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Sri V.S. Mani

A Devotee of the Devotees

Sri V.S. Mani, known to Sri Bhagavan's devotees as Mani Anna, passed away peacefully on July 19th at approximately 5 p.m., to rest at the feet of our Master. Since arriving at the ashram in 1985 to assist in its day to day administration, Sri Mani greeted all visitors with a beaming smile, a warm, genuine welcome and unending solicitude. We can never repay that gentle kindness that was showered upon us by Sri Mani, and we remember him as a shining example of one whose life, surrendered entirely to Sri Bhagavan, was given to the service of his Master's devotees.

Sri V. Subramanian, also known as Mani Anna to Sri Bhagavan's devotees, merged at the feet of his Master on July 19th. He had been somewhat unwell for the preceding two weeks, but had returned to the ashram the previous day, resuming his work in the office with his usual enthusiasm. He experienced some mild chest discomfort on the morning of the 19th, but it was not concerning. However, at about 4:30 in the afternoon he collapsed suddenly at his home and shortly afterwards he peacefully breathed his last. The news of his passing spread quickly among devotees. We could not believe that our friend, who always so warmly welcomed us to Sri Ramanasramam with his kind smile and loving concern, who out of his immense love for our Master rendered selfless and sincere service to all devotees, was gone.

Sri Bhagavan's nephew T.N. Venkataraman and his wife Nagalakshmi had seven children. The third child, Sri Mani, was born in Tirunvannamalai on February 8th, 1939. When the newborn child was brought in front of Sri Bhagavan, Sri Bhagavan himself chose the name Subramanian for the child. He had previously chosen the names for his two elder

brothers, Sundaram and Ganesan. "Ganesha's younger brother should be named Subramanian.", Bhagavan said.

From the recent issue of *Saranagati*, the inspiring newsletter of Sri Ramanasramam, we read the following:

"Once when Mani was about nine years old, his fourth standard teacher wrote a one-act play depicting Bhagavan's teaching which the children performed in Bhagavan's presence. The performance concluded with a line spoken by the young Mani with his fist firmly placed at the centre of his chest in a gesture of defiance, 'I will strive and work hard for this noble cause till my last breath.' A prophetic declaration for a young boy. Bhagavan turned his gaze to the child and smiled, and then to the devotees and family members, he remarked, '*Mani maniyaaga pesaraane*' ('Mani [gem] is talking like a gem [mani]').)

V.S. Mani studied engineering and was posted to ACC-Vickers Babcock Ltd., Mumbai, where he eventually served as deputy general manager. In 1969, he was married to Ramani who had been fortunate to have Bhagavan's darshan in her girlhood.

Making annual visits to the ashram, the couple set up house in Mumbai and played host to numerous ashram inmates and family members. In 1984, Mani Anna lost his mother and a year later, at the age of 45, even though still having the responsibility of two young children, took a voluntary retirement in the midst of a prolonged illness. He settled permanently in Tiruvannamalai and by Bhagavan's grace recovered his health within months. Already trained and experienced in management, Mani Anna proved invaluable as an administrator and worked hard to assist his father and brother. Seven years later, his eldest brother, V.S. Ramanan, returned to the ashram to join his brothers in assisting their father.

If as a child Mani had valiantly dedicated his life to Bhagavan, he now had the opportunity to live out this dedication by serving Bhagavan's devotees. Besides managerial adeptness, he demonstrated keen social skills as well as a deep respect and tireless solicitude for devotees. He always made it a point to see that guests felt welcome and went the extra mile to maintain contact with them when they were away, or when aged and for health reasons, were unable to come to the ashram. When devotees left this world, he stood by them by making sure that the moksha deepam lamp in their honour had been lit at Bhagavan's samadhi. He oversaw more than one hundred obituaries of deceased devotees for Ashram publications as it was his firm conviction that the living should remember and honour the lives of those who had dedicated their lives to Bhagavan. Though Mani Anna took his service in the Ashram seriously, he carried it out with light-heartedness and ease, bearing hardship with poise and perseverance."

