole administrative powers in the running of the Asram? Had He been partial to us? I must admit that I had such thoughts a couple of times. But do you know Saradamba? Soon as I came to the Asram permanently Bhagavan revealed to me clear as daylight that He had given us no powers at all, not even the powers that any visitor to the Asram may have. On the other hand it was His command to His family to serve the devotees in every breath. To be a dedicated servant to every devotee was Bhagavan's order to us as it were.'

In keeping with this conviction Sundaram Anna always adored the verse in Arunachala Aksharamanamalai which refers to serving the devotees' devotee with love. He chose this as one of his favourite verses when he wrote articles for the Ramana Way. One of the members of our Centre recently shared his letter to Dr.Srinivasa Murthy on returning from Asram in 2013. "Dear Dr.Murthy, thank you for the hospitality when I visited the Ashram on 19th and 20th June, 2013. I was reading Astavakra Geeta in front of Bhagavan's Photograph and of all the persons President Sri V S Ramanan came near me to inquire whether I require a fan to be switched on.. what a kind gesture...he has grace and lives for the happiness of others... One morning, may be around 5 am, I saw him praying silently outside the closed collapsible gate in front of samadhi shrine, alone in humility... regards, yours in Ramana, DVV Prasad, Bangalore" "This is a copy of correspondence exchanged with Ramanasramam authorities on 21/06/2013.. Felt like sharing with you.. Namō Ramana.." Indeed Anna was the very personification of simplicity.

Ganesan Anna would affectionately tease Sundaram Anna for his simplicity. 'Let me tell you Saradamba, when we were children our aunts and grandmothers used to mix the rice and rasam or rice and curd on a plate and sit with us and feed us with their own hands telling us stories. Sundaram would often object saying that the quantity of rice on the plate was too much. Then the aunt would ask, 'Which part is too much? This part?' and she would show some part segregating it from the rest of the mixed rice. 'Yes', he would say. Then she would say, 'Let us do one thing. You finish this extra part first and then you can eat what is just right for you.' And Sundaram would innocently be convinced about this argument and accept it. He was so trusting.'

That picture would come to my mind when I saw on occasion Sundaram Anna having his meal in recent years in the room behind the office. He would simply surrender to the attendant who was feeding him. No objection to what was being given, no asking for anything, not saying that it was more or less. This, it is said, is the way a sannyasi is bound to eat. Anna was an epitome of total acceptance.

In earlier years I have seen on occasion his righteous anger against a situation or a person but when it came to Bhagavan he would simply melt. It was he who pointed out to me a beautiful phrase in the Ramana Gita. 'See Saradamma how beautifully Muni has expressed this, 'abhishichya kataakshena maamidam vaakyamabraveet'. The closest English expression we can give to this is 'bathing me with his glance Bhagavan spoke the following words' but the word Muni has used is 'abhisheka'. Bhagavan poured the holy waters of His glance on me and thereby He made me also sacred, He sanctified me. What love and what glory that expression speaks of'. While saying this Anna's eyes became moist with tears. Whenever I read that chapter in Ramana Gita this conversation comes to my mind. And I have shared the beauty of the phrase and of Anna's observation any number of times with devotees.

There were times of fun too that we shared. Some sweet little memories about the family - he would recount how as a baby Aruna when she first became familiar with words would become very alert every time the refrain of Aksharamanamalai was sung because the word 'Aruna' would come again and again in it. While talking of Ravi his heart would swell with fatherly pride. He once said, 'Ravi seemed to be an average student in his school days, probably in relation to Anand who was absolutely brilliant. But the moment Ravi finished his MBA he came into his own and in his job his contributions are supremely valued. His inputs are unique and literally have a stroke of genius.'

Then he remembered a sweet incident about Ravi. He said with a joyous smile, 'We went for a movie in Baroda to a theatre in our colony, Susheela, I and Ravi who was a child of around five. In those days it was common in Hindi and Tamil movies in the song sequence for the hero to sweep the heroine off her feet and carrying her in his arms to swirl her around. When such a sequence in the movie came Ravi exclaimed loudly, 'Hai! Appa panra maadri!' 'Just as appa does'. What he meant was that I would lift him up and swirl him around in that way soon as I returned from work. But to our friends in the colony who were watching the movie with us, it probably seemed as if I would romance with Susheela in like fashion. Surely an embarrassing moment for Susheela and me.' So saying Anna laughed happily.

