

# SURPASSING LOVE AND GRACE

*By His devotees*



SRI RAMANASRAMAM  
TIRUVANNAMALAI  
2001

© Sri Ramanasramam  
Tiruvannamalai

First edition 2001 - 2000 copies

CC No:

ISBN: 81-88018-60-0

Price: Rs.

*Published by*  
V. S. RAMANAN  
President, Board of Trustees  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM  
Tiruvannamalai 606 603  
S. India

*Typeset at:*  
Sri Ramanasramam

*Offset by:*  
Kartik Offset Printers  
Madras - 600 015

# CONTENTS

Foreword	..	vii
1. Reminiscences-I — <i>Viswanatha Swami</i>		
—At the Feet of Bhagavan Ramana	..	1
—In the Proximity of Bhagavan	..	5
—With the Two Great Poet-Disciples	..	9
—Two Great Men Meet Bhagavan	..	12
2. From Early Days	..	14
3. Scenes from Ramana's Life		
— <i>B.V. Narasimha Swami</i>	..	19
4. How Bhagavan Came to Me		
— <i>Sadhu Trivenigiri Swami</i>	..	30
— <i>Y.N. Athavale</i>	..	33
— <i>Santhanam Iyengar</i>	..	37
— <i>Santha Rangachary</i>	..	39
— <i>Anonymous</i>	..	45
— <i>T.R.A. Narayana</i>	..	49
5. Incidents Connected with the Life of Sri Bhagavan		
— <i>M.V. Krishnan</i>	..	55
6. Lessons from Bhagavan's Life — <i>K.R.K. Murthy</i>	..	60
7. Loving Devotion — <i>T.P.R.</i>	..	62
8. Memorable Days with the Sage of Arunachala		
— <i>Swami Desikananda</i>	..	65
— <i>Santi</i>	..	68
9. Sri Bhagavan's Replies to Questions	..	73
10. Remembering Ramana — <i>Chagganlal Yogi</i>		
—Sri Ramana — The Destroyer of Miseries	..	77
—Sri Ramana The Nameless	..	83
—Sri Ramana's Sense of Equality	..	84
—Sri Ramana's Sermon of Love	..	89
—Homage to Sri Ramana	..	93
—Ramana — An Embodiment of Silence	..	96
II. Reminiscences-II		
— <i>Dr. Haribhai M. Adalja</i>	..	97
— <i>K.R.K. Murthi</i>	..	98

— <i>S. Kannikeswarier</i>	..	100
— <i>S. Subramania Iyer</i>	..	101
— <i>R. Narayana Iyer (Sub-Registrar)</i>	..	103
— <i>K. Arunachalam</i>	..	105
— <i>Panthalu Lakshmi Narayana Sastri</i>	..	109
— <i>B.N. Datar</i>	..	114
— <i>Mrs. Merston</i>	..	117
— <i>Sadhu Bramaniam</i>	..	121
— <i>Bharatananda</i>	..	125
— <i>Srimat Puragra Parampanthi</i>	..	128
— <i>Dr. T.N.Krishnaswamy</i>	..	132
— <i>Swami Satyananda</i>	..	133
12. Humour of Sri Bhagavan — <i>Evelyn Kaselow</i>	..	136
13. Conversations with Bhagavan — <i>Swami Madhava Thirtha</i>	..	139
14. Dreams — <i>A.W. Chadwick</i>	..	148
15. Lest We Forget. . . — <i>Natesan</i>	..	150
— <i>K. Venkataraman</i>	..	153
16. The Turning Point — <i>Natanananda</i>	..	156
17. Beyond Categories — “ <i>Sein</i> ”	..	158
18. <i>Arunachala Ashtaka</i> and <i>Siddha Purusha</i> — <i>Dr M. Anantanarayana Rao</i>	..	160
19. In To Bhagavan’s Fold — <i>K. Padmanabhan</i>	..	169
20. More than a Dream? — <i>T.P.R.</i>	..	172
21. Ramana As I Know Him — <i>C. Rajagopalachari</i>	..	176
— <i>P.S. Jivanna Rao</i>	..	176
— <i>N. Ponniah</i>	..	178
— <i>Swami Sivananda, Rishikesh</i>	..	181
— <i>Dr M. Anantanarayana Rao</i>	..	183
— <i>Swami Iswarananda</i>	..	188
— <i>Dr T.M.P. Mahadevan</i>	..	190
— <i>M.S. Madhava Rao</i>	..	193
— <i>Dr S.S. Sastry</i>	..	195
22. Silent and Solid Grace — <i>K.R.K. Murthy</i>	..	197

23.SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI	
— <i>N.N. Rajan</i>	.. 202
— <i>Kundamal A. Mahatani</i>	.. 203
— <i>Prof. D. Gurumurti</i>	.. 206
24.What is Life? — <i>Dr M. Anantanarayana Rao</i>	.. 209
25.With the Sage of the Holy Hill — <i>Dilip Kumar Roy</i>	.. 212
26.PEACE THAT PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING	
— <i>Swami Prasannananda Guru</i>	.. 223
— <i>K.R.K. Murthy</i>	.. 226
27.Grapefruit — <i>S.S. Cohen</i>	.. 229
28.Gospel of Sri Ramana — <i>Swami Pragnananda</i>	.. 232
29.Liberation During Last Moments	
— <i>Viswanatha Swami</i>	.. 235
30.The Great Event — <i>R. Narayana Iyer</i>	.. 241
31.A Dialogue — <i>A.W. Chadwick</i>	.. 244
32.Bhagavan Sri Ramana — <i>Mrs. Eleanor P. Noye</i>	.. 249
33.I Am! I Am! I Am! — <i>P.S. Jivanna Rao</i>	.. 251
34.Means and Ends — <i>A.W. Chadwick</i>	.. 254
35.Portrait of the Guru — <i>Atmananda Giri</i>	.. 257
36.Ramana Lives — <i>A.W. Chadwick</i>	.. 259
37.Ramanashram Today — <i>Arthur Osborne</i>	.. 263
38.Seekers and "Seekers" — <i>S.S. Cohen</i>	.. 270
39.The Maharshi of Arunachala — <i>Sadhu Ekarasa</i>	.. 274
40.The Unfinished Game — <i>Ratanlal Joshi</i>	.. 282
41.Bhagavan on Reincarnation	.. 285
42.Effect of Maharshi's Picture — <i>A Polish Devotee</i>	.. 290
43.Ever-Present — <i>Duncan Greenless</i>	.. 292



## FOREWORD

We present in this volume the reminiscences and reflections on Ramanā's teaching by his devotees. These articles are taken from *The Mountain Path* and *The Call Divine*.

In this collection of articles those devotees who were blessed enough to sit at his feet share their experiences with the reader. Here one can find that there is an underlying unity of deep devotion and love for the Master.

What was the first impression on seeing him? From the moment Bhagavan's eyes fell on a devotee, the latter's heart went out to him in spontaneous love and reverence. The visit to Ramanasramam was a shattering experience for some of them. They literally fell in love with him. This love which had been awakened was the kind which totally transcended the physical and material and created an awareness of a different kind of consciousness which can only be described as a mindless rapture, pure joy.

What was their experience while they sat in his proximity? Sitting in his presence one was convinced for the time being that all troubles were ended and one was forced back on oneself in spite of all obstacles. And this was the wonder of his presence. They saw before their eyes the grand manifestation of that majestic light. They saw the grandeur of that spiritual light before them. If one could not see it, it was one's fault.

The most remarkable feature about Bhagavan's form were his eyes, extremely penetrating and profoundly fascinating. Once you had come within the range of those eyes beaming with love and affection there was no need for any other *sadhana*.

Once those eyes had rested upon you there was no more fear or worry for you.

In a great many ways did he shower his love and grace on them. It is said that love was the force that created the universe. Perhaps it is. The force of such unselfish love as his, purifies our hearts, when all other methods prove futile. No other discipline can give the disciple the true peace which the Master gives. His affection was always there; and as fire melts ice so his affection made worries melt.

Sri Maharshi was a centre of love to his disciples. He left us his love and where else in the world could be found a purifying power such as this to bring peace to our hearts.

The devotees's hearts were kindled to deep affection while he taught them by word and example, while he silently showered the nectar of grace upon them all.

What was the change in their life after coming to him? It is an unlocated, pervasive state of being sparked off by some kind of recognition and it stays with you and you are never the same again. We may not claim that the devotees's life was transformed after seeing him.

No. Most of them got married, set up house, had children, started a career of their own. Their *grihasthasramam* became their main preoccupation. But their visits to Ramanasramam had done something to them. It had left a mark on their minds and hearts. Although some of their material circumstances underwent changes for the worse their inner life was tranquil, always, since the day they had his darshan; for invariably they experienced his grace, particularly when they were most dejected.

Whenever they felt that, that they wanted to go away some where, away from home, family, friends, books, mistakes, fears and sorrows, their mind automatically turned to Ramanasramam. And their body follows. They make the



journey to Tiruvannmalai, walk into the Ashram, enter the Hall, and they are 'home' and totally at peace.

The picture of the Ashram and of the Maharshi are always in their minds like the background curtain of a stage. Whenever they found that "the world was too much with them" the wish to go to Ramanasramam possesses them like a hunger. Even during their busiest hour a sudden look at a picture of the Maharshi hanging on the wall would momentarily root them to the spot and the mind would suddenly go blank. Such was, such is and such ever will be the Maharshi's influence upon those who approach with piety and devotion.

In the following pages they speak of him in awed tones and with overwhelming sensitivity and love. The reader is invited to participate in this spiritual feast.

Sri Ramanasramam  
Tiruvannamalai 606 603  
16th May 2001

V.S. Ramanan  
PRESIDENT

That light whose smile kindles the Universe,  
That Beauty in which all things work and move,  
That Benediction which the eclipsing curse  
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love  
Which through the web of being blindly wove  
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,  
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of  
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me  
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

– P. B. Shelly

# REMINISCENCES-I

*Viswanatha Swami*

## I

### AT THE FEET OF BHAGAVAN RAMANA

**M**Y first *darshan* of Bhagavan Sri Ramana was in January, 1921 at Skandashram, which is on the eastern slope of Arunachala and looks like the very heart of the majestic Hill. It is a beautiful quiet spot with a few coconut and other trees and a perennial crystal-clear spring. Bhagavan was there as the very core of such natural beauty.

I saw in him something quite arresting which clearly distinguished him from all others I had seen. He seemed to live apart from the physical frame, quite detached from it. His look and smile had remarkable spiritual charm. When he spoke, the words seemed to come out of an abyss. One could see immaculate purity and non-attachment in him and his movements. I sensed something very refined, lofty and sacred about him. In his vicinity the mind's distractions were overpowered by an austere and potent calmness and the unique bliss of peace was directly experienced. This I would call *Ramana Lahari*, 'the blissful atmosphere of Ramana'. In this ecstasy of grace one loses one's sense of separate individuality and there remains something grand and all-pervading, all-devouring. This indeed is the spirit of Arunachala which swallows up the whole universe by its gracious effulgence.

There were about ten devotees living with him there, including his mother and younger brother. One of them was Vallimalai Murugar, who for a while every morning sang the Tamil songs of the *Tirupugazh* with great fervour. These well-known songs, the remarkable outpourings of the famous devotee, Sri Arunagirinathar, are songs in praise of Subrahmanya. When he sang, Bhagavan used to keep time (*tala*) by tapping with two small sticks on the two rings of an iron brazier of live coal kept in front of him. Fumes of incense spread out in rolls from the brazier, suffused with the subtle holy atmosphere of Bhagavan. While Bhagavan's hands were tapping at the brazier thus, his unfathomable look of grace gave one a glimpse of the 'beyond' in silence. It was an unforgettable experience.

There was also a devotee from Chidambaram, Subrahmanya Iyer, who often sang with great fervour *Tiruvachakam*, hymns in praise of Arunachala by Bhagavan, and songs in praise of Bhagavan also. One morning when he began a song with the refrain "*Ramana Sadguru, Ramana Sadguru, Ramana Sadguru Rayane,*" Bhagavan also joined in the singing. The devotee was amused and began to laugh at Bhagavan himself singing his own praise. He expressed his amusement, and Bhagavan replied, "What is extraordinary about it? Why should one limit Ramana to a form of six feet? Is it not the all-pervading Divinity that you adore when you sing '*Ramana Sadguru, Ramana Sadguru*'? Why should I not also join in the singing?" We all felt lifted to Bhagavan's standpoint.

The inmates of the Ashram used to get up at dawn and sing some devotional songs in praise of Arunachala and Bhagavan Ramana before beginning their day's work. Niranjanananda Swami told Bhagavan that I could recite hymns in Sanskrit, and Bhagavan looked at me expectantly. Seeing that it was impossible to avoid it, I recited a few verses in Sanskrit. When I

had finished, Bhagavan gently looked at me and said, “You have learned all this. Not so in my case. I knew nothing, had learned nothing before I came here. Some mysterious power took possession of me and effected a thorough transformation. Whoever knew then what was happening to me? Your father, who was intending in his boyhood to go to the Himalayas for *tapas*, has become the head of a big family. And I, who knew nothing and planned nothing, have been drawn and kept down here for good! When I left home (in my seventeenth year), I was like a speck swept on by a tremendous flood. I knew not my body or the world, whether it was day or night. It was difficult even to open my eyes; the eyelids seemed to be glued down. My body became a mere skeleton. Visitors pitied my plight as they were not aware how blissful I was. It was after years that I came across the term ‘*Brahman*’ when I happened to look into some books on *Vedanta* brought to me. Amused, I said to myself, ‘Is this known as *Brahman*?’”

One of the earliest devotees, Sivaprakasam Pillai, has referred to this at the beginning of his brief biography of Bhagavan in Tamil verse (*Sri Ramana Charita Ahaval*) as, “One who became a knower of *Brahman* without knowing even the term ‘*Brahman*’.” Sivaprakasam Pillai used to sit in a corner in Bhagavan’s presence, as the very embodiment of humility.

Finding that I knew a bit of Sanskrit, Bhagavan asked me to take down a copy of *Sri Ramana Gita* and give it to my father. I did so, and it was only after going through it that my father understood Bhagavan. Yet I myself had not studied its contents. It was only at the end of 1922 that I happened to go through the thrilling verses in praise of Bhagavan Ramana and, profoundly moved, I made up my mind to return to Bhagavan for good. Thus, *Sri Ramana Gita* served to give direction to me in a critical period of my life when I was thinking of dedicating myself solely to the spiritual pursuit.

As it was impossible to get the permission of my father, I left home unknown to anybody and reached Tiruvannamalai on the evening of the 2nd of January, 1923. Hearing that Bhagavan had left Skandashram and was then living in a cottage adjoining his mother's *samadhi* on the southern side of Arunachala, I made my way straight to it, after meditating for a while at sunset time. Proceeding round the Hill, I reached the cottage where Bhagavan was then living. Entering it, I saw Bhagavan reclining peacefully on an elevated dais. As I bowed and stood before him, he asked me, "Did you take the permission of your parents to come over here?" I was caught, and I replied that he need not ask me about it since he had himself irresistibly attracted me to his feet. With a smile, Bhagavan advised me to inform my parents of my whereabouts so that they might be somewhat free from anxiety. I wrote to my father the next day and saw his letter to the Ashram enquiring about me the day after.

There was a gathering of devotees there and I came to know that it was for the forty-third birthday celebration of Bhagavan the next day. So I learned that I had come to Bhagavan on the evening of the famous *Ardra Darsanam* day.

Early next morning there was a gathering of devotees – they were sitting before Bhagavan. But my attention was particularly gripped by a radiant personality amidst the gathering. He was, I came to know, Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri. At once I saw that he was not merely a *sastri*, a learned man, but a poet and a *tapaswin*. His broad forehead, bright eyes, aquiline nose, charming face and beard, and the melodious ring in his voice – all these proclaimed that he was a *rishi* to be ranked with the foremost of the Vedic Seers. There was authority, dignity and sweetness in his talk and his eyes sparkled as he spoke. He recited the following verse (*sloka*) in praise of Bhagavan, which he had just then composed, and explained its import:

*“It is effulgent Devi Uma sparkling in your eyes  
 dispelling the ignorance of devotees,  
 It is Lakshmi Devi, the consort of lotus-eyed Vishnu,  
 alive in your lotus-face,  
 It is Para Vak Saraswati, the consort of Brahma,  
 dancing in your talk,  
 Great Seer, Ramana, the Teacher of the whole world,  
 How can mortal man praise you adequately?”*

## II

### IN THE PROXIMITY OF BHAGAVAN

AFTER THE DEVOTEES who had gathered for the birthday celebration of Bhagavan left the Ashram, I approached him with my problem: “How am I to rise above my present animal existence? My own efforts in that direction have proved futile and I am convinced that it is only a superior might that could transform me. And that is what has brought me here.” Bhagavan replied with great compassion: “Yes, you are right. It is only on the awakening of a power mightier than the senses and the mind that these can be subdued. If you awaken and nurture the growth of that power within you, everything else will be conquered. One should sustain the current of meditation uninterrupted. Moderation in food and similar restraints will be helpful in maintaining the inner poise.” It was this grace of Bhagavan that gave a start to my spiritual career. A new faith was kindled within me and I found in Bhagavan the strength and support to guide me forever.