Preserving the Ashrama Heritage for Future Generations

Sri Mani was instrumental in the initiative to preserve for future generations the sacred heritage of the ashram. He secured the safeguarding of the photographic negatives, video recordings and writings of Sri Bhagavan by undertaking the construction of the Ashram Archives. It is by his diligence that we are able to view these irreplaceable treasures today.

He also paid great attention to the upkeep and repair of holy sites such as Bhagavan's place of birth in

Tiruchuzhi and the Madurai Ramana Mandiram. Plans to build new guesthouses facilitating the visits of an ever-increasing number of devotees came to fruition. In addition, reconstruction of the Old Hall, which resonates with Sri Bhagavan's presence, was supervised by Sri Mani.

His love for the flora and fauna of the ashram was evident as he showed visiting devotees the surrounding gardens, replete with more than 150 varieties of trees and plants. With a mother's touch he nurtured the saplings and young plants and delighted as they grew into a habitat welcoming an increasing number of bird species, as well as providing a playground and refuge for the ashram's peacocks.

The inhabitants of the gosala were also beneficiaries of Mani's tender care. Under his guidance, new Indian breeds of cows were introduced to the ashram. Sri Mani unhesitatingly encouraged those projects which enhanced and supported the ideals of Sri Ramanasramam. His support of these endeavours of Arunachala Ashrama is recalled by Jim Hartel:

"I am deeply grateful to him for the generous assistance he provided for projects Dennis Hartel and I conducted in coordination with Ramanasramam. Mani helped set up travel arrangements for filming and interviews with early devotees for the documentary *The Sage of Arunachala* in 1989. Mani also closed the New Hall to visitors for 2 days in 1990 to allow Dennis and me to work undisturbed while making a mold from the statue of Bhagavan sculpted by Vaidyanatha Sthapati. Both projects, the documentary *The Sage of Arunachala* and replicas of the statue, now installed in Arunachala Ashrama in both NYC and Clarence, Nova Scotia, would not have been possible without Mani Anna's help.

When Mathy and Dr. Palanisamy Rathinasamy began plans to construct a replica of the Old Hall in Tampa Florida, it was Mani who supplied us with all the dimensions and images of architectural details of the Old Hall in Ramanasramam. From this, detailed drawings and schematics were developed to make the project a reality. An exact replica of the Old Hall now exists in Tampa, Florida because of Mani's indispensable attention to detail and generous assistance."

The contributions of this great devotee to Sri Bhagavan's ashram and to his devotees all over the world cannot be underestimated. Though that welcoming smile will no longer greet us as we enter that hallowed abode, the ideals embodied by Sri Mani will continue to inspire and encourage us all. Along with his beloved wife of 50 years, Srimati Ramani, who passed away in 2019, he taught us that service to the devotees of Sri Bhagavan is indeed service to Sri Bhagavan himself. He was indeed the votary of the votaries who are devoted to Sri Arunachala!

அன்பொடுந் னாமங்கே ளன்பர்த மன்பருக்
கன்பனா யிடவரு ளருணாசலா!

Let me be the votary of the votaries of those who hear Thy name with love, O Arunachala!

– Aksharamanamalai verse 104

He is survived by his son Ramanan, daughter Shanti, son-in-law Bharath and two grandchildren, Dhruv and Diya.

Online Memorial

On July 31st, there was an online satsang in honor of Sri Mani. This was led by Sri Mohan Ramaswami, President of Arunachala Ashrama.

After reading from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Sri Mohan introduced devotees who shared their experiences of meeting Sri Mani. Devotees also chanted various sacred texts in honor of their friend. During the ceremony, a touching tribute was given to his father by Sri Mani's son, Sri Ramanan:

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

It is difficult for me to talk about my father, but I will attempt to say a few words at Mohan's request.