Anna's smile is his trademark as it were but laughter he had specially for his moments with children. My sister Ambika's daughter, Poorna, was often blessed by a hearty laugh from him. He and Manni attended her wedding and blessed her by their presence in every part of the event. Whenever he gave her a gift after a performance in our seminars he had a loving laugh reserved for her.



I remember the time when he came to Bangalore to attend a wedding. While he and Manni would usually stay with us and then for a few years with Smt. Mukta and Sri Manu, on that occasion he was given accommodation at the Ramanashree Comforts, a three star luxury hotel. That evening after attending the wedding Anna and Manni dropped in at the Centre to spend some time with us. Anna laughingly reported to me, 'Today Bhagavan gave me a practical demonstration of the importance of living in the present. As we are staying at the Ramanashree Comforts there was a super spread for breakfast. Most of all there was a variety of luscious fruits which were very tempting. However, I ate a very light breakfast thinking that there would be a richer spread at the wedding lunch which I could not enjoy if I had a heavy breakfast. The wedding lunch no doubt had multifarious delicacies. But the

one thing that I had not anticipated was that every dish would have garlic added to it as garlic was a great delicacy in their custom. However, I do not fancy the taste of garlic. So my frugal breakfast was followed by a very frugal lunch.'

He would ensure that every one who came to the Asram had their hearts fill in every way. When the prize-giving event for the Inter-school Competitions held at Tiruvannamalai was to be held, Anna would readily have the Dining Hall made available for the function year after year. He would be overjoyed to see hundreds of children coming in to attend the event and most of them joining in the chanting of Aksharamanamalai.

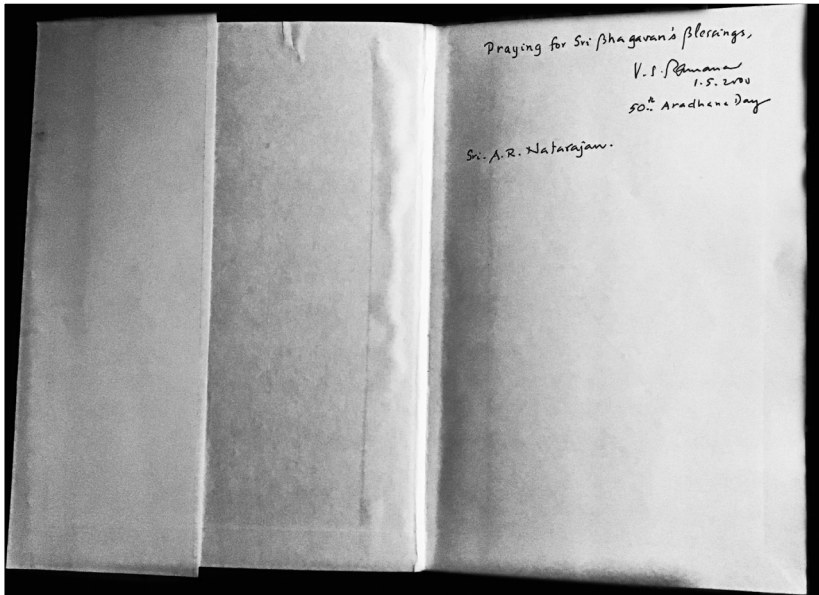
Initially Swami Ramanananda and later he would give away the prizes to the children. He would order a special sweet and savoury to be prepared and distributed to all the children that evening. Anna would give free access to the bookstall to Sri R.Natarajan to take books to the schools as he coordinated the school competitions at Tiruvannamalai for several years and personally took classes for several thousand children on Bhagavan's life and teachings. Sundaram Anna would affectionately call him 'Headmaster' for decades after Sri R.Natarajan had retired.



In the last decade he always gave me chocolates whenever I visited the Asram since I was ever a child for him and because he was aware that my father had indulged me always with them. Like Sundaram Anna, my father too had been christened 'chocolate thatha'.

Earlier my father would receive a copy of every new publication of the Asram from Sundaram Anna. One such, the reprint of the First Edition of 'Self-Realization' was given by

Sundaram Anna to him on the very special occasion the 50th Aradhana of Bhagavan the historical significance of which is also retained by Sundaram Anna in his inscription.