Another day, questioned about the problem of *brahmacharya*, Bhagavan replied: “To live and move in *Brahman* is real *brahmacharya*; continence, of course, is very helpful and

indispensable to achieve that end. But so long as you identify yourself with the body, you can never escape sex-thought and distraction. It is only when you realise that you are formless Pure Awareness that sex distinction disappears for good and that is *brahmacharya*, effortless and spontaneous.”

A week after I arrived, I got the permission of Bhagavan to live on *madhukari*, i.e., begged food. In that context, Bhagavan spoke as follows: “I have experience of it; I lived on such food during my stay at Pavalakkunru<sup>1</sup> to avoid devotees bringing for me special rich food. It is altogether different from professional mendicancy. Here you feel yourself independent and indifferent to everything worldly. It has a purifying effect on the mind.”

Four months after my arrival at Arunachala, my parents came there to have *darshan* of Bhagavan and take me back home. Though they did not succeed in this latter intention they were somehow consoled by Bhagavan before they returned. He asked them if it was possible to wean one from a course one had taken with all one’s heart and soul. Parents might as a matter of duty try it if it was a wrong course that one had taken. The problem did not arise if the course taken was intrinsically good.

My father was a cousin of Bhagavan, four or five years older than he, and knew him very well as Venkataraman before he left home for Tiruvannamalai. Though he had heard from others about Bhagavan’s spiritual greatness and had also gone through his teaching in *Sri Ramana Gita* and verses in praise of him by his (scholar-poet) disciple, Ganapati Muni, he was not sure of what his reaction would be on seeing Bhagavan. He decided to go to him with an open mind and see for himself what he was. But the moment he sighted him in the stone *mantapa* (on the other side of the Ashram), he was overpowered by a sense of genuine

---

<sup>1</sup> A small hillock, a spur of Arunachala on the east.



veneration, fell at his feet in adoration and said: “There is nothing of the Venkataraman whom I knew very well in what I see in front of me!” And Bhagavan replied with a smile: “It is long since that fellow disappeared once and for all.”

My father then explained that he had not visited him for so long because he did not have enough of dispassion and non-attachment to approach him. Bhagavan replied, “Is that so? You seem to be obsessed by the delusion that you are going to achieve it in some distant future. But, if you recognise your real nature, the Self, to what is it attached? Dispassion is our very nature.”

As the Ashram cottage was being repaired, Bhagavan stayed in the huge stone *mantapa* on the other side of the road during daytime and devotees had *darshan* of him there. Bhagavan used to dine with others under the shade of a huge mango tree within the Ashram premises. The cool, clear water of the Ashram well was kept in big pots at the foot of the tree. We enjoyed the shade of the tree and the grace of Bhagavan which like a cool breeze blew off man’s torments.

As advised by Bhagavan I engaged myself in nonstop japa, day and night, except during hours of sleep. And I studied *Sri Ramana Gita* in the immediate presence of Bhagavan drinking in the import of every *sloka* in it. Bhagavan explained to me his own hymns in praise of Arunachala. Even during his morning and evening walks I used to follow him, hearing his explanations of his inspired words. Early one morning there was none else near Bhagavan and he suggested that we both might go round Arunachala and return before others could notice his absence and begin to search for him. He took me by the forest path and suggested that Sankara’s “Hymn in Praise of Dakshinamurti” might be taken up for discussion on the way. And within three hours we reached Pandava Thirtham on the slopes of Arunachala, a little to the east of the Ashram, where he used to bathe on a few former occasions.

I shall not pretend that I understood everything that Bhagavan said in explaining the import of the hymn, but there was the spiritual exhilaration of his company in solitude and that was enough for me.

I had learned by heart, even before coming to Bhagavan, the three *vallis* of the famous *Taittiriya Upanishad*, which is being chanted every morning before Bhagavan at his Ashram even today. When I expressed to Bhagavan my aspiration to learn the import of the *Upanishad*, he directed me to Ganapathi Muni, familiarly known as Nayana, who was then living in the Mango Tree Cave on Arunachala which had been Bhagavan's summer residence during his stay at the Virupaksha Cave. It was a cool spot under a big mango tree with a spring of crystal-clear water a little above it. I went to the cave and waited at its outer precincts. Within a few minutes Ganapati Muni came out. There was the fragrance of *tapas* in his presence and in the whole atmosphere. After sitting in silence before him for a few minutes, I asked him for the explanation of a passage in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* embodying the experience of Sage Trisanku, beginning *aham vrikshasya rariva*, meaning, 'I am the Force operating behind the Tree of Existence'.

Nayana gave such a lucid and illuminating explanation of it that I decided that there was no need to ask him further questions; every word coming out of his mouth had scriptural clarity and sanctity. And yet he used to direct to Bhagavan those who went to him, saying: "To learn from him first-hand has a special effect." And Bhagavan, on his part, used to send those who approached him in connection with traditional worship to Nayana, as he was the authority on the subject. Such was the relationship between the Master and his famous disciple. We have had opportunities of noticing the special regard Bhagavan had for this learned poet-disciple who from his early youth had dedicated his whole life to *tapas*.

### III

## WITH THE TWO GREAT POET-DISCIPLES

SRI MURUGANAR CAME to Bhagavan during September holidays in 1923. He was then a Tamil Pandit in a Christian girls high school in Madras. He had studied *Tirukural* with great devotion and was following its teachings in his own life. No wonder he was held in the highest esteem by his pupils as well as by his fellow teachers.

He came to know of Bhagavan Ramana through some devotees in Madras as well as Dandapani Swami, who was his father-in-law. Conditions in his family life also favoured renunciation: yet he continued working, coming to Bhagavan during holidays. He was so keenly devoted to Bhagavan that he used to come direct from his school to Sri Ramanasramam with his coat and turban on and return to Madras only when his school reopened. He was drawn to Mahatma Gandhi, whose saintly life in the midst of worldly activities commanded his respect and esteem. He composed several poems in praise of him as well as national songs in general, which were published by Sri Ramana Padananda in 1943 with the title *Sutantara Gitam*.

Being a scholar, poet and devotee, he brought to Bhagavan on his first visit, a decad of verses, in Tamil, each stanza ending “...*desika Ramana ma deve*” (Great Lord and Teacher Ramana!). During one of his later visits in December he composed a poem beginning, “*Annamalai Ramanan...*,” in praise of Bhagavan following the pattern of *Tiruvembavai* of *Tiruvachakam*. Seeing that, Bhagavan suggested to him that he could compose songs following the themes and plan of *Tiruvachakam* of Manikkavachakar. Muruganar felt shocked at the idea and exclaimed: “Where is Manikkavachakar and where am I?” But later, he thought it was a prompting from the Master, though

gently expressed, and began following the suggestion relying on Bhagavan's Grace. And the result is the magnificent collection of thrilling songs in Tamil, well-known as *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, the third edition of which was published by Sri Ramanasramam in 1974. Muruganar has also given us Bhagavan's teachings in Tamil verse form. The work is known as *Guru Vachaka Kovai* (English translation by Professor K. Swaminathan as *Garland of Guru's Sayings*). There are, moreover, thousands of his verses being arranged and published in several volumes under the title *Ramana Jnana Bodham*.

A few years after his coming to Bhagavan his mother passed away and Muruganar came and settled down at the feet of his Master. It was after this that he composed the numerous songs in *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* as his devotional offering to Bhagavan. Scholars who had worked with Muruganar on the Tamil Lexicon Committee say that Bhagavan Ramana chose a very worthy scholar to sing his glory. Poets worship the Divine through their poetry. That alone is sufficient *sadhana* for them. They are moulded unawares into the likeness of the object of their worship.

We have to be grateful to Muruganar for making Bhagavan write "*Upadesa Undiyar*" (*The Essence of all Teaching*) and "*Ulladu Narpadu*" (Forty Verses on Existence), which are the most important of Bhagavan's philosophical works. The beautiful song on "*Atma Vidya*" was also composed by Bhagavan at Muruganar's request.

Muruganar too chose like me to live independently. We have lived together on the Hill (Arunachala) near the Mango Tree Cave for some months. Ganapati Muni was then residing there. He felt an urge to see Bhagavan every evening and be with him for an hour or two. I used to accompany him. A few months later a room was found for him in the Palakothu flower garden adjoining the Ashram on the west. Bhagavan used to go alone to that side every day after lunch. Sometimes he would visit that room also.

Ganapati Muni once told Bhagavan that he had seen many other forests, but not the one at Arunachala. Bhagavan, who knew very well every inch of Arunachala, offered to take the Muni one day into the interior of the forest. Ganapati Muni could not bear even the slightest heat of the sun on account of a yogic experience he had, known as *Kapalabhedha* (breaking of the skull), and so Bhagavan waited for a cloudy day. Such a day came soon and Bhagavan asked me if it would suit Nayana to go into the forest then. I replied that he would gladly jump at the opportunity and went ahead to his room to inform him of Bhagavan's intention. In a few minutes Bhagavan came to our room in Palakothu and we three set out. Bhagavan took us through the third forest path. After going for more than a mile, Bhagavan chose a cool and shady spot adjoining a huge rock to rest a bit. As we were sitting there a rustling sound was heard indicating someone was approaching, and in a minute, Muruganar stood before us. Bhagavan put his finger on his nose and asked him with surprise: "How did you come here? Even a forest guard could not have found us here," and Muruganar replied, "I knew that Bhagavan had promised Nayana to take him into the forest on some suitable day. I also wanted to join the party and was coming to the Ashram earlier than usual. But today, not finding Bhagavan at the Ashram, I proceeded to Palakothu where I found Nayana's room locked. I learnt from the watchman Sabhapati that Bhagavan had gone towards the forest with Nayana and Viswanathan. I made my way straight to the forest. Going along the second forest path, I found a footpath going further into the interior. I took the path and straight I arrived here." Bhagavan replied: "Is there a short cut like that? We shall return by it." Nayana patted Muruganar and said: "It is an indication of how you are attuned to Bhagavan by his Grace." And we returned to the Ashram before 4 p.m.

I am thrilled when I recollect my intimate contact with Bhagavan and these two great poet-disciples of his.

## IV

## TWO GREAT MEN MEET BHAGAVAN

ACHYUTHADASA WAS ONE of the earliest to discern Sri Bhagavan's spiritual greatness. He was known as Abboy Naidu before he renounced the world, and was skilled in playing upon the *mridangam*.<sup>1</sup> He has composed Tamil *kirtanas* (songs) of great merit, which are devotional and *Advaitic*. Having heard about Sri Bhagavan he went to Gurumurtham<sup>2</sup>, the *samadhi* temple of a *sadhu* where Sri Bhagavan was living deeply immersed in *nirvikalpa samadhi*, during the closing years of the Nineteenth Century. He sat in front of Sri Bhagavan and waited. As Sri Bhagavan who was then a young lad, opened his eyes, he paid his respects to him, massaged his feet and exclaimed with great devotional fervour, "One may be a great scholar, an author or composer and everything else in the world, but it is indeed very rare to come across any one actually established in the Self Supreme like you."

He then announced to his own disciples that there was "something very rare at Tiruvannamalai," meaning Sri Bhagavan. Achyuthadasa's *samadhi* is at Kannamangalam, a few miles north of Arni, in the North Arcot District of Madras State.

This is an instance of how spiritually-minded people were impressed with Sri Bhagavan's greatness at the very sight of him, even in his early years at Tiruvannamalai.

Another great man who visited Sri Bhagavan and was greatly impressed was Sri Narayana Guru of Kerala. The latter is well-known in South India as a man of great *tapas* and a

---

<sup>1</sup> A small drum instrument used at Karnatic musical concerts.

<sup>2</sup> Situated near Kilnathur village, an Eastern suburb of Tiruvannamalai.

great social and religious reformer. He visited Sri Bhagavan when he was living at Skandashram. After paying his respects to Sri Bhagavan he sat silently watching him. People, young and old, paid their respects to him and sat or passed on, while Sri Bhagavan sat silently with unblinking, wide-open eyes. He took no particular notice of anybody. He did not enquire about the whereabouts of anybody. There was no welcome and no permission to go. But all the while he was beaming with blissful joy and the audience was partaking of it. At the invitation of Sri Bhagavan, Sri Narayana Guru took his lunch with him and his devotees, and later took leave of him, saying, “May it be the same way here also”, meaning that he might also be blessed so as to be established in the Self as Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan gave a gracious smile.

On reaching his place, Sri Narayana Guru wrote five verses in Sanskrit, known as *Nivritti Panchakam*, and sent it to the Ashram. The theme of the composition is that he alone enjoys the peace of release (*moksha*) who does not allow his mind to observe or enquire about the differences pertaining to relative (mundane) existence and has risen above all formalities of worldly life. Sri Narayana Guru used to be greatly pleased whenever any of his disciples visited Sri Bhagavan, and used to listen with delight to the details of their visits.

## FROM EARLY DAYS

*This article was culled from Swami Omkar's monthly magazine PEACE, dated September 1931. It describes the first visit of Paul Brunton to Sri Ramanasramam. His book, A Search in Secret India, did more than anything else in the early years to make Sri Bhagavan widely known. When Paul Brunton first came to India he was using the name of R. Rafael Hurst. Paul Brunton was his pen-name, which he later permanently adopted because the book he wrote under it brought him much recognition.*

*It is interesting to note that an event of a visit from a foreign journalist to the Ashram was in those far-off days something to be written about in the newspapers!*

IT was half past four in the afternoon and the disciples were sitting before the Maharishi in the hall and were talking about a notification that had appeared in the dailies to the effect that a Mr. Hurst and a Buddhist *bhikshu* were intending to visit the Ashram. The clock struck five and there entered the hall a man in European costume bearing a plate of sweets, followed by a Buddhist monk. The visitors offered the sweets to the Maharshi and then, after making obeisance in the Eastern way, they both squatted on the floor before him. These were the visitors of whom the disciples had been talking. The man in English clothes was R. Raphael Hurst, a London journalist who was then on a visit to India. He was keenly interested in the spiritual teaching of the East and thought that by an intelligent study and appreciation of it the cause of cooperation between East and West might be greatly promoted.



He came to Sri Ramanasramam after visiting many other ashrams. The *bhikshu* who came with him is also an Englishman by birth. He was formerly a military officer, but is now known as Swami Prajnanananda. He is the founder of the English Ashram at Rangoon. Both visitors sat spellbound before Maharshi and there was pin-drop silence.

The silence was broken by the person who had brought the visitors asking them if they would like to ask any questions. They were, however, not in a mood to do so, and thus an hour and a half passed. Mr. Hurst then stated the purpose of his visit. In a voice of intense earnestness, he said that he had come to India for spiritual enlightenment. "Not only myself," he added, "but many others also in the West are longing for the light from the East." The Maharshi sat completely indrawn and paid no attention. One of those who were sitting there asked them if they had come to the East for a study of comparative religions. "No," the *bhikshu* replied, "we could get that better in Europe. We want to find Truth; we want the light. Can we know the truth? Is it possible to get Enlightenment?" The Maharshi still remained silent and indrawn, and as the visitors wanted to take a walk the conversation ended and all dispersed.

Early next morning the visitors entered the hall and put some questions to the Maharshi with great earnestness. The conversation reproduced below is from rough notes taken while it was going on.

*Bhikshu:* We have travelled far and wide in search of Enlightenment. How can we get it?

*Maharshi:* Through deep enquiry and constant meditation.

*Hurst:* Many people do meditate in the West, but show no signs of progress.

*Maharshi:* How do you know that they don't make progress. Spiritual progress is not easily discernible.

*Hurst:* A few years ago I got some glimpses of the Bliss, but in the years that followed I lost it again. Then last year I again got it. Why is that?

*Maharshi:* You lost it because your meditation had not become natural (*sahaja*). When you become habitually intuned the enjoyment of spiritual beatitude becomes a normal experience.

*Hurst:* Might it be due to the lack of a Guru?

*Maharshi:* Yes, but the Guru is within. That Guru who is within is identical with your Self.

*Hurst:* What is the way to God-realization?

*Maharshi:* *Vichara*, asking yourself 'Who am I?', enquiry into the nature of your Self.

*Bhikshu:* The world is in a state of degeneration. It is getting constantly worse, spiritually, morally, intellectually and in every way. Will a spiritual teacher come to save it from chaos?

*Maharshi:* Inevitably. When goodness declines and wrong prevails He comes to reinstate goodness. The world is neither too good nor too bad: it is a mixture of (both) the two. Unmixed happiness and unmixed sorrow are not found in the world. The world always needs God and God always comes.

*Bhikshu:* Will He be born in the East or in the West?

The Maharshi laughed at the question but did not answer it.

*Hurst:* Does the Maharshi know whether an *avatara* already exists in the physical body?

*Maharshi:* He might.

*Hurst:* What is the best way to attain Godhood?

*Maharshi:* Self-enquiry leads to Self-Realization.