The outpouring from devotees has been overwhelming. The love and devotion that they have expressed has been very moving. My father touched many lives, but never spoke about it. Now devotees are coming forth and sharing their stories on how he guided them, how he helped them, how he welcomed them and protected them. For me, Appa was more than a father, he was my mentor, guide, and for the last few years, he took on the role of my mother as well. He liked to lead by example, and lived a disciplined life. Both he and my mother would rise



Sri V.S. Mani

early, have their tea, read from Bhagavan's *Naan Yaar* and other spiritual texts each morning. He would then do some exercise, bathe and get to the ashram by 6:30 a.m. for the milk offering. Appa would have his breakfast in the ashram and then work until 12 p.m. and then return home for lunch. Appa and Amma would eat lunch together. Then he would rest for an hour and go back to the ashram by 2 p.m. In later years, he would go to the ashram by 3 p.m. He would be there until 8 p.m. and then return home for dinner. This was his routine seven days a week, 365 days a year. He rarely left Tiruvannamalai and when he came over to be with Shanti or me, he would always hasten to get back. This persistent dedication to serving the ashram and the devotees was the very core of his being.

A day before he left the body, he had gone to the ashram and spent the morning there. He hadn't been to the ashram a few days prior to that. During our daily telephone conversation he shared that his visit to the ashram that morning was extremely heartwarming and satisfying. He told me, "*Ramanan, romba triptiyaa irundadu.*" (Ramanan, it was very satisfying.) I could feel it in his voice, it was full of love and compassion.

When my parents visited me in the US, they loved to visit the redwoods. It was a pilgrimage, and we would go and spend an afternoon with these giants.

During the weekdays, the forest is almost deserted and many a time, we would find ourselves quite alone. We would sit and meditate, do parayanam, take a walk and return. They loved being in the presence of these ancient trees that are thousands of years old. It was always the highlight of the trip. During their first visit to the US, we visited New York and stayed at the ashram. Dennis was a gracious host. Along with Dennis, we drove up to Niagara. En route, we spent the night with Jim, Dennis' brother, and Fran (Jim's wife) at their home in Franklin and then stayed with Professor Ram Desai in Buffalo. While my parents proceeded to Toronto to meet with the Shastris, I stayed back to stay with Dennis at his parents' house in Tonawanda. Everyone we met and spent time with treated us like a member of their family. While the gatherings were simple, the heart connections ran deep. Appa seemed to naturally make this deep heart connection with devotees from all over the world and from all walks of life. When they visited me in California, there was so much warmth and happiness and joy that they shared with the devotees. During the last three trips to California, we always spent a weekend with Joan and Matthew Greenblatt. The meetings were so joyful and happy. They would often reminisce about the early days of Arunachala Ashrama and the Nova Scotia Ashrama and share stories about the old devotees.

We will miss our father dearly but take great solace that he was doing something that he loved until the

very end, which is to serve the ashram and the devotees. It was an exemplary life of great beauty and dedication. Thank you.

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya



Sri Mani is standing at the side of Sri Bhagavan.

Sri T.N. Venkataraman and children (left to right front row) Ganesan, Mani, Lakshmi and Sundaram. The taller girl in the photo is Ramani, their cousin, while attendant Rangaswami is seen in the background.

The program concluded with a talk by Dr. Anand Ramanan, President of Sri Ramanasramam, who reminded us that the highest tribute that we can pay to Sri Mani is to consecrate our lives to Sri Bhagavan's teachings and to attain Self-realization.

The program in its entirety can be viewed here on [Arunachala Ashrama's Youtube channel](#).

“Atithi Dēvo Bhava” The Service of God Through the Service of Devotees - Reminiscences

by Marye Tonnaire

Marye Tonnaire has resided in Tiruvannamalai and known Sri Mani and his family for many years. In this article, Marye shares her reminiscences about the friendship and guidance she received from him and his unending kindness toward all of Sri Bhagavan's devotees.

Mani Anna was indeed my elder brother in Sri Bhagavan and for almost 40 years. What is amazing

about Mani Anna is that everyone he touched felt that they were extra special in his eyes. For the devotees, Mani Anna's passing was a terrible shock, and we are still paralyzed and grief stricken. But for him it was beautiful: quick and apparently painless – no hospital, no machines, no feeling that he had become a burden on anyone – just a natural end for a natural man. He went peacefully at Mangala Nivas, the family home in Ramanagar. What good fortune to shed the body at the feet of Arunachala, in Tiruvannamalai the town where he had been born, and where he had dedicated his whole life in the service of Sri Bhagavan through the ashram and the devotees. When devotees went to the house to honor

Mani Anna as is done in the Hindu tradition, despite the grief there was such a feeling of all-prevading peace.