After I became President of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Sundaram Anna continued his tradition by blessing me with a copy of the latest publication of Sri Ramanasramam writing a note in it personally and saying it was for the 'President RMCL'. He would also make it a point to give me a copy of the Asram diary and calendar every year. This takes my mind to how the publications division of the Asram expanded immensely under his leadership. Indeed so did every aspect of the Asram. Swami Ramanananda would point it out to us with joy, 'Do you see? Paattayaa? How big your Asram has grown now!'

As if to put his stamp of authority on the continued relationship between our Centre and the Asram in the publications division, Anna blessed me with his mental presence a few hours before his physical departure. It was the early morning of the 21st of July, around 2.00 a.m. I was writing the dedication of our forthcoming publication that is practically ready to be printed. I was dedicating the book to Sundaram Anna. I could have written

the dedication earlier or later. But the fact that it happened at that point in time, that I was remembering Anna right then, to me is indicative of his coming to me, blessing me and taking leave personally as it were.

The strong inward thrust and peace that I have felt in the days after Anna's going is evidence of his being one with Bhagavan. It reminds me of a couple of things that my mother told me about my father. She said, 'Don't grieve about appa. He lived and went like a king. He was absorbed in Bhagavan.' And she also said very simply and as a matter of fact, 'He is in me too. I do not feel any separation from him. I have become ardhanareeswara'. In a similar manner I feel that we will continue to feel Sundaram Anna's presence in the Asram and vividly in Susheela Manni as well since we have always seen them together, inseparable, as one unit. His love will continue to flow to us through her.

Sundaram Anna's last spiritual message came to me through the mouth of Anand when I called a few hours after Anna had departed. Anand told me, 'There is nothing to grieve. All our stories begin and end in Bhagavan'. It was as if Anna was saying this. The words and their import stayed with me very strongly for a few days and keep coming to me frequently even now.

Song of Grace

Revathi Sankar

Whenever the ego, arises the questioning of it. Rise of ego is the opportunity to question it. So when you question the ego, then you become humble and that is the best attitude. This is a very good practice to cut off ego, as being humble itself is such a difficult thing. If things do not happen according to our wishes, then the Ego rises and we land in trouble. So vigilance to the rise of ego is very important.

The first instructions given to Siva Prakasam Pillai about self – enquiry in 1901 were documented in the famous text entitled ‘Who am I?’ Later, Pillai composed a poem called ‘Ramana Pada Malai’ in gratitude and devotion to the Sadguru. This has been set to music as Ramana Pada Pancharatnam – a unique musical piece which has been composed by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan on the lines of Saint Tyagaraja’s Pancharatna Kritis. Smt. Sulochana Natarajan has very carefully selected the verses from Pada Malai and set the ragas of Nattai, Goula, Arabhi, Varali and Sri which are the same as the ragas in Tyagaraja Pancharatnam.

As I was about to write the article, I remembered a verse in the Ramana Pada Pancharatnam that epitomizes Sundaram Anna, Sri V.S.Ramanan, former President of Sri Ramanasramam, who was absorbed in Arunachala on the 21st of July 2020. The verse that came to me when I thought of Sundaram Anna is in the third kriti set in Arabhi raga. The fourth charana of the song goes like this

*tAzha tAzha nalamihamenDRu tAzhvOn pAdam vAzhgavE
anniyar kAryattu ahanRiru vennum Aptan pAdam vAzhghavE
- Tamil*

*Namra vinamrate nalme endu nuDivavana pAdake jaya
anyara kAryadim saridiru ennuva Aptana pAdake jayave jaya
- Kannada*

Meaning –

Blessed be the Feet of the One who stays humble and says ‘To humble oneself more and more is good. Do not interfere in other’s affairs.’

Sundaram Anna was one such who was blessed with humility and lived in the essence of Bhagavan’s teaching every moment. Whenever we went to Ramanasramam, the way he would welcome any devotee who came there was so loving and so close to the heart. I have seen him serve ghee to the devotees during lunch at Asram. Like the flow of ghee, he too would continuously follow Bhagavan’s teaching - AiyadhAraya.

