

Saranagathi



eNewsletter from www.sriramanamaharshi.org

In this Issue

Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

It is September 1st. It reminds us of the time when a young boy of 16, arrived in Tiruvannamalai, enchanted by Arunachala and with total belief and surrender to the Lord, His father. He gave up all the worldly possessions He had (eatables, money, clothes and his sacred thread).

Even contemplating this scene gives one the chills. But maybe Sri Bhagavan wanted to define 'surrender' for us, without 'words'.

In this issue we carry an article on Uddandi Nayinar, who took care of Sri Bhagavan upon his arrival in Tiruvannamalai as part of the 'attendant series' and we continue with the write-up on 'Sri Ramanasramam Archives' from the last issue and have 'Reports from Sri Ramanasramam'.

Our 'Captain' Narayanan, a great devotee of Sri

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Bhagavan and Arunachala (the Hill) and Lord Arunachaleswara passed away on 28th August 2009. We commemorate 17 years of his dedication and service to the Ashram. We will miss him...

Yours in Sri Bhagavan,

The Editorial Team.

The Essence of Instruction

*Mind extinct, the mighty seer
Returns to his own natural being
And has no action to perform.*

— Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 15)

Uddandi Nayinar

One of the earliest attendants of Sri Bhagavan was Uddandi Nayinar. This was in the early days when Sri Bhagavan had arrived at Tiruvannamalai in September 1896.



We owe our eternal gratitude to Sri Seshadri Swami for he was instrumental in protecting Sri Bhagavan while He sat absorbed at the thousand-pillared hall soon after His arrival at Tiruvannamalai and later at Patalalingam. He was the one who alerted Venkatachala Mudali to Sri Bhagavan's presence at Patalalingam.

After Sri Bhagavan was taken out of Patalalingam He stayed at different places inside the Arunachaleswarar Temple precincts. From the *Vahana mantapam*, he moved to the foot of a *Bilva (Bel)* tree and later to the foot of an *Illuppai* tree and the adjoining Mangai Pillayar temple south of the Sivaganga tank.

The Brahmana Swami had already attracted the attention of the pilgrims and of the local public in the Kartikai season, November–December, 1896; and hence crowds were constantly flocking to see him.

It was here that the first disciple or permanent attendant of the Swami, Uddandi Nayinar came to him. This Nayinar was a pious scholar, of Tirumani near Wandiwash, who had read the sacred books and other books of philosophy, but found no peace of mind therein, and attained no realization. He chanced to see the young Swami at the foot of the Illuppai tree, rapt in ecstasy, and evidently oblivious of his body. He felt that here was realization and through Him he would find peace. Thenceforward, he was constantly at the Swami's side, looking after His bodily needs, reciting Vasishtham and Kaivalya Navanitam and waiting with eager expectation to hear from His lips some blessed words of Upadesa (instruction) which might transform his learning into realization and give him the peace supreme.

Nayinar kept crowds off the Swami, thus minimizing disturbance to His samadhi.



Sri Ramanasramam Archives

This article is a continuation from the last issue about the Archives team, which is dedicated to the arduous task of preserving the Masters' memory for posterity. John Maynard, a key member of this team writes the following piece.



Conch Shell Lamp - Archive Annex

'One day the Sarvadhikari came accompanied by a man who was limping, whom he introduced to Bhagavan. He brought an electric lamp with a big mother-of-pearl shade and presented it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan said that he had been reading an illustrated Tamil encyclopaedia just an hour before and a doubt had come whether a big mother-of-pearl could exist. He was surprised at the coincidence.'

Surpassing Love and Grace - 1st.edition 2001 pp 257-258 pub. Ramanasramam. (Out of Print)



Curzon easy-chair - archive furniture room

'I obtained for Sri Bhagavan's use an easy chair, specially made with a footrest, from Curzon and Co., the well-known furniture makers of Madras. It is now used on Deepam day for Sri Bhagavan's portrait. But when I got his sofa repaired, without his knowledge, he refused to sit on it for a long time. It was only when he saw my extreme distress that he relented and agreed to sit on it once more.'

Ramanapadananda in Fragrant Petals - 2nd Edition 2005 p.139 - Pub Sri Ramanasramam.

Anterior Rooms:

Only if a visitor has a special need may the anterior rooms be viewed. This is a practical rule – only because the inner archive atmosphere is air-conditioned and humidity controlled. These anterior rooms house the collections of original manuscripts and books; the complete collection of photographs; a room of cloth bundles used around Sri Bhagavan in the Old Hall and on celebration days; a second collection of bedding materials used by Sri Bhagavan in the Old Hall and Mahasamadhi room.

Each section and collection has its own needs in terms of preservation. The whole building is maintained at a constant temperature and humidity (50%), and the sections behind the glass are constantly monitored to ensure these parameters are in place. No chemicals are used in the preservation process; instead Ayurvedic roots of *Acorus Calamu*, commonly known as Sweet Flag, cedar balls alongside herbal dyed maroon khadi cloth are used to keep unwanted insects out of the delicate areas. In the photographic section we use pH balanced papers and boxes from the United States to

maintain the negatives and prints, while in the original book section each volume is hand bound and wrapped in pH balanced paper from the Auroville near Pondicherry. Once a month the whole archive is vacuumed and thoroughly cleansed without water.