*Hurst:* Is a Guru necessary for spiritual progress?

*Maharshi:* Yes.

*Hurst:* Is it possible for the Guru to help the disciple forward on the path?

*Maharshi:* Yes.

*Hurst:* What are the conditions for discipleship?

*Maharshi:* Intense desire for Self-realization, earnestness and purity of mind.

*Hurst:* Does a Guru want to take control of the disciple's worldly affairs also?

*Maharshi:* Yes, everything.

*Hurst:* Can he give the disciple the spiritual spark that he needs?

*Maharshi:* He can give him all that he needs, this can be seen from experience.

*Hurst:* Is it necessary to be in physical contact with the Guru, and if so for how long?

*Maharshi:* It depends on the maturity of the disciple. Gunpowder catches fire in an instant, while it takes time to ignite coal.

*Hurst:* Is it possible to develop along the path of the Spirit while leading a life of work?

*Maharshi:* There is no conflict between work and wisdom. On the contrary, selfless work paves the way to Self-knowledge.

*Hurst:* If a person is engaged in work it will leave him little time for meditation.

*Maharshi:* It is only spiritual novices who need to set aside a special time for meditation. A more advanced person always enjoys the beatitude whether he is engaged in work or not. While his hands are in society he can keep his head cool in solitude.

*Bhikshu:* Have you heard of Meher Baba?

*Maharshi:* Yes.

*Bhikshu:* He says that he will become an *avatara* in a few years.

*Maharshi:* Every one is an *avatara* of God: "The kingdom of heaven is within you." Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Krishna,

all are in you. One who knows the Truth sees every one else as a manifestation of God.

*Bhikshu:* Will the Maharshi make a statement about Meher Baba?

*Maharshi:* What statement? That (the existence of an outer *avatara*) is a question which seekers of Truth need not consider.

*Bhikshu:* Will the world be rejuvenated?

*Maharshi:* There is One who governs the world and it is His business to look after it. He who has created the world knows how to guide it also.

*Bhikshu:* Does the world progress now?

*Maharshi:* If we progress the world progresses. As you are so is the world. Without understanding the Self what is the use of understanding the world? Without Self-knowledge, knowledge of the world is of no use. Dive inwards and find the treasure hidden there. Open your heart and see the world through the eyes of the true Self. Tear aside the veils and see the Divine Majesty of your own Self.

# SCENES FROM RAMANA'S LIFE

*B. V. Narasimha Swami*

## I

June 29, 1929

THE evening was calm but cloudy. Occasionally it would drizzle and in consequence it was somewhat cool. The windows of the Ashram hall were closed and Maharshi was seated as usual on the sofa. A number of devotees sat on the floor facing him. Mr. A. S. K., the sub-judge of Cuddalore, had come to see the Maharshi accompanied by two elderly ladies, his aunt and his cousin. He was also accompanied by Raghupati Sastri, a pleader of Cuddalore. Of the inmates and regular visitors there were about seven or eight, including Sri Niranjanananda Swami (Chinnaswami), Echammal, Ganapathi Bhat, Visvanathan Iyer, Muruganar, and Madhavan.

It was about 6-00 p.m., and the conversation was mainly carried on by the Maharshi and the Cuddalore visitors. Mr. A. S. K. started the discussion as to the impermanence of all mundane things by putting the question: "Has *sat-asat-vicharana* (enquiring into the real and the unreal) the efficacy, per se, to lead us to the realization of the One Imperishable?"

*Maharshi:* As propounded by all and realised by all true seekers after the Truth, *Brahma-Nishtha* (abidance in *Brahman*)

alone, if one may say so, can make us know and realise it, as being of us and in us. Any amount of *vivechana* (discrimination) can lead us only one step forward by making us *tyaginah* (renouncers), by goading us to discard the *abhasa* (the fleeting), and to hold fast only to the Eternal Truth and Presence.

Then the conversation turned upon the question as to whether *Iswara prasad* (the grace of God) is necessary for the attainment of *samrajyam* (Self rule) or whether an individual's honest and strenuous effort to attain it cannot, of itself, lead us to that from where there is no return. The Maharshi, with an ineffable smile which affected everyone present, replied:

“*Iswara prasadam* is essential to realisation. It leads to God realization. But *Iswara prasadam* is vouchsafed only to him who is a true *bhakta* or a *yogin* who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path towards freedom. . .”

Sri Raghupati then proceeded to question the Maharshi about the six yogic centres (*adharas*).

*R:* The six *adharas* are mentioned. But the *jiva* (individual soul) is said to reside in the heart. Is that not so?

*M:* Yes. The *jiva* is said to remain in the heart in *sushupti* (deep sleep) and in the brain in waking hours. The heart need not be taken to be the fleshy or muscular cavity with four chambers which propels the blood. There are indeed passages which support the idea. The description that it resembles the bud of the lotus, that it is above the navel and between the nipples, that the blood vessels terminate there appear to confirm that view. There is the stanza in “Forty Verses on Reality,” Supplement, v. 18, to the same effect. But there are many who hold that the term ‘heart’ denotes a set of ganglia or nerve centres about that region. Whichever view is correct does not matter to us. We are not concerned with anything less than our Self. About that we have certainty within ourselves. No doubts or discussions arise there. The ‘heart’ is used in the Vedas and Shastras to denote the place

whence the notion 'I' springs. Does it spring only from this fleshy ball? No. It springs from within us somewhere right in the middle of our being. The 'I' really has no locality. Everything is our self. There is nothing but That. So the heart must be said to be our entire body and the entire universe conceived as 'I'. But for the practice of the *abhyasi* (spiritual aspirant) we have to indicate a definite part of the universe or body, and so this heart is pointed out as the seat of the Self. But, in truth, we are everywhere. We are all that is and there is nothing else.

*R:* The six *adharas*, are they not the seats of the soul?

*M:* Those six are stated to be the seats of the soul for the spiritual aspirant's contemplation. He should fix his attention on *muladhara* first, think of the Self as residing there, and gradually go higher up.

*R:* There is a description of each of the six as the seat of a God, or a figure with a varying number of sides, and with a varying number of faces.

*M:* Yes. These are for purposes of concentration. They are interpreted symbolically.

*R:* There is a difference of opinion between two schools as to the order of the *adharas*. Sir John Woodroffe mentions that some (probably the Nepalese) place the *anahata* (the heart) next to *muladhara*, i.e., as the second of the six.

*M:* Yes, there may be variations. But the usual order here is *muladhara*, *swadishтана*, *manipuraka*, *anahata*, *visuddhi*, *ajna*, and *sahasrara chakra* on the top of all these six.

*R:* The *muladhara* is said to be triangular.

*M:* Yes. We may think of the *muladhara* or Self therein as arising from a three-sided figure.

*R:* The *kundalini* is said to rise from that.

*M:* Yes. That current is ourselves. By meditating on each *adhara*, the current advances higher and higher and various powers are said to develop.

R: It is said that *Iswara prasadam* is necessary to attain successful *samadhi*. Is that so?

M: We are *Iswara*. By *Iswara drishti* (seeing ourselves as *Iswara*) we are having *Iswara prasadam*. So we need *Iswara prasadam* to obtain *Iswara prasadam*.

Maharshi smiles as he says this and the devotees all laugh.

R: There is *Iswara anugraham* (grace). That is said to be distinct from *Iswara prasadam*.

M: The thought of *Iswara* is *Iswara prasadam*. His nature is *arul* or *prasadam*, i.e., grace. It is by *Iswara's* grace you think of *Iswara*.

R: Is not *Guru anugraham* the result of *Iswara anugraham*?

M: Why distinguish between the two? The Guru is viewed as *Iswara* and not as distinct from *Iswara*.

R: When an endeavour is made to lead the right life and to concentrate thought on our Self, there is often a downfall and break. What is to be done then?

M: It will come all right in the end. There is the steady impulse of your determination that sets you on your feet again after every fall or breakdown. Gradually the obstacles disappear and your current gets stronger. Everything comes right in the end. Steady determination is the thing required.

## II

### A day in 1929 (date not given)

SRI N. NATESIER, advocate of Madura, arrived this morning at 7-30 a.m. with his family and paid his respects to the Maharshi. He quoted a verse from the *Bhagavad Gita* and then asked: "How are doubts removed?"



*Maharshi:* By *granthichhedan* (cutting the knot).

*N. Natesier:* “All karmas get destroyed on seeing it.” How are we to have that experience? How does this illusion arise and to whom? How is it removed?

*M:* Instead of pursuing these inquiries as to how illusion arises and how it is removed, it is sufficient if we solve first the question “To whom?” it arises and then all questions are solved.

*N. N:* The doubts arise in my mind and to me. The books say that I must know myself and learn my own nature. But how is this to be done?

*M:* Seek your source. Find out whence the thought I springs.

*N.N:* How is that to be done? I don’t find that easy.

*M:* Do we not see things and know them clearly? But what object can we be surer of and know more certainly than our Self? This is direct experience and cannot be further described.

*N.N:* If we cannot see the Self, what is to be done?

*M:* Strenuous endeavour to know the Self. Develop the *antarmukham* or introspective attitude. Constantly put before your mind the query “What am I?” and in time you will be able to see your Self. How can you see your Self? You can see that which you have not seen before. But as to what you are always experiencing, there is no *drishti* (vision), strictly speaking. By *drishti*, the removal of the hindrance, viz., the idea that you are not seeing the Self, is meant.

*N.N:* It is said there are *trimurtis* (three aspects of God) and that Vishnu is in *Vaikunthalokam* (a heavenly region). Is that a real world, real like this world, or is it only a fiction?

*M:* If you and others and this world are real, why are *Mahavishnu* and *Vaikuntha* unreal? So long as you consider this reality, that also is reality.

*N.N:* I am not referring to the *Advaita* state or truth that *Brahman* alone is real and all else is fiction (*mithya*). But I am

trying to find out if, in *vyavahara* (empirical) stage, accepting the standards for truth that we have here, *Vaikuntha* is true. *Trikalabadhyam satyam* (true in all three states) is not the standard I take. In *vyavahara*, this body exists now and though it may not be found at other times, it is *satyam* or true in one sense. In that sense, is *Vaikuntha* true? Does it exist?

*M*: Why not?

*N.N*: Are Mahavishnu, Siva, etc., then included among *jivakoties*?

*M*: There are *jivas* and *Iswara*. *Jivas* are not the only beings known.

*N.N*: Is there *pralaya* (dissolution) for Mahavishnu, etc., and do these *trimurtis* also meet with their end? Or are they eternal? Do they exist with a body, like this *panchabhutika* (made of the five elements) body of ours? Have they a *vyavaharika satyatwam* (empirical reality)?

*M*: Instead of pursuing the inquiry in that direction, why don't you turn attention on yourself? To whom does the notion of *Vaikuntha* and Vishnu arise?

*N.N*: Is Mahavishnu or *Vaikuntha* a mere notion or idea?

*M*: Everything to you is a notion. Nothing appears to you except through the mind and as its notions.

*N.N*: Then Vishnu and *Vaikuntha* are creatures of my imagination and pure fiction? They have no more reality than the snake fancied in the rope or *sasa-vishanam*, the hare's horn?

*M*: No. When you consider your body and life and other things as real, how can you treat Mahavishnu or *Iswara* as unreal? if you are real, he is real, too.

*N.N*: It is not about reality in that sense that I am asking. *Sasa-vishanam*, for example, never exists. None has seen it. It is a case of *atyantika abhavam* (absolute nonexistence), whereas this body is felt and exists at least as an object of sense experienced for the present. There is a difference between the

two sorts of *abhavam*. Can it be said that *Vaikuntha* is as unreal as *sasa-vishanam*, the hare's horn?

*M*: No. Just as you experience this world and this body and say it is true, there are others who have experienced *Vaikuntha*, the *Vishnulokam*, and say that is true. Why call that alone unreal, while you talk of your sense experience as real?

*N.N*: Then *Vaikuntha* must exist somewhere. Where is it?

*M*: It is in you.

*N.N*: Then it is only my idea, what I can create and control?

*M*: Everything is like that – your idea.

*N.N*: That is coming back to the Advaitic idea. But what I wish to know, is there a separate person like ourselves who is *phaladata*, the rewarder of virtue and the punisher of sins?

*M*: Yes.

*N.N*: Has he an end? Does he get dissolved in *pralaya*?

*M*: *Pralaya* is for the soul held by *maya*. If you can, with all your defects and limitations, rise by *jnana* into realisation of the Self, and above all *pralaya* and *samsara*, is it not reasonable to expect that *Iswara*, who is infinitely more intelligent than you, is above and beyond *pralaya*?

*N.N*: I have my doubts yet.

*M*: He who has doubts will go on doubting up to the end of the world.

*N.N*: No. I am anxious to get rid of that doubt and request you to remove my doubts begotten of ignorance. Pray, enlighten me.

*M*: Enlighten yourself by realising your Self.

*N.N*: That I am unable to do. In spite of my desire to shake off all doubts, they cling to me. That is why I seek help. My present doubts about the reality of the existence of other worlds have been long with me. Are *devas* and *pisachas* true?

*M*: Yes.

### III

THIS IS A conversation between the Maharshi and Bezwada Sundararama Reddi from the Nellore district. It took place on the morning of 23-2-30.

*Bezwada:* What to do to get *moksha*?

*Maharshi:* Learn what *moksha* is.

*B:* Should I not leave wife and family?

*M:* What harm do they do? First find out what you are.

*B:* Should not one give up wife, home, wealth, etc.?

*M:* Well, first learn what *samsara* is. Is all that *samsara*? Are there not people who live in their midst and get realization?

*B:* What steps should I take as *sadhana*?

*M:* That depends on your qualifications and stage.

*B:* I am going on with *vigraharadhana* (worship of a form of God).

*M:* Go on. That leads to *chitta ekagrata* (one-pointedness). Get one-pointed. All will come right. People fancy *moksha* is somewhere and has to be searched for after kicking out *samsara*. *Moksha* is knowing yourself within yourself. Keep on to a single thought. You will progress. Your mind itself is *samsara*.

*B:* My mind is being too much tossed. What to do?

*M:* Fix yourself to one thing and try to hold on to it. All will come right.

*B:* I find concentration difficult.

*M:* Go on practising. Your concentration must come as easy as your breathing. That would be the crown of achievement.

*B:* *Brahmacharya*, *sattvic ahara*, etc., are all helpful, are they not?

*M:* Yes, all that is good.

Then Maharshi is silent, gazing at vacancy and setting an example to the questioner for him to imitate and follow immediately.

*B:* Do I not require yoga?

*M:* What is that but concentration?

*B:* To help in that, is it not better to have aids?

*M:* Breath regulation, etc., are of much help.

*B:* Is it not possible to get a sight of God?

*M:* Yes. You see this and that. Why not see God? Only you must know what God is. All are seeing God always. Only they don't realize it. Find out what God is. People see and yet they don't see, because they don't know God.

*B:* Should I not go on with *kirtan*, *nama japa*, etc., when I worship?

*M:* Yes. *Manasa japa* (mental repetition) is very good. That helps with *dhyana*. The mind gets identified with that *japa* and then you know what real *puja* is – the losing of one's individuality in that which is worshipped or revered.

*B:* Is *Paramatma* always different from us?

*M:* The difference is the view a man has now. But by thinking of him as not different, you achieve identity.

*B:* That is Advaita, is it not? Becoming oneself.

*M:* Where is becoming? The thinker is all the while the same as the Real. He ultimately realizes that fact. Sometimes we forget our identity, i.e., as waking individual self. In sleep Bhagavan is perpetual consciousness.

*B:* Is not the Guru's guidance needed in addition to idol worship?

*M:* How did you start without advice?

*B:* From *puranas*, etc.

*M:* Yes. Someone tells you, or Bhagavan himself, in which latter case He (God) is your Guru. What matters it who the Guru is? We really are one with the Guru and Bhagavan. The Guru is really Bhagavan. We discover that in the end. There is no difference between them. "Guru is God" is the idea.

*B:* If we have some merit the search will not leave us.

*M:* Yes. You will keep your effort that way.

*B:* Will not a cleverer man be a great help in pointing out the way?

*M:* Yes, but if you go on working with available light you will meet your Guru, as he will be seeking you himself.

*B:* Is there a difference between *prapatti* (surrender) and the yoga of the *rishis*?

*M:* *Jnana marga* and *bhakti* or *prapatti* advocated by Sri Aurobindo are the same. The goal is the same. Self-surrender leads to it like enquiry. Complete self-surrender means you have no further thought of 'I'. That is what *bhakti* leads to, and also *jnana*. Then all your *samskaras* are washed off and you are free. You should not continue as a separate entity at the end of either course.

*B:* Don't we attain *swarga* (heavenly regions) as a fruit of our actions?

*M:* Why? That is as true as our present existence in this world. But, if we enquire what we are and discover the Self, what need is there to think of *swarga*, etc.?

*B:* Should I not try to escape from birth and death?