Mani Anna was a skilled manager for the ashram. He was stern when he had to be with both devotees and with ashram workers, but the main way he interacted with people was through immense love and everyone felt it. It was beautiful to see how all the ashram workers adored him and carried out their tasks in the spirit of service to Bhagavan. I remember him recently telling some young, new workers who were going to bring the carts of food for Narayanan Seva, that they should always remember that this was not just a simple distribution of food to the sadhus and poor people around the ashram; this was nothing less than supreme Service to the Lord.

Mani's immense love for people extended even beyond Ramana bhaktas. People all over held him in great esteem. The love that poured forth in such abundance from the heart of Mani Anna included animals, birds, trees, flowers and plants and even insects like the ashram bees. Many times over the years Mani would take me for a walk to show me a new tree or a new plant. He knew all the names of the ashram trees and plants in Tamil, English and the botanical Latin names as well. He loved the peacocks and always pointed out when they had their little ones. He was extremely fond of all the cows and knew many of them by name as well. On certain occasions he would invite me to join him in the gosala to feed greens to the cows, sometimes with his family members and other devotees. He would always recall how beholden the ashram is to Cow Lakshmi who gave birth to many calves and helped the gosala to grow into what it has become.

When I was working in Europe during the late 80s and 90s, I could only come to the ashram as a visitor. I was grateful for the 4 to 6 weeks in summer that were allotted to us in Europe. Sometimes I could get extra time to come at Deepam as well, and I was thankful to Bhagavan that my superiors would give me the time to go when I asked for it. Mani Anna, who by then had joined the ashram permanently, was a dear, familiar and welcoming presence to all the devotees who would come from abroad as I did. We never, ever felt like "foreigners" on foreign soil.

Mani Anna made us all feel like an integral part of the Ramana family coming back home to their Father's house, and this feeling of being welcome and welcomed we had also felt very strongly from Mani Anna's father "Venkatoo", later Swami Ramanananda, his brothers Sundaram Anna and Ganesan when the latter was still working at the ashram. I always felt that Mani Anna, like his brother Sundaram Anna, the ashram President, embodied the statement from the Taittiriya Upanisad, "*Atithi Dēvo Bhava*" – "the guest is God." This is chanted every morning during Veda Parayana at Sri Bhagavan's shrine, and Mani Anna took it to heart.

Mani Anna used to attend the milk offering in the morning and then greet the devotees on the steps of the dining hall. Sundaram Anna would greet the devotees before meals as well before his health started to decline. Often Sundaram Anna and Mani Anna would invite devotees in for breakfast even though we were staying outside the ashram – not every day, but just enough to make us feel part of the ashram family. Having idlis and coffee at the ashram was a wonderful boost for the climb up to Skandasramam and Virupaksha Cave afterwards.

Mani Anna used to attend the pujas and Tamil Parayana. I would often see him sitting in deep meditation in the Old Hall. We speak a lot about Mani Anna's seva and his bhakti, but there was also a profound meditative side to him which was discreet, in keeping with his humility and deep reverence for Sri Bhagavan – Mani Anna was indeed a multifaceted gem.



*The moksha deepam lit in front of
Sri Bhagavan's samadhi*

Bhagavan's Presence Through His Devotees by Darlene Delisi Karamanos

Bhagavan blesses us with the company of devotees who bring his presence into focus. Devotees at the Nova Scotia Ashrama were treated to a visit with relatives of Lakshmana Sarma: Veidhya Pradeep Kumar and her daughter, Shraddha.

Lakshmana Sarma, you will recall, was an ardent devotee of Sri Bhagavan. He learned Sri Bhagavan's work, *Forty Verses on Reality (Ulladu Narpadu)*, directly from Sri Bhagavan himself. He wrote a Sanskrit translation of this work with Sri Bhagavan's encouragement, *Sri Ramana Hridayam*, and also translated it into English under the title *Revelation*.



Sarada and Kameswaran Sarma with Sri Bhagavan

In this photo with Sri Bhagavan, Veidhya's grandmother, Sarada, and grandfather, Kameswaran Sarma, the fourth of six sons born to Lakshmana Sarma, are expecting their first child. The photo was taken in 1944 in the month of September.