It may not be generally known that Sri Bhagavan's usual kamandhalu (gourd water pot) and walking stick seen in many of the best known and loved photographs were buried in the samadhi alongside his body; those articles on view within the archive and the Mahasamadhi room being others He carved or which were gifted to Him.



West wall display

Ramanasramam Photographic Archive:

Housed in the south side of the archive this room contains over three thousand prints and negatives of Sri Ramana, old devotees, old photographs of Arunachala. Before the construction time, the Ashram had albums of original prints collected by devotees such as Dr. G.H.Mees [Sadhu Ekarasa], as well as the original S.G & G.G. Welling album. Sri Karthik has reproduced the majority of the Sri Ramana photographs as duplicate negatives in a larger format also for further safeguarding the collection. The collection has also been scanned and is preserved in several digital formats. In recent years it has been catalogued also for ease of use.

This room is maintained at 20 degrees Centigrade



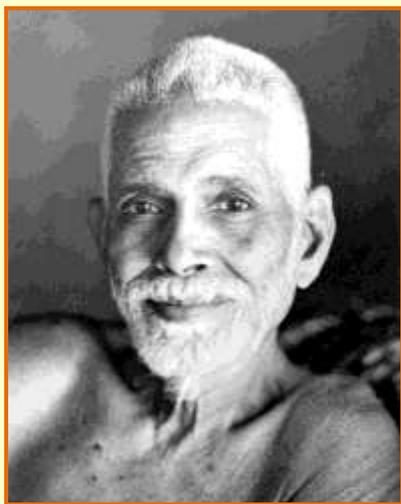
Photo Archive - anterior room

and at fifty percent humidity to preserve this unique collection. In 2009 a set of optimally designed shelves were added, providing full support and aeration to the pH balanced boxes etc, made from Neem wood and aluminium. (Neem wood and oil is a natural insecticide and preservative) From this collection come many of the prints seen in books, in the Mountain Path magazine, and for sale in the bookstore.

Visiting devotees often ask whether there are any 'special' unseen photographs of Sri Bhagavan. Each photograph is definitely special but "No", is my usual reply! The diamantine and most famous, such as the Welling Busts, (1948) and the Mani Bust, (R.R.S. Mani - in the ashram 1917-1922) which have drawn seekers and devotees from all corners of the Earth are all out in the open and have been seen. In earlier days when Henri Cartier Bresson was being pushed to give all the negatives he had taken here he replied, "I have given them the best, now they want the rotten potatoes!" So, there are less common photos, little used, and these are they!

One fact perhaps not so well known is that neither the ashram nor the archive holds the original negatives to the Welling series. The

negatives are variously said to have been destroyed by a fire; lost at an early book printer; kept by the Welling business; in Bangalore; and a few other variations. If anyone who reads this does know where the originals are please let us know - no questions asked! The Welling photographs you see now in books and for sale are prints remade from the original print negatives, which we do hold.



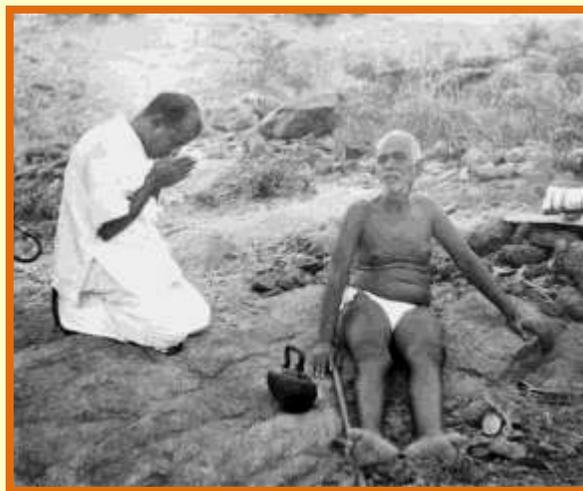
Famous Welling bust (unrestored version)



East Wall Photos with the Mani Bust in the center

Ongoing work in this section is the cataloguing of the Ramana and Mountain Path photos; restoration of certain photographs; the scanning of the complete Mountain Path magazine for the Ashram website as well as for posterity; photography for the Mountain Path; and handling the normal day-to-day requests for photographic materials.

Bhagavan Ramana's devotees are all indebted to Dr T. N. Krishnaswamy, the devotee whose hobby was photography and who shot about eighty-five percent of the images we now have of Sri Bhagavan. His first photograph of Bhagavan came out so well that he was asked to be the official ashram photographer. Most weekends [1930's to 1950] he came up to Tiruvannamalai from Madras and took more photos; he meticulously kept the medium format 2.25 X 2.25 inch negatives which we still have today. He once asked Bhagavan's attendant to take his photo with Sri Bhagavan on the Hill, since Dr T.N.K rightly said he was always on the other side of the lens. Our sincere thanks to the family of Dr T. N. Krishnaswami who recently presented to the Archives, his trusty Rolleiflex camera.