*M:* Yes. Find out who is born, and who has the trouble of existence now. When you are asleep do you think of birth and trouble, etc.? You think of it now. So find out whence this trouble arose and you have the solution. You discover none is born. There is no birth, no trouble, no unhappiness in fact. Everything is That. All is bliss. We are then freed from rebirth in truth. Why feel misery?

*B:* Chaitanya and Ramakrishna wept before God and achieved success.

*M:* Yes. They had a powerful *shakti* drawing them through those experiences. Entrust yourself to that power to take you on to your goal. Tears are often referred to as a sign of weakness. We cannot attribute weakness to these great ones. These symptoms are passing manifestations while the great current is carrying them on. Let us look to the end achieved.

*B:* Can this physical body be made to disappear into nothingness?

*M:* Why this query? Why not find out if you are this body?

*B:* Can't we appear and disappear like Viswamitra and other *rishis*?

*M:* These are debates about physical matters. Is that our essential object of interest? Are you not the *Atman*? Why think about other matters? Seek the essence. Reject other disquisitions as useless. Those who believe that *moksha* consists in disappearance err. No such thing is needed. You are not the body. What matters it how the body disappears – in one way or another. There is no merit in disappearance of body in one way over the other. Everything is one. Where is superiority or inferiority in the one? See Chap. XIV of *Ramana Gita*. The loss of the 'I' is the central fact – and not of the body. It is the *dehatma buddhi* (the idea that I am the body) that is your bondage. It is the discarding of it and perceiving the Real that matters. Should you pound to pieces something golden before seeing it is gold? What matters if it is round or powdered when you perceive the truth of its being gold? The dying man does not see this body. It is the other man who thinks about the manner in which the body dies. The realized have no death. Whether the body is active or drops off, he is equally conscious and sees no difference. To him nothing is superior to the other. To an outsider also, the manner of disappearance of a *mukta's* body is unimportant. Mind your own realisation and after that it will be time enough to see which form of death is preferable!

Are you the body? During night, when you are fast asleep have you body consciousness?

*B:* No.

*M:* What exists always, is the 'I'.

# HOW BHAGAVAN CAME TO ME

## I

*Sadhu Trivenigiri Swami*

WHEN I was in Tiruchendur in 1932 it came to my mind that I should regard all women as my mother or Valli if I was intent on leading a spiritual life. One evening, I went to the Shrine of Sri Subramanya and stood for half an hour before the *Moolavar* (main deity) and the following words flashed into my consciousness: “Here I am a God who does not talk. Go to Tiruvannamalai; Maharshi is a God who talks.” This was how Maharshi’s Grace manifested itself to me. I had not even seen Maharshi then.

In December 1932, I wrote to Ramanasramam and got the reply conveying Bhagavan’s *upadesa* that the body is the result of *prarabdha* (accumulated karma) and the joys and sorrows relating to it are inevitable and they can be borne easily if we put the burden on God.

In 1933, one day, Vakil Sri Vaikuntam Venkatarama Iyer suddenly spoke to me about Maharshi and gave me a copy of *Ramana Vijayam* in Tamil. I read it and when I came to the part when his mother was crying before him to urge him to return home I was choked with tears.



Then my mother made the following inspired utterance. “Malaiappan calls you; go to him. This path will result in the salvation of twenty-seven generations of your family. This is the *upadesa* (teaching) of Mother Truth. Go along this path. Any obstacle you meet, regard as *maya* (illusion). You will soon be liberated.” So saying, I was given *upadesa* of *Mahavakyam* and *Karana-Panchaksharam* (Vedic truth of *Brahman*).

In February 1933, I wrote to the Ashram again and got a prompt reply. Bhagavan’s *upadesa* given in it was as follows: “*Sattvic* food will keep the mind clear and help meditation. This is the experience of *sadhakas*. Eat to appease hunger and not to satisfy taste or craving; this will in due course lead to the control of the senses. Then continued and concentrated meditation will result in annihilation of desires.” It is the Atman that activates the mind and breath. Watching the breath will result in *kevala kumbakam* (stopping of breath). Control of breath will lead to temporary control of the mind and *vice versa*. Intense and constant *japa* (repetition of a sacred syllable) will lead to *ajapa* (non-repetition). Sound being subtler than form, *japa* is preferable to *murti* (image or form) or worship. *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am *Brahman*) is the best. To those who seek the source of the ‘I’ no other *mantra* or *upasana* (meditation) is needed.”

Within a month after the receipt of this, I proceeded to Ramanasramam to stay there permanently. One day I decided to spend the nights for one *mandala* (cycle of 48 days) in the presence of Bhagavan. On the 15th day I had a dream: The attendant Madhavan had an epileptic attack and suddenly grasped my hand. I cried for help to Bhagavan who pulled away Madhavan’s hand, and gave me milk to drink. When I woke up I still had the taste of the milk in my mouth; I felt I had drunk the milk of wisdom. From then onward my mind turned inwards.

One morning while cutting vegetables, I wanted to do *giri pradakshinam* (circumambulation of the Hill) and asked

Bhagavan's permission. Devotees nearby made signs pleading to Bhagavan not to let me go. Bhagavan said, "Is *pradakshina* a *sankalpa* (intention)? Let him go." I said, "No. I decided last night to go with somebody. That is all." Bhagavan, "Oh! You already made the *sankalpa*. *Sankalpa* leads to *samsara*. Fulfil the *sankalpa*. You need not cut vegetables." I took it as an *upadesa* (teaching) not to make *sankalpas* thereafter.

Another morning when I was cutting vegetables with Bhagavan, he said: "Sundaram! Take this hurricane light and pick up the mangoes that have fallen from the tree." I said "Yes", but continued cutting up the vegetables. Bhagavan said, "Sundaram! Attend to what 'I' said first. It is from me that everything rises. Attend to it first." I took this as an *adesh* and *upadesa* (advice and instruction) to make the enquiry "Who am I?" My friends also felt so.

One day the attendant Madhavan was binding a book. A devotee wanted a book from the library. Bhagavan asked Madhavan to get it saying, "You do my work; I will do your work." And Bhagavan took the book and went on with the binding while Madhavan got the library book. A devotee interpreted this as follows: "My work means looking after the needs which arise in the minds of devotees for anything from Bhagavan. Your work is to get liberation which is not possible without Bhagavan's Grace and help." Bhagavan heard this comment and said "Hum Hum! That is what it is!"

Once when meditating in the presence of Bhagavan, the mind persisted in wandering. I couldn't control it. So I gave up meditation and opened my eyes. Bhagavan at once sat up and said, "Oh! You abandon it thinking it is the *swabhava* (nature) of the mind to wander. Whatever we practise becomes the *swabhava*. If control is practised persistently that will become the *swabhava*." Yet another *upadesa* for me.

## II

*Y. X. (alias Bhauroo) Athavale*

BEFORE I HAD the first *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan in 1942, I was brought up in a religious and spiritual atmosphere at home. Ever since 1914, I used to visit Alandi, near Poona, to have *darshan* of the *samadhi* of the Maharashtrian saint, Jnaneshwara. About 90 years ago, there stayed in Alandi a great realised saint and yogi, Swami Narasimha Saraswati. My grandfather was his staunch disciple and the Swami's grace has been showered on our family ever since then. Even though the Swami left this world and was enshrined in *samadhi* before my birth, I knew that many devotees had the good luck to have his *darshan* even after his *nirvana*. I also felt ardently that I should have his *darshan* in flesh and blood and I used to pray to him for many years. In spite of many happy incidents of grace in our family, my yearning for his *darshan* remained unsatisfied and I was rather insistent on it. I was not satisfied with his *darshan* in a dream and so continued to pray for the same off and on.

From 1939 to 1942 I suffered from sciatica due to overexertion in my engineering work, and became very weak. As I did not like in this state to be a burden to my old father I went to Vai, a sacred place on the bank of the Krishna, about fifty miles away from Poona, rather dejected about my health. Still I used to pray to the Swami of Alandi to give me *darshan*. But because my prayer was not granted and I was not feeling well, I made a slight change in my prayer that I should at least have a *darshan* of a great Mahatma like the Swami before my death. After a month or so, in February 1942, when I was in a state of utter depression, I had a wonderfully vivid vision-like dream at dawn.

In a cave of a mountain, a great mahatma was staying and throngs of people of different religions and castes, *sannyasis*, yogis and householders were going up the mountain towards the cave to listen to the speech of the mahatma. I was one of them. The cave was spacious enough to hold the 150-200 people who had assembled there and were sitting close to one another in a crowd. I also sat there among them, waiting. I waited for an hour or so and still the speaker was not seen nor heard. Naturally I was bored and asked the people around me, "How is it that the lecture has not started yet? Where is the Saint?" Near me sat an old man with matted hair. Afterwards I came to know that his name was Kavya Kanta Vasistha Ganapati Muni. He raised his hand and said to me, "Silence of the Master is his speech and the disciples have no doubts left." I was wonder struck to hear this, as I could not understand who that silent Master was and could not follow his silent speech. So again I asked, "Where is the Master?" He replied, "He is sitting quite near you." I began to search among the people near me and found a slender young man of twenty-two years wearing a white codpiece and a smile on his face. I bowed down to him immediately and asked whether I could know his name and would understand the silent speech. He pointed his finger to his heart and said in Marathi, "This is known as Ramana Maharshi." Having said this he smiled in a charming manner and instantly I woke up in delight. I took it to be the answer to my constant repeated prayer, felt happy and began to reflect.

Though a resident of Poona, I did not hear much about Ramana Maharshi's greatness then (in 1942) as his name was not then well known in Maharashtra. In a big library there were one or two books of Paul Brunton, but very few people would read them. A few educated pilgrims visiting Rameswaram might have heard his name in the Madras province. But in a distant town like Vai, nobody knew Bhagavan's name and hence it was very

difficult to account for my vision. For about ten or twelve days I was eagerly longing to get some information about him. All the while, I was praying. All of a sudden, one day a gentleman of my acquaintance from Poona happened to meet me and having seen the photograph of Narasimha Saraswati Swamy on my table, instantly remembered something and told me that recently, during his pilgrimage to Rameswaram he heard from some pilgrims about Sri Ramana Maharshi, and went along with them to Tiruvannamalai and had his blissful *darshan*. He further told me that Bhagavan was a *Siddha Purusha* (a liberated Being) like this Swami and advised me to go and have his *darshan* once.

Thus unexpectedly my dream was accounted for and immediately I sent money by telegraphic money order for two or three books of Bhagavan. My curiosity and longing were intense. In four or five days the books came but before I could read them, a friend of mine took them away and when I wrote to him, he ordered them again, and in the next week I got them. Their reading increased my longing to see Bhagavan. Even though I had become very weak due to the disease, my earnest desire to have Bhagavan's *darshan* did not allow me to keep quiet. I started in that very condition by rail and reached Tiruvannamalai station on the third day at dawn. I hired a horse-cart and reached Sri Ramanasramam at 6 a.m. The driver showed me that Bhagavan was coming towards us. My joy knew no bounds. As I prostrated before him Bhagavan approached me and said, "Have you come from Poona? You seem to be quite exhausted." I was wonder struck to hear this, as I had not written to the Ashram about my whereabouts and the date of my coming there. Thereafter arrangements were made for my stay.

In the afternoon, when I sat before him in the Meditation Hall, he enquired about my health. I replied that I had been suffering terribly from sciatica for three years, had no sleep, no desire for food and was growing from bad to worse in spite of

the treatment of the best doctors. I further told him that my father was old, my children were young and my young wife helpless, and being extremely pestered by the disease I continued praying to Swami Narasimha Saraswati of our family and as a result was blessed by Bhagavan's *darshan* in a vision-like dream and hence had come there. I handed over the Swami's photograph to Sri Bhagavan. He smiled and indicated his divine intimacy with the Swami. He graciously said to me, "You can stay here in peace. Your disease is not incurable." He quoted a verse from the *Bhagavad Gita*, (II: 14): "O son of Kunti, the contacts between the senses and their objects, which give rise to the feelings of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc., are transitory and fleeting. O Arjuna, bear them," and pacified me. I felt extremely relieved. In three or four months I was completely cured of the disease by his grace.

Thereafter I used to see him three or four times a year up to 1950, and came in close contact with him. He rejuvenated me physically and spiritually and brought me eternally into the fold of his benign Grace, to describe which I have no words.

On receiving a telegram I came to the Ashram on the day of his *mahasamadhi*. My emotions and feelings were checked somehow during the day he left the body. But next day, at night, when everybody was asleep, I began to weep bitterly feeling very uneasy that I shall never henceforth see Bhagavan in an embodied form and enjoy the bliss of his presence. All of a sudden in the dead of night, some footsteps were heard and lo! there came Bhagavan with a lantern in his hand! He straightaway approached me, removed the curtain and said to me in a soft, gentle, loving voice, "Oh! Why do you weep? Did I not tell you that I am here?" I controlled myself and bowed down to him. By the time I raised my head, he had disappeared, leaving me in utter surprise and desolation. My thousand *pranams* to Ramana Bhagavan.

### III

## *Santhanam Jyengar*

UNTIL MY THIRTY-SECOND year I did not have any special inclination for spiritual pursuits. I was living with my wife in Tanjavur where I was a teacher. But suddenly my outlook on life changed. I distinctly remember even now the exact date on which it happened. It started with a vivid sense of the impermanence of all the things which I had valued in life. I realised that God is the only unchanging Reality. I therefore began to adore him and to pray to him in the usual manner by reciting hymns of praise like “Dakshinamurthi Stotra” and “Subrahmanya Bhujanga Stotra” of Sankaracharya, the “Dhyana Sopana” of Vedanta Desika and “Mukundamala” of Kulasekhara. Sometimes tears flowed from my eyes while reciting them.

Shortly after this my wife died. Although I was only thirty-three at that time I did not remarry. The worldly life had lost its charm for me. I continued my daily prayers. To the hymns of praise I added *nama japa* or the repetition of the name of Rama, into which I was initiated by one Guha Das of Sengalipuram. I maintained a diary in which I used to note down the time spent by me daily in prayer, meditation, etc. I devoted on an average six hours a day for these practices. Although my hymns and prayers were addressed to several gods, Rama was the god for whom I had a natural liking and love. I used to sit before his picture and gaze at it intently. On such occasions I would see a halo of stars and bright lights around his face. Sometimes I saw him smile at me. About this time I came across a book of Swami Ram Tirtha in which there was an article on the True Self. This appealed to me very strongly and I read it repeatedly.

After about two years of this kind of *sadhana*, one day before going to bed I prayed to Rama to vouchsafe His grace to me and to uplift me spiritually. I prostrated before his picture with extreme devotion. That night I had a dream in which I saw some thatched sheds, trees and a hall in which a holy person was sitting in the middle of devotees. I heard a voice telling me to wake up and go immediately to see Sri Ramana Maharshi who was bestowing his grace on all. This dream made such a deep impression on me that I caught the next train to Tiruvannamalai and arrived there the following day.

I had previously visited Tiruvannamalai on my way to Tirupati, but I had not then heard of the Maharshi or his Ashram and had therefore gone away after seeing the Arunachaleswara Temple and Pavalakkunru. When, therefore, I reached the Ashram I was surprised to see the same thatched sheds and trees which I had seen in my dream. After taking my bath I went to the hall and sat before Bhagavan. As I looked at him I saw around him a halo which was exactly like the one I used to see around Rama. During the two days of my stay I spent almost all my time sitting before him experiencing a strange peace and tranquillity. When I took leave of Bhagavan I implored him to bestow his grace upon me. He nodded his head in assent.

Gradually it began to dawn upon me that it was Rama who had directed me to Bhagavan and that Rama and Ramana were one and the same. But when the person who had initiated me into *nama japa* came to know of my visit to Sri Ramanasramam he was displeased and warned me that I would meet with some disaster. I, however, began to study books about Bhagavan and went to the Ashram regularly every year during the *Jayanti* and the *Mahapuja*, staying for two or three days. Once I came at the time of the Deepam Festival and stayed for seven days. On one of these days, when I was alone with Bhagavan, I narrated my story to him and had the supreme



blessing of hearing from his lips that I had his grace and need not fear any disaster or obstacle to my *sadhana*.

I retired from service in 1956 when I attained the age of sixty, but continued to live at Tanjavur until 1960 when I received a call from the Ashram President to come and help him with the Ashram accounts in the absence of Chelliah, who had suddenly fallen seriously ill and was not likely to resume his duties for a long time. I looked upon this as a call from Bhagavan and accordingly came and took charge of the Ashram accounts. I have since then been attending to this work more or less continuously and at the same time devoting as much time as possible to prayer, meditation and Self-enquiry as taught by Bhagavan. I also teach the Vedapatasala boys English, Tamil, etc. I wish and hope to spend my remaining days doing such service to Sri Bhagavan!

## IV

### *Santha Rangachary*

ONE OF THE great regrets of my life is the loss of a letter which I received in 1934. It was in reply to a rather hysterical missive I had despatched addressed 'Personal and Private' to Sri Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai. This communication dealt with a serious, self-admitted weakness of mine which was my mother's despair – a combustible temper which would explode at the slightest provocation. It was a bad time for me. I had just lost a father I had worshipped. I was twelve, going on thirteen and at once all had been said.