To me the AiyadhAra also reveals itself in the continuity of service to the Asram and Bhagavan’s devotees by the family of Niranjananda Swami in accordance with Bhagavan’s Will. I have had the good fortune of seeing Sri TNV, who later became Swami Ramanananda, and then Sundaram Anna. I have also heard

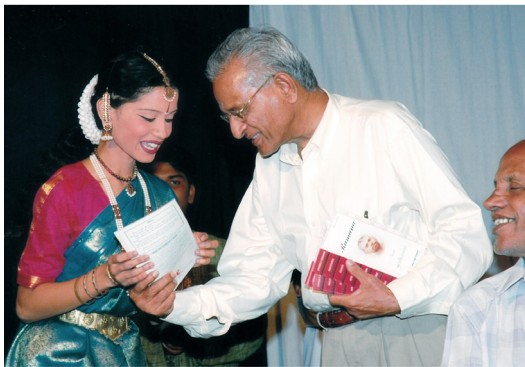


about Dr.Anand who is now the President of Sri Ramanasramam. I have learnt from Sri A.R.Natarajan, the Founder President of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning and our present president, Dr.Sarada, that the President of Sri Ramanasramam is Bhagavan’s chosen representative and hence must be respected in every way. They must be accepted in totality. I have had the joy of participating in an event where Sri ARN honoured Swami Ramanananda with the title ‘Naveena Arjuna’ for victoriously fighting many legal battles on behalf of the Asram.

Although reverence for the Asram President is thus a rule with us, the best part is that there is no need at all for us to follow this rule. It may seem strange that I am saying this. This is

because each of these people are so full of love for the devotees and devotion to Bhagavan that respect for them is automatically roused in us and we don't have to be told to hold them in high regard. On the other hand they are examples for us to follow.

As I am far younger in years to Sundaram Anna and in every way consider him to be far greater than I am, I cannot even presume to praise such a great devotee of Bhagavan. But I can boldly say that his remembrance surely brings great joy to me. He used to fold his hands and greet me with so much love and would welcome all of us from RMCL in the same way. He would also shower love on us as on his own grandchildren. Whenever he came for a public event at RMCL, I and other members of our team have had the privilege of receiving certificates from his hands eagerly as the squirrels of Ramanasramam would receive cashew-nuts from Bhagavan.



Sundaram Anna has recounted how he was amazed to see the squirrels scampering all over Bhagavan and Bhagavan himself allowing them to do so without the least awareness of his own body. This takes my mind back to an incident related to squirrels. Although Bhagavan always gave an equal share of anything that was distributed in his presence to everyone who came to him, one squirrel was impatient to receive his share earlier than the rest. So he bit Bhagavan's finger in his excitement. Bhagavan rebuked the squirrel and refused to feed him from his hands. It was only after the squirrel pleaded for days and refused to eat unless fed by Bhagavan that he relented and fed the squirrel again.

This is the teaching given to Sivaprakasam Pillai also in the song saying have patience and do not worry about others. If we wait for our turn with patience and humbleness and not think about others, then we shall 'Be in the state of Truth, being in the Self'.

Funnily enough this was the first instruction which I got when I entered into the Ramana fold playing the naughty squirrel's role. Bhagavan taught me this lesson, to be patient and not to worry about others. I don't know to what extent I have been able to imbibe or internalise this, but I can say that Bhagavan holds me tight as I am his 'attention seeking child'.

I am sure Sundaram Anna as a child would have learnt many things like this and much more from Bhagavan and this was seen very evidently by all the devotees in Anna's life. As Ganesan Anna has mentioned in his Ramana Periyapuram, every devotee has become a rock on the Aruna Hill, merging as Arunachala. Sundaram Anna also is in Arunachala, as Arunachala Ramana

Thank you Bhagavan
Your attention seeking Child :) ????

A Lover of Ramananjali

Dr.Ambika Kameshwar

This is the 40th year of Ramananjali and I would like to seek Sundaram Anna's blessings for the celebration of this event. Hence I will write this tribute to Sundaram Anna from the perspective of the leader of Ramananjali, my mother Smt.Sulochana Natarajan.

Certainly Sundaram Anna was a lover of Ramananjali in every sense of the term, in its spirit of being an offering to Ramana and in its poetic and musical value.

It was also on account of his love for his 'sister', Sulochana (my mother).

Once, when someone in the family affectionately told my father that he was practically like a son to TNV - our families are so closely knit - my mother immediately said, 'Say that I am a daughter to TNV and ARN is a son-in-law.'

She certainly believed that Sundaram Anna was an elder brother to her.



He would be present for every Ramananjali concert at Sri Ramanasramam and for the Pada Pancharatnam that is offered during Bhagavan's Aradhana every year.