Dr T.N. Krishnaswami with Sri Bhagavan



Dr TNK's Rolleiflex camera

(To be continued)

Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

The **Aradhana Day of Sri Kunju Swamy**, Old Ashramite, was solemnly observed at the Ashram on 7th August 2009. At 7.30 a.m. recorded parayana of Bhagavan's poetic compositions in Malayalam by Sri Kunju Swamy was played at Swamiji's Samadhi. At 10 a.m. Sri Bhagavan's Aksharamanamalai was recited by a large number of devotees including those who came especially from Palghat, Kerala after which puja was offered to the lingam at Swamiji's Samadhi. At its conclusion Prasad was distributed.



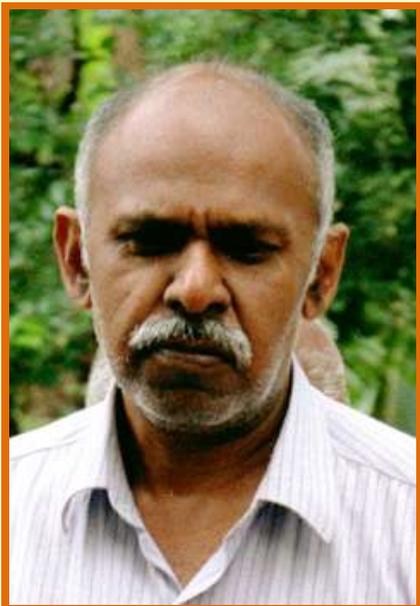
The **Samadhi Day of Poet Muruganar Swami** the great devotee of Sri Bhagavan was solemnly observed on 20th August 2009. On 18th August devotees from Choolaimedu, Chennai, led by Sri Ramanan, arrived at the Ashram and, accompanied by some inmates of the Ashram, started reciting Muruganar Swami's Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai running into 1851 verses and completed the recitation the night of 19th August. At 9.30 a.m. on 20th August Oduvars led by Sri Balachandra Oduvar, sang some selected verses from Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai at the Poet's Samadhi while the Ashram priests performed Puja to the Lingam in the Samadhi. At the conclusion of the Puja accompanied by singing, Prasad was distributed among the large gathering of devotees.

Tirukoilur Visit

Tirukoilur is one of the Krishnaranya Kshetras and Sri Bhagavan was brought to this holy city in 1896 on the Birthday of Lord Krishna. And the young Venkataraman pledged his earring with Muthukrishna Bhagavatar to reach Arunachalam.

This year a few devotees went from the Ashram to Muthukrishna Bhagavatar's House on 13th August, Sri Krishna Jayanti Day, chanted Aksharamanamalai and distributed Prasad from the Ashram. They also visited the huge Vishnu Temple apart from Veerateswar, Atulyanatheswar Temples etc.

Captain A. Narayanan



Captain Narayanan (Captain to everyone in Sri Ramanasramam and other devotees) was absorbed in Arunachala around 11.15 p.m. on Friday, 28th August 2009. He was 63. In fact, Captain was always mentally absorbed in Arunachala who, along with Lord Arunachaleswara and Bhagavan Ramana, was his only idol. To him the three are one.

Captain was the grandson of the eminent doctor of Pudukottai, K. Narayana Iyer, a great devotee of Bhagavan, who contributed money to the construction of the Old Hall and the northern wall of the Ashram.

Soon after passing out of the Madras Christian College with an M.Sc. degree, Narayanan joined the Indian Navy in 1966 as a Short Service Commissioned Officer and served for seven years. In 1975 he joined the Merchant Navy serving it as Chief Officer and Captain for 17 years.

When Captain Narayanan came to Sri Ramanasramam for good in February 1992 he had indeed come to his true home. His sense of identity with the interests of the Ashram was complete and he proved himself to be a karma yogi par excellence.

Captain was a man of few words and intense activity. Single-handed, he compiled the eight-volumes on Sri Bhagavan entitled 'The Boundless Ocean of Grace' in Tamil first and later its English version. He rarely indeed ever, spoke of himself and never ever sat in judgement of anybody. He practiced an austerity and observed a self-discipline which would do honour to a seasoned sannyasi. He was a man of spotless character and flaming integrity. His self-effacement was total. In brief, he lived Bhagavan's teaching without ever even dreaming of preaching. It won't be wide off the mark to assert that Captain performed Giripradakshina of Arunachala every day of his life since 1992 till he was too ill and weak to walk. Captain made it a point to participate in the Narayana Seva (Poor Feeding) at the Ashram every morning. He did take part in it till almost his last day.

Narayanan was given excellent treatment for his pancreatic cancer at Bangalore. However, metastasis set in, the cancer, attacking his liver and lungs. Knowing that the call was coming soon, Captain radiated a striking aura of peace, calm, courage and even joy in the last days of his life. It was clear to everyone in the Ashram that Bhagavan was blessing him with a sense of detachment from the body.

Frugal to the extreme in his personal matters, Captain was generous to a fault in helping the needy. A large number of Bhagavan's devotees, his admirers and beneficiaries attended the cremation on Saturday, the 29th August, 2009.