I desperately needed a confidante, an adviser, somebody preferably outside the family, and out of the blue the name of Ramana Maharshi came to me. His was the only name I had ever heard my father – a stubborn, intolerant sceptic – mention without any codicils. I decided, therefore, to write to the sage of Tiruvannamalai secretly. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, I finally sent off a letter asking the Maharshi directly to “please, I beg of you, help me with my temper problem.” Within a week I received a reply signed by the *Sarvadhikari*, informing me that my letter had been received and placed before the Maharshi and that his message to me was that if I myself made a constant and earnest effort to overcome my temper I would rid myself of it, and that he sent me his blessings.

My first reaction to that letter was one of astonishment at being treated like a grownup, since I had always been told what to do, guided, instructed, warned, but never challenged except on Sports Day. And here was this great Guru as good as telling me: “It is your temper, isn’t it? So, you yourself deal with it.” He had simply batted the ball back to my court in the nicest possible way by treating me as an individual in my own right. I rather liked that.

Ramana Maharshi entered my life again a year or so later when my sister took our whole family on a pilgrimage. The whole thing was going to take less than a week and we were to stay at Tiruvannamalai only for two days. But as it turned out we stayed at Ramanasramam for the whole week and I wept like a lost child when we had to leave. The visit to Ramanasramam was a shattering experience for me. I do believe I literally fell in love with Ramana Maharshi. I was in a daze, a trance, my tongue was gone, my mind was gone, I was in a state of dumbfounded ecstasy. This love which had been awakened was the kind which totally bypasses the physical and creates an awareness of a different kind of consciousness

which can only be described as a mindless rapture, pure joy. It is an unlocated, pervasive state of being sparked off by some kind of recognition and it stays with you and you are never the same again.

We arrived at Tiruvannamalai just before dawn. After reaching the Ashram we bathed and had our breakfast, and then made our way to the Hall. My mother, brother and sister went ahead and quickly disappeared into the Hall. I hung back, unaccountably apprehensive. Then, as I at last composed myself and got to the door and looked in, I saw reclining on a sofa, a golden-brown figure with the most radiant countenance I had ever seen before or since and, as I stood there riveted to the spot, the Maharshi turned and looked at me. When I remember it even now, more than forty years later, tears come to my eyes as they did then. I stood there, God knows how long, just looking at that face. Then, as in a trance, I moved forward deliberately towards him and touched his feet. Fighting my way through the disapproving glances that followed, I then made my way to a place near the window. Once I was seated I let my tears flow. I remember I spent a good part of that morning wiping my eyes. They were not tears of grief nor were they tears of joy. Maybe they were for something which I saw in the Maharshi fleetingly and which I also want and shall forever seek. Yes, I cried for myself then and I still do it now.

Never before had I seen in a human countenance a more intense, inward life and yet one which remained so transparent and childlike. There was about him an irresistible and indefinable spiritual power which simply overwhelmed me. I was conscious of people sitting all around me but was totally incurious about them. After an hour or so of silence I suddenly felt like singing. Without hesitation or embarrassment, I lifted my 12 year-old voice in a rendition of Tyagaraja's *Vinanok koni Yunnanura*, keeping time softly with my fingers on my knee. The audience

sat still and unresponsive. The total lack of reaction to my performance, should in reason have embarrassed me, but I was away in a state of mind which recognised nobody except that reclining figure on the sofa. After a few minutes I threw myself with another gush of abandon into *Thelisi Rama Chintana*. As I began the *anupallavi* which exhorts the mind to stay still for a moment and realise the true essence of the name Rama, I saw the Maharshi turn his eyes upon me with that impersonal yet arresting look of his, and my heart soared and I thought: "I want to be here for ever and ever."

For three hours every morning and every evening my vigil in the Hall continued for seven days. After the first day my family had, without any discussion, silently and unanimously changed our planned programme and requested and got extension of residence. I sat in my seat near the window still and thought-free, just gazing at the Maharshi. Occasionally somebody would ask a question and the Maharshi would turn and look at him, and you got the feeling that the question had been answered. Or somebody would ask for the meaning of a particular phrase in a Sanskrit or Tamil stanza, and the Maharshi would answer softly, briefly.

He was not a man of many words. His long years of practised detachment from people made him laconic in speech. His knowledge of classical Tamil religious literature was considerable; he could himself compose verses and he did. His enlightenment had not been directed by a Guru but had come from his own Self-consciousness. It was all there lighting him up from inside and his most effective form of communication was intra-personal through the sense of sight and the medium of silence. He was a very human being, who laughed and joked occasionally, but he could suddenly plunge deep into himself while sitting in a hall full of people and rest in that stillness of spirit, which as he himself said, was being in God.

One afternoon somebody showed Maharshi some verses written on paper. Maharshi read them, made a brief comment, and then clarified it by narrating a story from *Yoga Vasishtam*. I listened – and felt that I could understand the words that were being spoken though I really could not have grasped their meaning. I wondered in retrospect years later when I myself read that book, at the delightful ease and simplicity with which the Maharshi had narrated that story, going straight to the spirit like an aimed arrow, and then lapsing into what I can only describe as a speaking silence. In those eloquent silences that punctuated his brief remarks, one seemed to feel unspoken thought flowing around the room touching and drawing everybody into its illuminating course. That was a strange experience to me, that in the presence of Maharshi, speech seemed redundant. I was totally and blissfully satisfied just being in his presence.

That whole week we spent in the Ashram. I practically did nothing else but sit in that Hall. We attended the *Vedic* recitals at dawn of the students of the Ashram *Patasala*. My brother and I watched every morning the Maharshi's gangly walk up and down the hill and I remember, on one memorable occasion, the gentle sage himself smilingly stood still for a couple of minutes as he saw my brother adjusting his camera. I had never before spent so many days talking so little, just sitting around so much, or so lost in a single-minded pursuit of the Maharshi. The evening we finally left, my brother and I kept coming back to look at the Maharshi "Just one more time" as he sat in the enclosed veranda beside the hall having a light oil massage. I finally said: "We will go only after he turns his head and looks at us once more." After a minute or two the Maharshi turned full face towards us and looked at us and without a word we turned and walked away.

I shall not claim that my whole life was transformed after this meeting. No. I went back to school and then to college,

got married, set up house, had children, started a journalistic career of mine own. My *grihasthasramam* became my main preoccupation. But my visit to Ramanasramam had done something to me. It had left a mark on my mind and heart. The picture of the Ashram and of the Maharshi was always in my mind like the background curtain of a stage. Whenever I was tired or dispirited or perplexed the wish to go to Ramanasramam would possess me like a hunger. Even when I was so busy that I did not know whether I was coming or going a sudden look at a picture of the Maharshi hanging on the wall would momentarily root me to the spot and my mind would suddenly go blank.

I did go to Ramanasramam a fortnight before death claimed the Maharshi's frail human body. Because of the vast crowds which had come to visit him, the Ashram authorities had made special arrangements for everybody to get *darshan* of the white-haired smiling figure who sat on an easy-chair on the veranda of the room in which he later breathed his last. For a brief moment I stood below and looked up at that benign countenance, the eyes so bright and serene, and knew it was the last time I was looking at the living Maharshi.

I went to the Ashram again some years later. As usual, as soon as I passed through the Ashram gates, its peace closed around me and emptied my mind. I sat on a veranda where I had only to turn my head to the left to see the mountain and bring my eyes back to the *samadhi* to see in my mind the Maharshi sitting on his sofa. I sat there the whole of that day doing nothing, not reading, not writing, not eating, not thinking, not remembering, not wondering why it was so quiet or where everybody was, and the voice of a young lad who came running through the gate screaming: "Nehru has passed away" was just an incidental sound. During all those hours I never for a moment wanted to be anywhere else or doing anything else.

Whenever I feel I want to go away somewhere, away from home, family, friends, book, mistakes, fears, sorrows, my mind automatically turns to Ramanasramam. And my body follows. I make the journey to Tiruvannmalai, walk into the Ashram, enter the Hall, and I am “home” and totally at peace.

Every human being has really only one Guru like one mother. Some are fortunate enough to meet their Gurus, some pass them by, like ships in the night. I stumbled upon mine when I was twelve. I now stand alone in myself. In a sense I am twelve-going-on thirteen all over again, standing on another threshold, remembering, waiting.

## V

### *Anonymous*

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI personifies, to many devotees, the Universal Father. Instances are many when devotees felt that they were looking at their own father when they saw Bhagavan.

I vividly remember a friend of our family who had accompanied us to Sri Ramanasramam in 1942, exclaim in delight as soon as he saw Bhagavan, “Here is my father, just as he looked in his later life!” Far back in 1933 when my own father was drawn to Bhagavan Ramana for the first time, he actually saw ‘his father’, with the same physical traits. And as recently as 1966, after the passing of my father, I cannot but be touched by the striking resemblance between his and Bhagavan’s appearance, although such an impression was not altogether new to me. Indeed, Bhagavan Sri Ramana is the embodiment of ‘Fatherhood,’ that is at once universal and transcendental.

On the sacred occasion of the *Mahakumbabbhishekam* of Sri Bhagavan's shrine, many an illustrious pen poured forth its spontaneous homage to his Lotus Feet. Before them, mine is like a candle before the splendour of the sun. Nonetheless, the inner urge to share an experience of mine, I would call it the most sacred and valuable experience in all my life, blots out my hesitation. It is just an insignificant *parijata* flower in the midst of thousands of fragrant roses.

Experiences with Sri Bhagavan and his Grace used to be recounted very often by my father together with other incidents in his life, rich with spiritual lessons. A boy of about twelve then, I used to listen avidly and as a result these narrations took a deep root in me, ripening into an incessant desire to have Bhagavan's *darshan*, to touch him and to be always near him. During my daily prayers, my mind used to fix itself on the frontispiece photograph of Bhagavan Ramana, appearing in his books and fervently ask for his *darshan*. As time rolled by, the yearning intensified but no call came. Once or twice I ventured to ask my father about it, but he used to simply brush it aside with the remark, "If and when Bhagavan calls you, you will go."

Then one day the first experience came. I think it was in 1945. One night during deep sleep I dreamt that I was sitting in the corner of a room, waiting for somebody. I then saw Bhagavan Ramana slowly enter the room and rushed to him and held him around the waist with both my hands, crying and supplicating. But Bhagavan simply passed on with apparent unconcern. I woke up and thought of it for a long time. It seemed so disappointing that there was no response from him. However, I felt confident since at last I had seen him and touched him, which proved that he had not forsaken me.

Now I began to think of him more and more. Yet again, for a long time nothing happened.



Once more I was becoming desperate and losing hope. Then one dark night, he appeared and initiated me out of his boundless love. This time it was more of a vision than a dream. I was half awake and felt myself rising from bed and walking into the courtyard of our house. Total silence enveloped the entire surroundings. The blanket of darkness was accentuated by the twinkling stars above. I found myself standing still on a mound of sand, facing westward, looking, looking and looking. Slowly out of the darkness emerged the outline of a hill, shaped exactly like the Holy Arunachala. Emerging, it steadied itself into a discernible silhouette by remaining darker than the dark background. After a few minutes, a small flame leapt out of the apex of the hill. In the beginning, it was just like an eye in vertical position, but very swiftly it grew and grew until it became a pillar of light with extraordinary brightness, having the hilltop as its base and origin. Its height touched the very heavens. Its splendour was beyond description. It was just the shape of the flame of a lamp when it burns steadily golden coloured, shining as if a thousand suns had arisen together. Its golden rays fell on my body. I was riveted to the spot and found that I could move neither hand nor foot. I stood there as one totally hypnotised, oblivious of anything else but the burning golden flame. My mind was in raptures, throbbing with an ecstatic joy, which seemed to burst out of my body. How long I stood like this I cannot say, for time seemed to stop altogether. Then I became conscious of the scene, and felt that I was not alone, in that spot. With an effort, I turned my face to the right and found Bhagavan Sri Ramana was standing there, looking at me. On his lips played the most bewitching smile, while his eyes poured out boundless compassion and love. When I saw him, I forgot the *jjyoti* and everything else and tried to fall at his feet. But he gently stopped me by placing his divine hand, upon my head. Joy of joys! My whole being, inner and outer, thrilled to that

divine touch from the hand of one who is no other than God. Waves of bliss and tranquillity took possession of my whole being. He raised his forefinger and pointed at the Golden Flame and asked me in a voice resembling the sound of silver bells, “Child, do you understand what the *jjyoti* is? This is the real Karthigai Deepam.”

Suddenly I was wide awake, ushered by consciousness into the care and worry-ridden world. Subsequent visions have followed, all of them showing Bhagavan as the personification of supreme love, but none could ever match the splendour of this first vision and initiation.

I no longer felt dissatisfied at not being able to go to the Ashram in a physical sense, though I must confess, occasionally the desire did arise.

In 1942, I was proceeding to Madras from Coimbatore. The train was speeding along some hills in the night when a prayer to be allowed to visit the Ashram took shape in me. As I was accompanying my father, who did not entertain ideas from children, I did not talk of the prayer to anyone. A few days later, when we were to return to Coimbatore, my father suddenly asked me how I would like to go to Ramanasramam and have *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan. I am not ashamed to record here that I broke into tears on hearing this, as this was a prayer so graciously granted by Sri Bhagavan.

The next day, we were in our home — Sri Ramanasramam. It was a Friday and a New Moon day. As I entered the divine presence of Bhagavan Ramana, I felt that I was submerging in a sea, only this was a sea of bliss and tranquillity.

We were there the whole of the forenoon and except for a swift, piercing look that Sri Bhagavan blessed me with, nothing happened. Nothing mattered any more.

When I heard later that Sri Bhagavan had shed his mortal frame, a few teardrops rolled down my cheeks, but my father

sternly said, "You are a fool. Where can Bhagavan go?" Years have rolled by; still the torch burns on, gathering more and more brightness. It is the torch that he, out of his boundless grace, lit in my heart. Now my children, in their turn, ask me: "Father, when will Bhagavan Thatha come to us?" I feel too full to reply to them, yet sometimes say, "All in good time, children. Learn to labour and to wait."

When the messenger comes, carrying the authority of inexorable time may my heart surrender to him and may my lips whisper, "*Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya.*"

## V I

### *J. R. A. Narayana*

THE YEAR WAS 1948.

I was then in my thirty-ninth year. I lived in Madras with my wife and four children. I was the branch manager of a large British firm, and being in happy circumstances, I did not find the need for any religious practices or spiritual enquiries; I was content with enjoying the good things in life.

I was on a tour of small towns, with one of the inspectors under me, Sri Parthasarathi. It was a hot April day. As Sri Parthasarathi and I were boarding the train at Villupuram to go to Tiruvannamalai, we noticed a young man of about twenty-five trying to enter the first class compartment by the next door. The man was so fat that he heaved his bulky body this way and that, while another man on the platform, obviously his servant, pushed him in through the door. He was also ashamed of the curious way the people on the platform, including

Sri Parthasarathi and myself, watched his predicament. He got in somehow and occupied the cubicle next to ours.

When the train had run for some minutes, the man came to our cabin, introduced himself as Ratilal Premchand Shah and started talking.

Sri Ratilal was a Saurashtra Vaishya, born and brought up in Gondal, the only son of his father, a rich merchant of the place. He had been married six years ago. Cursed with so much fat in his body from his tenth year, now at twenty-five, he was a huge mass of flesh and misery. How he wished to get rid of his fat and be a man!

In the last week of March, Sri Ratilal had a vision while he was asleep at night. He saw an ascetic smiling and beckoning him. The smile and the beckoning persisted for a long time and stood clearly before Sri Ratilal's mental eye when he awoke. He did not speak to any one about the vision. Two days later his wife was reading a Gujarati magazine. Looking over her shoulders he saw the picture of the ascetic he had seen in his vision. He came to know that the ascetic was Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. He at once went to his father and arranged for his journey to Tiruvannamalai with the trusted family servant. All he knew about Bhagavan was what that Gujarati article said. But he felt sure that his suffering would end as soon as he reached Bhagavan; the smile and the beckoning of his vision of Bhagavan had given him that firm faith.

Sri Parthasarathi had seen Bhagavan many times before and had also read a good deal about him. He and Sri Ratilal talked about Bhagavan during the whole two-hour journey. I was apparently reading an English novel, but heard their conversation with interest and attention.

At Tiruvannamalai station, Sri Ratilal was received by a local merchant with whom his father had arranged for his stay. Sri Parthasarathi and I proceeded to the travellers bungalow.

It was four when we had our bath and tiffin. Sri Parthasarathi knew that I was very businesslike and would not waste a single minute. He said we could visit the market. He was very surprised at my reply: “No, Parthasarathi! We shall go and have *darshan* of Maharshi first. Then, if time permits, we shall go to the temple. Let business wait!”

It was about five when Sri Parthasarathi and I entered the Ashram. Going round Bhagavan’s Mother’s *samadhi*, we came to the veranda by its side. About fifty people were sitting there, Sri Ratilal, his host and his servant included. Bhagavan was not on his couch as usual. The visitors talked in whispers, trying to find out where he was.