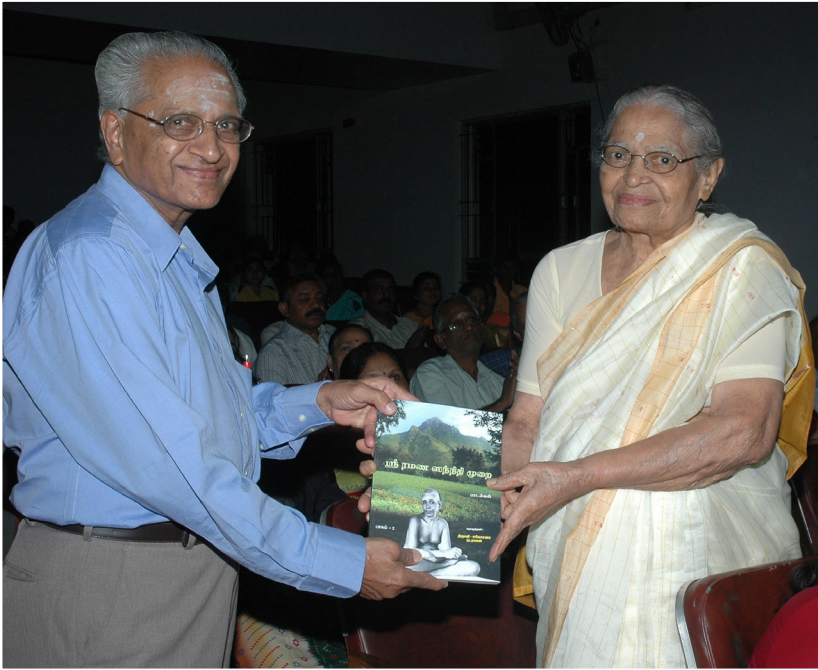
He released most of our cassettes, music books and CDs as Amma was certain that it was a great blessing for it to be so.



Of course Susheela Manni or Amma herself would be the first recipient of the cassette.



Sometimes Sri K. Natesan or Kanakkamma would receive the copies making it a double blessing on the occasion.



While Susheela Manni has undergone formal training in Carnatic Classical Music and hence would enjoy the musical nuances of Ramananjali songs as well, for Sundaram Anna it was the mood of devotion that he soaked in. One of his favourite songs was 'Anbu vadivame engal Ramana devane' 'The embodiment of love is He, our Lord Ramana'. That may be well because Anna was constantly in harmony with or immersed in the mood of love. For him Bhagavan was 'anbu' and he himself not just an 'anban' but an 'anbarukku anban'.

So overflowing with love was he that his heart would be completely identified with anyone in any kind of pain. I remember the occasion when he and Manni had come for what the 'Annual Shrine Festival' at Ramana Maharshi Centre, Bangalore. They were staying at home with Appa and Amma and I was rehearsing for my solo dance presentation that evening along with the full orchestra of musicians. As chance would have it midway through the rehearsal

I hurt my toe severely and the toe nail came off completely. It was extremely painful and I could hardly place my foot on the floor. But by evening I had a heavy dose of painkillers, bandaged the toe and was ready to go on stage. After the performance Sundaram Anna told me, 'You danced happily. But every time I thought you were pressing down that foot I felt the pain.'

Anna and Manni blessed Amma specially during the 500th performance of Ramananjali at Bangalore.



Speaking at the Asram Jayanthi performance just before the 500th, Sundaram Anna said, 'I can hardly believe that we are on the eve of the 500th performance of Ramananjali which is evidently a great landmark. I say I can hardly believe it because to me every performance of Ramananjali is like the 500th, every performance is a landmark and is exhilarating. It is so full of Bhagavan's Grace.'

YOUR DATES WITH RAMANA

SPECIAL ONLINE EVENTS IN AUGUST

8th August – Sri V.S.Ramanan Memorial

15th August – Independence Day

22nd August – Muruganar Day

29th August to 1st September – Aruna Vijaya Offering – Parayanam of Aksharamanamalai by joining online during the days of Bhagavan Ramana's journey to Arunachala and premiere of online production.