It was Kameswaran who told Sri Bhagavan, after seeing Sarada, that he wanted to get married.

Sri Bhagavan said, "No, you need not get married, it is not necessary."

But it was destined to happen, and the marriage did take place. After the wedding the couple came to Sri Bhagavan who blessed them abundantly with a gracious smile.

Also as destiny would have it, Kameswaran passed away at an early age when Veidhya's grandmother was only twenty-three. It was for her to provide for

and raise their three daughters, with the assistance of their maternal uncle.

Veidhya's mother, Srimati Geetha, who is visiting Canada from Pondicherry at present, is the youngest of the three daughters born to Sarada and Kameswaran Sarma.

Srimati Geetha shared with us the following incident: Sarada's brother was named Ramanan. One day the young boy suffered a snake bite and he was taken by Veidhya's great grandmother, Thangammal, directly to Sri Bhagavan. The child had already turned blue and others had lost hope for his survival, but Thangammal ran with him in her arms and laid him on Bhagavan's lap. It was about 8 p.m. Sri Bhagavan touched him and said, "OK, Ramanan, get up, get up." The child opened his eyes and got up. As is usual with our Bhagavan, this was done in a low key manner.

Veidhya remembers Sarada telling her, "Always have faith in Bhagavan. Through all the ups and downs of life, never lose faith in Bhagavan." Veidhya's daughter is named Shraddha, meaning Faith.

Both mother and daughter were very happy to be in Bhagavan's Nova Scotia Ashrama, participating in the morning and evening practice, hiking up to the cabin where they chanted *The Marital Garland of Letters to Arunachala* and *Five Verses to Arunachala* and mixing with all the visitors. We were truly blessed by their visit.



Veidhya and Shraddha at Arunachala Ashrama

Advent At Arunachala Celebrations Nova Scotia, Canada

You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the 126th anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala. The program will include parayanams, bhajans, talks, followed by prasad (lunch).

Sunday, September 4th, 2022 – 11:00 AM AST

Arunachala Ashrama

1451 Clarence Road

Bridgetown, Nova Scotia B0S 1C0

Tel: (902) 665 2090

Nova-Scotia@ashrama.org

Advent At Arunachala Global Celebrations New York

Please join us for the celebration of the 126th anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala. The function will be broadcast from Arunachala Ashrama in New York from 6:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. EST and will include presentations by Ramana Satsang groups world-wide. The program will be streamed on the Ashrama's [YouTube channel](#).

Sunday September 11th, 2022 – 6 a.m. EST

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37. 'During the search, duality; on attainment, unity' – this doctrine too is false. When eagerly he sought himself and later when he found himself, the tenth man in the story was the tenth man and none else.

38. If we are the doers of deeds, we should reap the fruits they yield. But when we question, 'Who am I, the doer of this deed?' and realize the Self, the sense of agency is lost and the three karmas slip away. And eternal is this liberation.

– *Forty Verses on Reality (Ulladu Narpadu)*

Updates

For the latest information regarding Arunachala Ashrama, New York Please visit our [home page](#). The Ashrama has been having regular satsangs online which can be found on our [upcoming virtual events](#) page

The Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama (see our [home page](#)) will be welcoming overnight guests beginning May 11, 2022. Guests are required to make arrangements ahead of time by contacting nova-scotia@ashrama.org and submitting proof of being fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Guests will be responsible for cooking vegetarian food during their stay and ensuring that their rooms have been cleaned and their linens and towels are laundered and replaced before they leave.

As usual, the Mandiram is open to daytime visitors for prayers and meditation. We ask that groups call ahead of time to avoid exceeding our limit based on NS COVID19 restrictions. Tel: 902-824-2297

For a listing of other centers that are offering virtual satsangs at this time, please see our [online satsangs](#).

For Ramana Satsang locations in the USA and Canada, please see [this listing](#).

THE MAHARSHI is a free bimonthly newsletter published by Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center, New York. To subscribe online or access all back issues, please visit "www.arunachala.org/newsletters/". Books, DVDs and audio CDs on Sri Ramana Maharshi are also available at "www.arunachala.org/bookstore/".

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