After waiting for some ten minutes and finding that Bhagavan had not come to his seat, Sri Parthasarathi suggested to me that we could in the meantime go around and see the *goshala* and other places.

Finishing our inspection we were returning to the veranda by another side, when we heard a childish voice say “*Chee, asatthe!* (Fie, you creature!).” We could see no children around, and, therefore, peeped to find out the source of the voice. We observed movement among the leaves of the brinjal, lady’s-finger and other plants in the kitchen garden near the veranda. Looking more intently, we saw a small goat, a little monkey and a squirrel and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi! Bhagavan was sitting on his haunches with his legs folded up to his breast. The goat nestled between his knees; the monkey had its head resting on his right knee; the squirrel was perched on his left knee. Holding a packet of paper in his left palm, Bhagavan picked ground nuts from it with his right-hand fingers, one by one, and fed the goat, the monkey and the squirrel, and himself, by turns. His remarks appeared to have been addressed to the monkey which had tried to snatch the nut he was going to place between the squirrel’s lips. As we watched, the four companions went on enjoying the

eating. All four seemed to be equally happy; the way they looked at one another and kept close together was touching. The goat, the monkey, the squirrel, and Bhagavan, had obviously forgotten their differences in species! And we too, looking on, saw all the four only as good friends despite the differences in their forms. No words could describe the feelings which passed through my being at the sight. The vision of the Transcendent appeared as a flash of lightning, and revealed to me the essence of being, awareness and bliss, *sat-chit-ananda*.

The nuts were over. Bhagavan threw the paper away and said: "*Pongoda!* (Go away, you fellows!)," just as any old man speaking to his grandchildren. The goat, the monkey and the squirrel left. Bhagavan made to get up. Sri Parthasarathi and I hurried away, feeling guilty of trespassing into the Divine, but not sorry.

Soon after Sri Parthasarathi and I had resumed our seats in the veranda, Bhagavan came to his couch. I cannot say he looked at us. He stood facing us, his eyes fixed on something far above and beyond anything on earth. They were like screens which shut the material world off from the light which was burning behind them. Sparks of light shot out through the fibres of the screen at times, sparks which cooled the eyes on which they fell, pierced the gross coverings and lighted the wick inside them.

Bhagavan reclined on the pillows in the couch, supporting his head on his left palm. We all sat down to look at his face. We sat and sat, and looked and looked. No one spoke or made any noise. But the confrontation was not a dead silence; it was a very live experience in which the innermost being of each one of us communed with the Supreme Consciousness which was Bhagavan.

I was numb with the appalling realisation that the Glory was the same that dwelt in the simplicity which a few minutes ago I had seen eating groundnuts in the intimate company of

the goat, the monkey and the squirrel. My mind kept recalling that scene: how the goat had snuggled to Bhagavan's breast in perfect confidence in his love for it; how the monkey had grinned in joy and how Bhagavan had returned the grin as both bit the nut; how the squirrel had peered with its pinhead eyes into Bhagavan's dream-laden ones and scratched his nose tenderly with its tiny left paw. The vision of the Supreme Spirit underlying and overlaying the sense perception was spiced with the lovely sight of the groundnut party in the kitchen garden.

Bhagavan got up from the couch. We got up. It seemed tacitly understood that we were to leave. We left. I felt a hitherto-unknown peace and joy inside me; the faces of the others also showed a similar condition.

I saw Sri Ratilal, his host and his servant get into their bullock cart at the Ashram gate. There was a new spring in Sri Ratilal's movements. Bhagavan's promise in the lad's vision appeared to be starting a fulfilment.

Many things have happened since that day in my life. My material circumstances underwent changes for the worse, but my inner life has always been happy since that day, for I very often got a vision of Bhagavan, particularly when I was most depressed in spirits.

In 1953, I was in Rajkot staying alone in a lodge. One day, while in the dining hall, a man of about thirty accosted me, "Don't you recognise me, Sir?" "No, I'm sorry," I replied, truthfully. The man continued: "I am Ratilal of Gondal, Sir! You remember the *darshan* of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, five years ago?" I looked at the man again. He was thin and wiry, his face aglow with health and happiness. I shook his hands heartily. He spoke again: "Sir, Bhagavan fulfilled his promise wonderfully well. You see me. I am now managing our family business, my father taking complete rest. I have a son two years old and expect my wife to give me another child in a month or two."

My mind immediately went back to the goat, the monkey and the squirrel – and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. I could never think of Bhagavan alone!

So it has been all these years. The scene comes to my mind's eye often. The kitchen garden with the four friends at the groundnut party.

And, I thank Sri Ratilal and Sri Parthasarathi for guiding me to the Vision Beautiful!



# INCIDENTS CONNECTED WITH THE LIFE OF SRI BHAGAVAN

*M. V. Krishnan*

ON August 29, 1896, Venkataraman (later Sri Bhagavan) left Madurai for Tiruvannamalai. One week later, Munagala S. Venkataramiah, later known as Ramanananda Saraswati, went home from Madurai to Sholavandan and told his mother that a *brahmin* boy who was studying in Madurai at an adjoining school had run away from home. At that time he little realised that he was to meet this runaway boy later in 1918 at Skandasramam and that he was to become his disciple, live in close proximity of Sri Bhagavan from 1933 to 1950, and be the compiler of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

S.V. Ramanathan and M. V. Krishnan, sons of Munagala S. Venkataramiah came to the Ashram with their parents in the summer of 1930. They were just thirteen and ten years of age. One morning they were standing near the old dining hall (where now Sri Bhagavan's *samadhi* stands) when Ramu, the elder brother, remarked that for the last few days no onion *sambar* had been tasted by them. At that precise moment Sri Bhagavan was passing by the boys, as he was returning from the kitchen. He smiled and asked Ramu: "So, you want *vengaaya* (onion) *sambar*!" The boys blushed and kept quiet. Next morning, the boys were served with *vengaaya sambar*. Everybody thought it was onion *sambar*. Sri Bhagavan later in the day asked Ramu how he relished the *sambar* to which he replied: "Very well."

Ramu, however, was surprised to know the truth only a few days later when his mother told him that what he ate was not onion but garlic *sambar!* There was no onion at that time in the Ashram and yet Sri Bhagavan wanted to fulfil the boy's wish. Through his expert culinary knowledge, he brought the smell and taste of onion to garlic itself!

\* \* \*

IN THE 1930s, Dr. T. N. Krishnaswamy wanted to visit the Ashram and be with Sri Bhagavan during the weekend. He asked a friend to accompany him. This friend at that time did not even put on his shirt. He was in his dhoti and upper cloth and had two or three rupees in his purse. He readily agreed to go then and there. Both travelled up to Katpadi by train, took a bus to Vellore and changed onto another bus for Tiruvannamalai. In Vellore the friend wanted to take something to Sri Bhagavan. On the roadside he saw a woman selling *kovai kai*. He bought the lot for a few *annas*. It was about one *viss*, or 1½ kg in weight. Since he had no bag to carry the vegetable, he bundled them at one end of his upper cloth. Both of them reached Tiruvannamalai in the evening. The vegetable bundle was put in front of Sri Bhagavan when both the devotees paid their respects. On an enquiry from Sri Bhagavan, the bundle was opened. Sri Bhagavan saw the contents and said that if *kovai kai* was cooked with brinjals it would be tasty. The next morning a devotee arriving from Madras through Villupuram brought brinjals! The curry was cooked in the morning and all of them relished it.

\* \* \*

IN 1937, AN elderly American came along with a group to visit Sri Bhagavan. The trend of the discussion was that the five

senses were to be put under check. Since the old American was deaf he could not follow the discussions. Sri Bhagavan remarked that the American needed to control only four senses as the fifth (hearing) was already under check. Someone in the Hall explained this to the American and he beamed with joy.

\*   \*   \*

WHEN SRI BHAGAVAN was in Skandashram two devotees were having heated discussions regarding *siddhis* (occult powers). One devotee did not believe in such powers while the other was a firm believer. A challenge was accepted by the latter, who undertook to convert a copper coin into a gold one. It was agreed that this should be done in the presence of Sri Bhagavan. On the appointed day the two devotees were sitting in front of Sri Bhagavan. A copper coin was produced and everybody examined it. It was given to the devotee who kept it for several minutes in his closed palm and then opened it. There was a sovereign. Sri Bhagavan with a faint smile told him to part with the sovereign and repeat the miracle. The challenge was not accepted!

\*   \*   \*

MUNAGALA V. KRISHNAN went to Delhi in December, 1940, in search of a job. He could not secure a job up to the end of February, 1941. So he wrote to his father Sri Venkataramiah saying that he had to return to the south as no job was available. This letter was shown to Sri Bhagavan who went through it and said: "Let him stay on in Delhi." In March he got a job. From then V. Krishnan prospered very well.

\*   \*   \*

SRI BHAGAVAN COULD very well probe deep into the minds of devotees and visitors. He said the following about a *sannyasi*-devotee who used to sit daily before Sri Bhagavan for three or four hours in meditation: “Aspirants who sat motionless even for longer times have been deceived,” meaning thereby that he lacked concentration or humility or both.

Sri Bhagavan said the following to Sri Salem Rajagopala Iyer about a devotee: “He has some eye defect. When he keeps his eyes open tears fall down. Others mistake this for deep *bhakti*.” This devotee used to visit people in various towns and demonstrate the tears flowing from his eyes.

\* \* \*

SRI RAMANATHA DIKSHITAR, a pupil in a *Vedapatasala*, was a puny figure, about four feet and six inches in height. He used to spin cotton yarn, get it woven and present the cloth to Sri Bhagavan for his loin cloth. This Ramanatha Dikshitar was also a freedom-fighter and a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Once he wanted to go to Vedaranyam to take part in the salt *satyagraha*. Sri Bhagavan jocularly remarked that the police would be afraid of him. When Ramanatha Dikshitar went and joined the salt *satyagraha*, he was not arrested, the police just ignored him.

Ramanatha Dikshitar, who was short and frail, seldom spoke to others and when he did he was full of humility. There was another devotee who was well built and tall. This devotee once got angry with Ramanatha Dikshitar, and raised himself to his full height and thundered, “Do you know who I am?”

Dikshitar meekly replied that it was the very purpose for which every devotee was in the Ashram.

\* \* \*

AFTER SRI BHAGAVAN moved down and settled near the Mother's *samadhi* there was only a thatched roof over the *samadhi* and an adjoining hut. Some devotees decided to build a more solid hall. So bricks and building material were gathered. The bricks were carried to the site by the devotees. Sri Bhagavan also wanted to work but the devotees would not permit him. One moonlit night, when all were asleep, a devotee woke up and found that Sri Bhagavan was missing. He woke up the others and they all began to search for him. They found Sri Bhagavan taking part in bringing bricks to the site from a kiln opposite the Ashram.

\*       \*       \*

IN THE EARLY 1920s there was a big mango tree near Palitirtham. Chinna Swami was also in the Ashram, although he had not yet taken charge of the management. Dandapani Swami, a huge figure, was another Ashram inmate. Chinna Swami and Dandapani Swami did not like each other. One night Dandapani Swami wanted to settle scores with Chinna Swami, so he seized Chinna Swami to crush him. Bhagavan appeared on the scene and slapped the back of Dandapani Swami, who immediately put Chinna Swami down. No words were spoken and each retired to his place of rest. Later Dandapani Swami described the slap as 'terrific'.

# LESSONS FROM BHAGAVAN'S LIFE

*K. R. K. Murthy*

OUR Bhagavan was an adept in the art of cooking. He used to cut vegetables, grind pulses and freely take part in various kinds of preparations. In the utilisation of different parts of a vegetable or fruit, his suggestions were very valuable and worth noting. He was very economical and knew how to put to use anything that came his way.

Once when there was a discussion about the foodstuffs such as onions, drumsticks, carrots, etc., which the orthodox people avoid, Sri Bhagavan remarked that they may do good to the body, but not to the mind. They may purify the blood and benefit the body, but they rouse passions and are not helpful for the purification of the mind (*manassudhi*).

Giving up for life certain fruits, nuts or other foodstuffs dear to one, during the pilgrimages to holy places, is one of the practices prevalent among the religious people. One day Sri Bhagavan noticed a devotee avoiding a mango on this ground and commented that a better form of *tyaga* (renunciation) would be to accept whatever one happens to get and not to crave for that which is not available.

Once Sri Bhagavan expressed that one may avoid things which do not agree with one's constitution and take necessary quantities of suitable ones that do him good. But maintenance

of body and health should not occupy much attention as it is not our chief pursuit.

Sri Bhagavan never used to compromise with equality in serving meals. He never agreed to accept anything which is not equally shared by his fellow diners. He was satisfied only when he was served in the end after everyone was served. He liked that he should be given only smaller quantities of even the most delicious or costly dishes than others. Even under exceptional circumstances he was not willing to take the food of superior quality unless it was distributed to all. This was one of the principles he observed very rigorously.

Sri Bhagavan made people of different tongues in South India quite at home by speaking or writing in their respective languages. It requires a great effort to cross the narrow linguistic barriers and shed the unjustifiable prejudices against sister languages and appreciate good works in them. Only one who studies one or two languages in addition to his mother tongue and moves and lives with others has ample opportunities of broadening his outlook and also of reaching others' hearts. The initial linguistic affinities do not last long and after all, people of the same mentality flock together, whatever their mother tongue is. Sri Bhagavan is particularly adored as he had taken a lot of pains to master several languages and write his works in the same for the benefit of devotees from various parts. His glorious example will continue to influence generations of devotees to put forth their best efforts in this direction and to come closer by understanding one another better.

# LOVING DEVOTION

T. P. R.

**A**N old devotee vividly relates how Major Chadwick once resorted to a stratagem to induce Sri Bhagavan to improve his health by taking a medicine.

It was some time during the early forties. Sri Bhagavan showed symptoms of slight jaundice and was growing weaker and weaker every day avoiding medication. Devotees implored him to have some treatment but without success. Some of us prayed and a few others were silently doing circumambulation round the Hall in which Sri Bhagavan was seated. Major Chadwick was prominent among those beseeching Sri Bhagavan to take some medicine.

One day while I was just starting from home to my office in Madras, the postman handed me a letter. It was from Mr. Chadwick. The letter I recollect read like this: "Dear T. P. R. I am sorry to tell you of the declining health of Sri Bhagavan who is growing weaker day by day, and will do nothing to alleviate it. He will not take any medicines, or heed our requests and persuasions. It is misery to be seeing this. Today just a thought came to me. You know that Sri Bhagavan always avoids medicines, but all the same he does not reject ayurvedic preparations like 'black *halwa*' (*lehiyam*) which if offered he may be pleased to accept. So why don't you go to some ayurvedic expert or pharmacy and ask for something, mentioning the symptoms and conditions and send it to him (to the Ashram). If it is your good *karma* he may be pleased to take it. But don't



say I wrote to you or expressed concern. You can say that by chance you met so and so and found a *lehiyam* well prepared which is good for many things and that it is only a tonic and not a medicine, etc. I shall expect your immediate response.” On reading this letter, I went straight to the Venkataramana Dispensary in Mylapore before going to court, and meeting the senior physician in charge there narrated the symptoms without disclosing the identity of the person for whom it was meant. I requested him to prescribe and give something helpful. The doctor asked me if I could not bring the patient for examination. I expressed my inability to do that and merely gave the age and other details. He then wrote two items with instructions to follow. The first was an ‘oil’ and the second was a *lehiyam*, called *jiragavilvadi lehiyam* and he advised me how to use them. I knew Sri Bhagavan was not usually given to consuming any ‘oils’ internally and so left it out and purchased one pound of the *lehiyam* and went to my office. Retaining a small part with me, I packed the rest and sent it to Sri Niranjananandaswami, the then *sarvadhikari*, with a letter saying: “Dear Sri Chinnaswamigal, Today as I was passing through Mylapore I peeped into the Venkataramana Dispensary where a fresh *lehiyam* was being prepared and ready for sale, called *Jiragavilvadi lehiyam*. I felt impelled to buy it and did so. It is so sweet and good that retaining a portion for me, I have sent the rest to you which I request you may place before Sri Bhagavan as any other offering is done. This is not medicine but belongs to the class of tonics generally taken by all.” Sri Chinnaswami accordingly appears to have placed both the parcel and the letter before Sri Bhagavan.

That weekend, as was usual then with me, I left for Tiruvannamalai. On arrival at the Ashram and in Sri Bhagavan’s Hall as I rose up after obeisance Sri Bhagavan turned to me on his couch with a small container in hand and remarked, “See!

This is the *lehiyam* you have sent. I am using it regularly four times. *Jeeraga* and *Bilva* are very good for biliousness,” and all that. I felt elated and happy at the success of Mr. Chadwick’s scheme and sat down before Sri Bhagavan. Within half a minute Sri Bhagavan asked, “What? Did anyone write to you to send this?” I immediately admitted it and said: “Yes Bhagavan, Chadwick wrote to me all that I have said in my letter, and my expectations and hope also being the same, I did what he asked me to do and faithfully wrote to Chinnaswamigal without even mentioning his letter as if all this was my own initiative.” Sri Bhagavan laughed graciously saying, “See that, see that!”