We at Ramana Centre, Bangalore are happy to announce one single sign-in Google Meet URL for all the Online Self Enquiry Sessions and Satsangs of the Centre. URL: <https://meet.google.com/kwx-bdoa-gtf>

1. Daily Morning Self Enquiry satsang *Time: 5:30am Duration: 15min*
2. Daily Night Self Enquiry satsang *Time: 9:30pm Duration: 30min*
(9:30pm - 9:45pm Q&A, 9:45pm - 10:00pm Self Enquiry)
3. Thursday Evening Self Enquiry satsang
Time: 7:00pm Duration: 1hr Conducted by: Sri Nandakumarji
4. Friday Evening Self Enquiry satsang *Time: 7:00pm Duration: 1hr*
Conducted by: Dileep Simha and Dr. Sarada Natarajan
- 5: Saturday Evening satsang: *Time: 6:30pm Duration: 2hr Conducted by: Dr. Sarada Natarajan*

Ramana Music by Radha, Revathi, Prathiba, Savithri, Jaisriram, Poorna Sharings by Nandakumarji, Venkatesh Deshpande, Dr.Kalarani Rengasamy, Ujwal Jagadeesh and Dr.Sarada

Chanting by Sapna, Ashwini, Uma, Vallabh and Vaibhav

Self-enquiry by Dileep Simha Ashtottara Puja by Subramaniam

6. Sunday Evening Satsang (in Kannada) 6.45pm - 8.30pm

7. Every First Sunday of the Month - Morning Satsang (in Tamil) 10:00am - 11.30 am.

If you have any queries or concerns regarding joining the Satsang, please contact: **Uma: 9538472026**

Ramana Every Day

RMHC - Ramana Maharshi Heritage Centre - Sanjaynagar

RMS - Ramana Maharshi Shrine - Mekhri Circle

RSCS - RMCL Satsang Centre at South Bangalore

RSCR - RMCL Satsang Centre at Rajarajeshwari Nagar

To register for Online sessions contact

Uma 9538472026 or join on <https://meet.google.com/kwx-bdoa-gtf>

Online and On site Self Enquiry sessions

Thursday: 7:00 pm to 8.00 pm at RSCS

By Sri Nandakumar ji

Friday: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm at RMHC

By Dileep Simha and Dr. Sarada

Everyday: 5:30 am to 5.45 am, 9:30pm to 10:00pm (online)

By Sri Nandakumar ji & others

(Chanting and Self-enquiry)

Online Satsang

Chanting, Reading, Music, Talks, Puja

Saturday: 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at RSCS

Every Sunday 7.00 pm to 8.40 pm Kannada Satsang

Every first Sunday 11.00 am to 12.30 pm Tamil Satsang

Online and On site Music and Dance classes

[Contact - Uma (9538472026)] at RMHC

On site Yoga classes [Contact - Uma (9538472026)]

Monday - Wednesday - Friday: 6:30am & 6:00pm at RMHC

On site Talk

By Sri Sridhar Guruji,

Saturday 4:00pm - 5:30pm at RMS.

[Contact Usha Sankar (9663284111)]

On site Talks, Parayana and Puja

By Sri Chandrashekar (9448839594)

Thursday 6:30 pm at RSCR

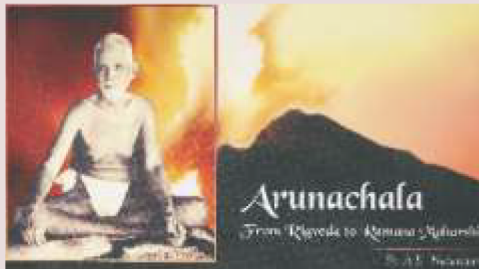
Guru Vachaka Kovai in English

Original : Muruganar

Translation: David Godman

Investigation into Truth

112. 'If, even in the state of ultimate truth [*paramartha*], the *jiva* and the world are as real as God, then God's nature – complete and utter fullness – becomes imperfect'. It is not proper to make this claim unless we accept that God is subject to limitation.
113. If the *jiva*, who is reflected appearance, really shines as an independent entity distinct from the Supreme, then the authoritative conclusion of the *jnanis* that the actions of the *jiva* are [really] the actions of Siva will have to be said to be merely mental imagination.



ARUNACHALA FROM RIGVEDA TO RAMANA MAHARSHI

This book covers a vast panorama of over four thousand years from the Rigvedic seers to Ramana Maharshi. Arunachala, the seemingly insentient hill, and the golden hued Ramana are embodied fire of Knowledge. The purpose of this book is to rekindle in every human heart this smouldering fire now doused by ignorance.