That evening Chadwick entered the hall at 4 p.m. as was his routine, inwardly also elated and happy. But hardly did he rise from his obeisance when Sri Bhagavan said: “Chadwick! Did you write anything?” This was a moment of shock and surprise for Chadwick and he having done all this out of his extreme love and devotion to Sri Bhagavan, happily declared: “Yes Bhagavan, I wrote all that to T. P. R. What can we do? Sri Bhagavan never will take anything and it was miserable for us devotees to be witnessing Sri Bhagavan growing weaker day by day. So I did all that and I am happy now.”

He resumed his seat and began to meditate as usual. Such was Chadwick’s devotion and love to Sri Bhagavan! He was one among the many old devotees whose devotion to him was boundless.

# MEMORABLE DAYS WITH THE SAGE OF ARUNACHALA

## I

*Swami Desikananda*

THE highest ideal for man is to realise God, his real Self. Three prerequisites for fulfilling this sublime purpose of life are: a human body as it is only in such a state that we can work out our destiny and practise *sadhana*, the desire to be free and the help of a Guru who has crossed the ocean of delusion. This objective unfolds itself commensurate with our spiritual effort and growth.

It was Grace and good fortune that brought me to the presence of Bhagavan Sri Ramana in 1927. On entering the Ashram I saw the Maharshi seated on a couch wearing nothing more than a loin cloth and appearing to gaze at some distant void. He was surrounded by devotees sitting at his feet and the whole scene was reminiscent of sages of yore. I stood for a while in his presence. He looked at me casually and I made my *namaskarams*. He made kind enquiries as to where I came from and about my stay. Next morning I went to the Ashram and sat before the Maharshi in meditation. The mind was quiet and not wavering. Sri Maharshi was sitting on the couch as usual, apparently gazing at the Hill.

Next morning I again returned to the Ashram to sit at his feet as I found I could easily concentrate in his presence and

have progressively longer spells of undisturbed meditation such as I have never been able to achieve before anywhere else. When I told the Maharshi about it and how enjoyable it was, he asked me whether I was sleeping at the time of meditation. On my replying in the negative he laughed and enquired about my method of meditating, which was to concentrate on a light in the heart and offer a flower to my *Ishtam* (chosen God) whenever the mind wavered as instructed by Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, second president of Ramakrishna Math Mission. The Maharshi said it was all right for me and I could continue in this way.

The third day after a lengthy meditation in front of the Maharshi I told him about a picture of Jesus I had seen in a church, surrounded by all sorts of animals at peace with one another. He replied that this was due to the fact of animosity having been conquered by the sage. Even snakes would not harm anybody here in this Ashram and added that in the presence of sages evil natures would be conquered and friendliness prevail. That is how the *rishis* of old used to live in forests and caves unharmed by wild creatures.

A visitor asked the Maharshi in the evening if he saw any form of God in meditation. He replied smiling that the Self or Atman is our real nature and has no form. He quoted a verse of Sankaracharya: "You are not the body, you are not the mind, senses or *buddhi*. You are beyond all these. You are the Atman." When one becomes perfected in meditation having discarded all desires and merges in the Self the mind loses itself without any objectivity. The mind then is no mind. The mind losing itself in Atman is what is called *samadhi*. This is the real nature of man and sublime happiness.

The highest goal of man is to enquire 'Who am I?' and realize the Self. If a human being does not try to realize this he lives in vain. This state in which he enjoys the highest peace and

happiness is dearer than anything else in the world. It is in all beings in the innermost heart. Unless one realizes this state one will have to be born and die again and again. In this real state one goes beyond grief and sorrow. It makes a man immortal.

Young as I was, I found it difficult to follow this teaching and asked for clarification when I returned to the Ashram the next morning. This was the first time I addressed the Maharshi as 'Bhagavan'. He replied that the path was indeed difficult, as difficult as walking on a razor's edge, but sincere effort is sure to bring result. "You (meaning me) could meditate for two or three hours not because of this life's practice but as a result of effort in past lives."

The fifth day of my visit I saw a young woman with a small baby seated at Bhagavan's feet sobbing bitterly. She had recently lost her husband and was grief-stricken. Bhagavan looked at her with compassion and told her: "Husband, wife and children are for the body. Go home and know who you are. Go home and do not weep." The words of a *jnani* have power to transform. 'Home' can also mean spiritual home, the source. His command "Go home and know who you are" might have taken effect in a heart one-pointed and purified by sorrow. In the case of another young woman, Echammal, heartbroken at the loss of her entire family, Bhagavan's very Silence was enough to effect the transformation and lift her grief (as recorded in *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge*).

The remaining days went off as usual. Bhagavan's routine was to sit on the couch mostly in silence till noon and again after food and a little rest. He used to look through the mail twice a day and go for a short walk on the Hill. He said on one occasion that since there was no mind at all, there was also no concept of anything. All was one full expanse in peace and happiness. He quickly added that we cannot even say one expanse as there was no second. He was immersed in



introduced to one of the greatest living sages of modern India. It is not every day that one meets a sage like Sri Bhagavan. I think the opportunity that arose of coming into contact with him must have been the result of my prayers to God to lead me to a living sage.

On September 15th, at 7 a.m. I reached the Ashram. Bhagavan had gone to the big dining hall for breakfast. The devotees accompanied him and they were taking their seats one by one. From an old devotee of Bhagavan, I had a letter to Sri Niranjanananda Swami. I delivered the letter to him, and he took me to the dining hall and introduced me to Bhagavan. Bhagavan welcomed me with a soft and affectionate look. I prostrated and when I got up he made a sign to take my seat nearby and I did so. From the moment Bhagavan's eyes fell on me, my heart went out to him in spontaneous love and reverence. The way he ate his food, the way he sat, the way he walked, the way he talked, were so remarkably calm, and so different from the manner of ordinary men. Here, I thought, is a perfect example of a sage, a *jivanmukta*. It was only now that I understood the significance of Arjuna's question to the Lord, regarding the *sthitaprajna*. These questions are important because the sage sits, talks and walks, not like ordinary men, but whatever he does has a peculiarity of its own. To understand this one has to see a sage for oneself and sit at his feet.

At about 9 a.m. Bhagavan came to the meditation hall and we too entered the hall and sat facing him, while he reclined on his couch with his face turned towards us. As I sat in the meditation hall the words of king Dushyanta, 'Peace dwells in an ashram' came to my mind and I felt that they were true of this ashram also. For the first time in my life, I realized how dynamic *santi* could be. Peace seemed to emerge from Bhagavan and fill the hearts of one and all. In his presence, the mind became calm and tranquil of its own accord and consequently

doubts and questions became few, and finally vanished. I was very happy and felt myself spontaneously as a *kritakritya* that my heart softly whispered within me the words, “*Dhanyoham, Dhanyoham*” (I am blessed).

All the devotees sat in the hall in front of Bhagavan till about noon, and at 12 o'clock a bell was rung announcing lunch. Bhagavan got up from his seat, and with his stick in hand slowly moved out of the meditation hall and proceeded to the dining hall. There food was served and we waited till Bhagavan took his first morsel of rice. We followed, and in about half an hour we finished our lunch and Bhagavan went back to the meditation hall. We were expected to take rest for 2 or 3 hours. By about 4 o'clock, people came into the meditation hall and sat before Bhagavan, some to put themselves in tune with the atmosphere of tranquillity, some to meditate, some to ask questions and get their doubts cleared, and some to hear the conversation that took place between Bhagavan and the many visitors. To listen to these conversations was a lesson in itself. Bhagavan's physical form has gone, but we his devotees who have sat in his presence and have heard his calm and profound words, carry in our hearts indelible impressions of him and his words which passing times and circumstances could not easily efface. To all of us, these memories are precious treasures, and I think we should feel grateful to the ashram for publishing these volumes which aid us to relive those days we have spent with Bhagavan.

I shall now relate an incident which to me was very significant. Two or three days after my arrival at the ashram, I had a desire to dedicate a Sanskrit stanza to Bhagavan, but my knowledge of that language was not so much as to compose verse with any degree of confidence. However, the desire had sprung up within me and I was sure that by God's *kripa* even the dumb could be made eloquent. So, I thought, if I prayed to Bhagavan, he would satisfy my desire. Hence in my heart, I



prayed to him to extend his grace so that I might fulfil my wish. That noon I laid myself down for my siesta. After three quarters of an hour, as soon as I got up a stanza occurred to me. Apparently without any conscious mental process, a poem was formed in my mind ready to be transcribed. I knew this was due to Bhagavan's grace. My prayer had been granted. With great joy, I wrote it down on a piece of paper.

That afternoon I took the stanza to the hall and placed the paper at Bhagavan's feet. Bhagavan took it, read the stanza twice or thrice, and with a tender expression he asked me to put the words *sona sailam* for the words Ramana Maharshi which the stanza previously had. So I changed the fourth line which read "I meditate on Ramana Maharshi in my mind" to "I meditate on *sona sailam* (Arunachala)." Thus Bhagavan revealed to me that he was none other than Lord Arunachala or Dakshinamurthy himself, who by his sublime silence expounded to his devotees the mysteries of self-knowledge. At that time it struck me so and my eyes were filled with tears of delight and gratitude. I prostrated once again and took my seat near the wall.

It was only after coming into contact with Bhagavan that I understood certain spiritual truths. Here I may mention one example. While I was at the ashram, I did quite a lot of *mananam* and meditation. Bhagavan taught that there was no qualitative difference between the experiences of 'jagrat' and 'sushupthi' and I had no great difficulty in apprehending that. But when I reflected upon my own experience, the state of *sushupthi* offered a difficulty. It appeared to be a complete blankness, a nullity in my existence which I felt to be discontinuous. Bhagavan said that the real 'I' is eternal, continuous and beyond even *manas*, *buddhi*, *ahamkara* and *chitta*, whereas I found my existence was discontinuous. So where is my real 'I', my true self? There seemed to be no answer and I did not realize that there could not be any answer to that question. Here, then, was a cul-de-sac,

beyond which I could not go. Mentally I put the matter to Bhagavan and waited for his grace. And lo! one day, this blind alley disappeared and all of a sudden it struck me that '*sushupthi*' is not after all a '*sunya*' as I had formerly felt, and that I existed even in dreamless sleep to perceive the nonexistence of the world including my body and mind. A continuity of my existence is clearly intuited by me. In the waking state I am the witness of the world, mind and body; in the dream state, I am the witness of the dream; in dreamless sleep, I am the witness of the nonexistence of the world. Thus I exist in all the three states. It was indeed mysterious that all this came to me with such a depth of understanding that all doubts vanished forever. I understood clearly that to know myself *was to be* myself.

Mere reading and thinking about self-knowledge alone is of no use. Only by the grace of God coming through a sage like Bhagavan, can one rightly understand the words of wisdom of our great *rishis*, and as Sankaracharya has put it, the flight of steps leading to *jivanmukti* begins with *satsanga*, the company of sages and saints. In *Viveka Chudamani* it is said:

“There are good souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring, and who having themselves crossed this dreadful ocean of birth and death help others also to cross the same, without any motive whatsoever.” Our Bhagavan is such a soul. Through the apparent severity and unconcern of this majestic sage, there shone unmistakably a sweetness and a love which endeared him to the hearts of those who approached him. I think we are too near Bhagavan's time to see him in the correct perspective of history. As years roll on, his spiritual grandeur will assume Himalayan proportions and future generations will consider him as an *avatara* of Sri Dakshinamurthi. May He ever enlighten us!

# SRI BHAGAVAN'S REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

*Submitted by Sri D. C. D. on 25-8-1944*

1. *Japa* of *koham* is not correct. Put the question once and then concentrate on finding the source of the ego, and preventing occurrence of thoughts.

2. You should not attend to the breathing if you are capable of concentrating on the enquiry without it. Some may have to attend to the breathing if unable to concentrate on the enquiry alone. Some may practise *kevala kumbhaka* during the enquiry. Some may require the help of regular *pranayama* also to steady the mind and control the thoughts. All these practices are to be given up when the mind becomes strong enough to pursue the enquiry without any aid. *Pranayama* is to be practised with the usual caution. It will gradually increase the power and duration of *kumbhaka*. It will make the mind one-pointed. Take help if unable to concentrate without it. *Pranayama* is like reins to control the mind-horse, or like brakes to control wheels of thought ... 'Who am I?' and 'Whence am I?' are one and the same. They refer to the ego only. No such questions can be asked in the case of the Real Self.

3. Suggestive replies such as *Sivoham* etc., to the enquiry, are not to be given to the mind during the meditation. The true answer will come by itself. Any answer the ego may give cannot be correct. These affirmations or auto suggestions may be of help to those who follow other methods, but not

in this method of enquiry. If you go on asking, the reply will come. The method of enquiry is *dhyana*, and the effortless state is *Jnana*.

4. 'I' is also a *Guru-mantra*. The first name of God is "I." Even OM comes later. Atma or the real Self is always saying 'I-I.' There is no *mantra* without the person who does the *japa*, i.e., *Aham*. The *japa* of *Aham* is always going on within. *Japa* leads to *dhyana* and *dhyana* to *jnana*. You may practise *saguna* meditation or the method of enquiry according to your inclination. Only that method which is most suitable for a person will appeal to him.

5. Without losing hold of the knowledge of "Who you are," you may continue all activities as prompted to perform by the inner controller. They will go on even without your efforts. What you are destined to do, you cannot avoid. They will come your way of their own accord. You should also understand what *japa*, *kirtans*, etc., are meant for. The real *japa* is always going on. *Japa* and God are one and the same. See the philosophy of the name of God as given by the saint Namadeva.

6. In the enquiry, 'I' refers to the ego.

7. Don't entertain such thoughts of imperfection, lack of qualities, etc. You are already perfect. Get rid of the ideas of imperfection and need for development. There is nothing to realize or annihilate. You are the Self. The ego does not exist. Pursue the enquiry and see if there is anything to be realised or annihilated. See if there is any mind to be controlled. Even the effort is being made by the mind which does not exist.

8. Real *asana* is "being established" in the Self-Reality or the Source. Sit in your Self. Where can the Self go and sit? Everything sits in the Self. Find out the source of the 'I' and sit there. Don't have the idea that the Self cannot be realized without the help of *asanas*, etc. They are not at all necessary. The chief thing is to enquire and reach the source of the ego. The details

such as posture, etc., may distract the mind towards them or to the body.

9. You may read whichever book you like. Self (*Atma*) is the real book. You can look into it whenever you like. Nobody can take it away. It is always at hand to be read. Hold onto your Self in your spare time also and then you can read any book.

10. Ask yourself, “To whom do these doubts, fears and worries occur?” and they will vanish. Cease to pay attention to them. Pay attention to the Self within. Fears, etc., can only arise when there are two, or when anybody else exists apart from, or separate from, or outside you. If you turn the mind inward towards the Self, fears, etc., will disappear. If you try to remove a doubt or fear, another doubt or fear will arise. There will be no end of it. The best method to annihilate them is to ask “To whom do they occur?” and they will disappear. Destroying a tree by plucking its leaves one by one is impossible – other leaves will grow by the time you pluck a few. Remove the root of the tree – the ego – and the whole tree with its leaves and branches will be destroyed. Prevention is better than cure.

11. Q. Should I look for the source within the body?

A. The ego arises within the body. Hence in the first instance you may look within the body for its source. When you reach the source there will be no inside or outside, because the source of the Self is all-pervading. After realization everything will be inside the Self.

12. Q. Is the source on the right side of the middle line of the chest?

A. The Heart is defined as the place from which the “I thought” arises. Heart means the Centre (of consciousness). It cannot be identified with any part of the body.

13. Keep the mind quiet. That is enough. Sitting in the hall will help you. The purpose of effort is to get rid of all efforts. The force will be clearly felt when the stillness is achieved.

Spiritual vibrations exist everywhere and they will manifest when the mind is stilled.

14. Look at your Self or Atma, rather than anywhere else. The eyes may be kept open or closed – it is immaterial. There is only one I, whether you spell it ‘I’ or ‘eye’. There is no point in opening or closing the eyes. Attention must be focused on the inner ‘I’. You are not an eye that can be opened or closed. You may close or open the eyes according to your liking or inclination. It is immaterial, and not important. You will cease to think of the world when you think of the Self. If you are in a room and close your eyes and do not look out, it is immaterial whether you close the windows or keep them open. (The body is the room, the eyes are the window.)

Looking at *ajna-chakra*, etc., is not necessary in this method. It may help in keeping the mind from going out towards external objects. Concentrate on the Self without which there are no *chakras*. They do not exist without you. You are all of them. All centres (*chakras*) are in the Heart.

The Heart is not the *anahata chakra*, which is in the spinal cord. Heart is ‘I’.

15. First find out whether the ego, who is depressed by these thoughts, exists. Find out how you got the idea of the body. Solve this problem for your ego, then see if anything remains to be solved.

# REMEMBERING RAMANA

*Chaggnalal Yogi*

## I

### SRI RAMANA – THE DESTROYER OF MISERIES

“I own the fact that a person’s external activities stop automatically when his heart is fully saturated with love and his sense of non-duality with all beings reaches its consummation. If we happen to meet such a person who has attained oneness with all, his mere *darshan* will drive away our miseries. But from among lakhs and crores, we will find only one *mahatma* of this type”, thus said Saint Vinobaji.

Indeed, one such *mahatma* of our times was Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Sage of Arunagiri whose mere *darshan* bestowed Grace on thousands and relieved them of their miseries. Even today his grace is available to all those who yearn for it, though he is not with us physically. After giving up his small mortal coil he has now assumed a huge all-pervading form.

As Sri Ramana himself has said, “The Guru is within; meditation is meant to remove the ignorant idea that he is only outside. If he be a stranger whom you await, he is bound to disappear also. Where is the use of a transient being like that?”

He further says: “One of two things must be done; either surrender yourself because you realize your inability and need a

higher power to help you, or investigate into the cause of misery, go into the source and so merge in the Self. Either way you will be free from misery. God or Guru never forsakes the devotee who has surrendered himself.”

Thus he himself has shown us the path of winning his grace. We have only to follow it faithfully and then wait to reap the sweet fruits of his grace ‘full of love and oneness with all beings’. We will not have to wait for a long time if our efforts and devotion are sincere. His grace is bound to descend on us and relieve us of our miseries.

Replying to a question of a visitor to Sri Ramanasramam a few years ago, Sri Ramana Maharshi had said that, “To have *darshan* of a saint is sure to bring good to you. Thousands of persons pass by Tiruvannamalai in the trains daily, but a few alight here and fewer still visit this ashram. About *darshan* of and association with a saint, the scriptures say that it is a vessel which enables you to cross the vast ocean of *samsara*. What more benefit do you want?”

Indeed, *darshan* of a saint is so very efficacious that it occupies an important place in the curriculum of a *sadhaka* or a *bhakta*. In this connection I am reminded of a very inspiring experience that a devotee from Nepal, Sardar Rudra Raj Pande had, when he came for *darshan* of Sri Ramana for the first time. After having Sri Bhagavan’s *darshan* he went to Lord Arunachaleswara’s temple situated in the town at the foot of the Arunachala Hill. Narrating his experience about the *darshan* of Lord Arunachaleswara, Sri Pande says in his article published in the Golden Jubilee Souvenir: “All my attention was directed to the one purpose of seeing the image or lingam in the *Sanctum Sanctorum*. But strange to say, instead of the lingam, I see the image of Maharshi, Bhagavan Sri Ramana, his smiling countenance, his brilliant eyes looking at me. And what is more strange is that it is not one Maharshi that I see, nor two, nor



three but in hundreds, I see the same smiling countenance, those lustrous eyes, I see them wherever I may look in that *Sanctum Sanctorum*. My eyes catch not the full figure of the Maharshi but only the smiling face from the chin above. I am in raptures and beside myself with inexpressible joy. That bliss and calmness of mind I then felt, how can words describe? Tears of joy flowed down my cheeks. I went to the temple to have *darshan* of Lord Arunachala, and I found the living Lord as he graciously revealed himself. I can never forget the deep, intimate experience I had in the ancient temple.”

Truly speaking, *darshan* and grace go together; one follows the other. *Darshan* begets grace and if it does not beget it, it ceases to be the *darshan* of a saint or a sage. A sage’s *darshan* will always be fruitful. It will surely bring some good. But as Sri Vinobaji says, in the vast multitude of lakhs and crores, there will be one sage. Hence, when we find such a sage, we must avail of his *darshan* and grace to our fullest capacity.

Speaking of my own experience about Sri Bhagavan’s benign grace, I have found it playing a prominent part in solving the most difficult problems confronting me and guiding me safely through thick and thin. I propose to narrate here a few glaring incidents of my intimate experience.

In 1945, I decided to wind up my printing press at Bombay in order to go and settle at Sri Ramanasramam. I had no prearranged plan for closing down my business. I did not know how things would be shaped, I solely relied on Sri Bhagavan. And he in turn did respond to my devout prayer.

In the early hours of one morning, while I was still in my bed half awake, I saw a vision in which Sri Bhagavan appeared before me. By his side stood the gentleman whom I recognized as a friend of mine, who had neither been in the ashram nor had any faith in Sri Bhagavan. The following conversation then took place between Sri Bhagavan and myself:

*B:* You want to sell away your press, don't you?

*I:* Yes, Bhagavan, but I should find a buyer.

*B:* (Showing my friend standing by his side). This is the buyer. He will buy your press, so sell it to him.

*I:* When Bhagavan is so very kind to show me the buyer may he favour me by stating the amount at which I should execute the sale?

Sri Bhagavan thereupon showed me five figures on the opposite wall which were shining like a neon sign. The amount indicated to me was quite reasonable, neither low nor exorbitant.

Sri Bhagavan then disappeared from my sight, and with him also disappeared my friend. The vision ended.

I was simply wonder-struck and when I entered my press that day at 11 a.m., my friend was waiting there for me. Of course, he had come to see me for some other work. I narrated to him my vision of that morning. He heard me very attentively and when I had finished he simply replied: "I will buy your press at the price indicated by your Guru." There was no limit to my joy. It was all over in a minute. My desire was fulfilled by his grace. I could leave Bombay with my family and settle first at Bangalore and later at Sri Ramanasramam itself, and spend about three years in his Holy presence. Our shifting from Bombay and settling at Bangalore was a series of incidents bespeaking of his benign grace. Those were the days when prices were soaring very high for everything. Bangalore was a new place for us. In view of the wishes of a few devotees at the Ashram I had agreed to buy a printing press at Bangalore for the purpose of executing the printing work of the Ashram. Thus I had to get a printing press as well as a house for us to live.

It was his grace which had drawn us to Bangalore and it was the same grace which got us both a printing press and a residence there, without the least difficulty.

In a good business locality of Bangalore there was a very old press established in 1885, lying idle for the last 6 months. It was for sale. I saw its proprietor and told him the purpose for which I was to buy the press. He agreed to sell it to me but haggled about the price. I proposed that both of us visit the Ashram and after having Sri Bhagavan's *darshan*, might talk about the bargain. He at once agreed to it, and both of us went to Sri Ramanasramam. I took him to the holy presence of Sri Bhagavan whom I informed that I proposed to buy his press. Sri Bhagavan did not say anything but simply nodded. Within a few hours of having had Sri Bhagavan's *darshan*, there was a wonderful change in the attitude of my Bangalore friend, who left the question of price to me. Of course I did not want to exploit him, so I stated a reasonable amount which he quite willingly accepted. Though he had insisted that no business talks should take place at the Ashram it was he himself who proposed that the bargain might be settled at the Ashram only. Of course his wish was carried out and the agreement of sale was executed and signed there and then.

Within a week thereafter, the press came into my possession. It was a fairly big press where I could do all types of printing work including the Ashram books in various languages, such as English, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Gujarati and Kannada. It was named 'Aruna Press' by Sri Bhagavan himself.

The press was idle for six months. It was to be put in working order. For this purpose a lot of work was to be done. It was really a heavy task, but due to his merciful grace I did not feel the burden. In a short period, the entire press was put in order and renovated, and publications of the Ashram began to be printed one after the other.

Throughout the period that I ran the Aruna Press at Bangalore, I felt his hand of grace extended to me on many occasions.

On 1st September, 1946, the devotees of Sri Bhagavan had decided to celebrate the Golden Jubilee, 'in commemoration of the day, the 1st September, 1896, on which young Venkataraman reached Arunachala and in devout and humble recognition of his fifty years of transcendental life'. On that day, the Golden Jubilee Souvenir was to be published. The printing of this Souvenir was, of course, entrusted to my press. Up till now, the press had printed small books for the Ashram but as this was going to be a big volume and time at my disposal was short, I was rather diffident. But his grace eliminated my diffidence, and help and cooperation in the successful execution of this work began to pour in from all quarters, some of them being unexpected.

Only ten days were at my disposal and the major portion of the Souvenir Volume was yet to be printed. I lost courage and at once ran up to the Ashram. Having prostrated, I placed the entire position before Sri Bhagavan and then pouring out my heart pleaded that "Unless the help of some other press is taken, the volume will not come out on 1st September." Then I sat before him in a praying mood, enjoying his blissful *darshan* and waiting for his gracious reply. After a few moments he said in a low melodious tone, "Do your work." These three simple words were indeed magical words. They fired me with fresh vim and vigour and there arose in my heart a strong faith that the volume would surely be out on the scheduled date. There was the order for me I had simply to obey and "do my work," and the rest would be looked after by him. I returned to Bangalore. I told the story of my experience at Sri Ramanasramam to my co-workers in the press. All of them accepted Sri Bhagavan's order in the same spirit as I did and all of us worked with full faith, zeal and enthusiasm day and night. The bulk of work turned out in those last ten days was really surprising. For the last three days a party of about ten devotees

came to my house on its way to the Ashram, going there for attending the Golden Jubilee. Three or four of them were expert bookbinders, whose timely help completed the work of the Souvenir a day early.

Indeed, wonderful are the ways and modes of his grace, which made so many impossible things possible and difficult things easy for us. All through the period of our stay at Bangalore we experienced the beneficial working of his benign grace.

There flows a perennial stream of nectar of his grace, which is freely available to one and all, provided we care to avail ourselves of it by following the path shown by him.

May all respond to his call divine and be devoted to Him, by adhering to his teachings.

## II

### SRI RAMANA THE NAMELESS

ONCE, AN old lady came to Sri Ramanasramam. After prostrating, she placed a slip of paper in the hands of Sri Bhagavan Ramana. I guessed that it contained a prayer or doubt from her, as it was wont with all the devotees to offer their prayer or place their doubt before Bhagavan in that manner. But in this case, it turned out to be quite a different thing.

This old woman lived in the town in a dilapidated temple, to repair which she wanted some money. With this purpose she got an appeal for funds drafted by someone. In order to collect the required amount easily and early, she hit upon the idea that the appeal should be signed by eminent persons of the town and that Sri Bhagavan's signature should top the rest. Thus the slip of paper was nothing else but the said appeal given to

Sri Bhagavan for his signature. After reading he returned it to her without uttering a single word.

“My work will be done only if you will put your signature on this appeal”, the old woman urged Sri Bhagavan.

Sri Bhagavan with his usual sweet smile said: “It is well known that I never sign anything.”

But she would not accept defeat. She pressed him again and again to sign her appeal. At last Sri Bhagavan spoke out: “Yes, yes, you want me to sign your appeal, but how can one sign who has no name? With what name will he sign?”

The old woman was puzzled. What did Sri Bhagavan mean by saying that he had no name? Why, was his name not Sri Ramana Maharshi? How was it then that all knew him by that name?

As she could not understand the significance of Sri Bhagavan’s reply, she persisted in coaxing him to sign. But Sri Ramana remained unmoved and kept mum. After some time the old dame was also tired and left the hall, of course, without obtaining Sri Bhagavan’s signature.

Often would autograph hunters come to the Ashram and request Sri Bhagavan to sign their autograph books. Wreathed in his inherent smile, Sri Bhagavan would give all of them only one answer: “Let him sign who has a name. Here (meaning himself) there is no name. How can there be a signature then?”

### III

## SRI RAMANA’S SENSE OF EQUALITY

OF THE VARIOUS characteristics attributed to the man of wisdom and devotion in the *Bhagavad Gita*, the sense of equality

in word and deed towards all beings belonging to human, animal and vegetable life is considered to be very important. Sri Ramana Maharshi, the Sage of Arunagiri, possessed this rare quality among many others. This fact has been borne out by a few true, incidents from his life, set forth in this article.

One day the post brought a small parcel to Sri Ramanasramam. It was a tin weighing about a pound containing the invigorating medicinal jam called *Chyavanaprash avaleha*, sent from the Punjab by a devotee. It was accompanied by a letter wherein the devotee had requested Sri Ramana Bhagavan to take a teaspoonful of the *avaleha* every morning so that his health may be improved and vigour restored.

After reading the letter, Sri Ramana said with a sweet smile, “Oho! So he wants me to be a sandow! But, isn’t it still better if all of us become sandows?”

The next morning, every devotee found a little of the *avaleha* served on his leaf along with his breakfast and thus the entire quantity was consumed in a trice.

It was a rule with Sri Maharshi not to take any costly food at all and if a rich dish was brought to him, it was invariably distributed equally among all the diners. “We cannot afford rich dishes,” he used to say.

Once when Sri Bhagavan was suffering from serious ill-health and debility, the doctors recommended that he should take some nourishing food. But he would not listen to it. The devotees too continued to make pressing appeals to him. Some of them would earnestly plead for thickly-buttered bread, some others for milk and some again for sweet orange juice. But to all of them, he had only one answer to give, with his usual genial smile: “But how can we afford to have such a luxurious diet? For us there can only be the poor man’s ration.”

“But what is the harm in changing the diet for the sake of health? Even Mahatma Gandhi takes a special diet and

Sri Aurobindo too does the same, to keep up their health. Please, therefore, do take at least a tumblerful of sweet orange juice, for our sake,” ventured a devotee in a plaintive tone.

“Well, well! But do you know the cost of a tumbler of juice?” asked Sri Bhagavan.

“Oh, only four *annas*”, rejoined the devotee with hope gleaming in his eyes.

“No, it won’t be four *annas*. We will require about 200 tumblers of juice. Do you want me alone to gulp down the sweet drink with all of you gaping by? Moreover, how can we poor folk provide 200 tumblers of juice worth Rs. 50 a day?” put in Sri Bhagavan smilingly.

The answer dumbfounded the devotee for a while, but he would not give in so easily. He had a lingering hope that if once Sri Bhagavan somehow started to take the nourishing diet, he would continue to do so for at least some days and his health would thereby surely gain. So the next day, he quietly prepared fine hot *rotis*, well-smearred with ghee and filled two tumblers one with milk and the other with sweet orange juice. Then with the help of a few other devotees, all these things were taken to Sri Ramana.

“What’s all this?” he queried as he saw them coming with something in their hands.

Putting down the tray before him, the devotees uncovered it and prayed to him to deign accept the things. He refused point-blank to even touch them and wished that the devotees themselves should consume them. Repeated appeals to him from other devotees were also of no avail. In the heat of the moment, a lady devotee burst out:

“Oh Bhagavan! Just as you are kind enough to agree to sit on the sofa for our sake, so also why not favour us by taking this diet?” Though the lady spoke these words in good faith, the outcome was quite the reverse of what was expected.



Hardly had she finished, when to her and other devotees' dismay, Sri Bhagavan got down from the sofa and quietly squatted on the floor.

"Oh, oh! My Bhagavan! No, no, please don't. What a silly woman I am! What horrid words I blurted out." She screamed out with anguish in her heart and tears in her eyes.

All others also stood aghast. The remedy turned out worse than the disease! The *rotis*, milk and juice were left to themselves and everybody was racking their brains to find a way out of this impasse and re-seat Sri Bhagavan on the sofa.

It was certain that no appeal or argument would move Sri Bhagavan to change his decision. Therefore a devotee who had been associated with Sri Bhagavan for over thirty-five years resolved to take a desperate step. Without any fuss, he simply started lifting Sri Bhagavan bodily. Seeing this, one or two other devotees joined him and together they succeeded in lifting and placing Sri Bhagavan's body on the sofa. Sri Bhagavan thereafter neither resisted nor tried to come down from the sofa. However, the devotees were so much upset that even after seeing Sri Bhagavan sitting quietly on the sofa, they began to beseech him with folded hands not to get down again.

Sri Bhagavan, out of his benevolent grace, accepted the new situation created apparently by sheer physical force, but really out of sincere love and devotion of the devotees, and every one felt greatly relieved. Thus a loving attempt of the devotees to make Sri Bhagavan agree to take a special diet, came to a fruitless end.

Sri Ramana maintained till the end his very keen sense of strict equality in his treatment towards one and all. Whenever any eatable was offered to him it was distributed equally among all the ashramites and guests. For instance, when fifty bananas were offered by someone and there were one hundred leaves, everyone got his equal share of half a banana. If a server made

an exception in Sri Bhagavan's case, intentionally or otherwise, and served one whole banana or three-fourths, he would not rest till the excess was removed from his leaf.

One evening we offered *puries*. There were enough to serve two *puries* on his leaf. Sri Bhagavan asked the server why he had been served two *puries* instead of one. The latter explained that everyone had been served two each. Immediately his eyes quickly passed over all the leaves to see if the explanation given was correct, and when he saw that it was so, he expressed his satisfaction by a vocal sound of assent.

Not only did Sri Ramana express his sense of equality to human beings without distinction of sex, class, birth or education, he applied it to even beasts and birds. Nay, even trees and plants were as dear to him as men and animals. That this equal eye for all was not a mere theory or a platitude with him, but was a living reality, is attested by the following incident.

One day, some labourers were thrashing a mango tree with long pieces of bamboo in order to bring down the mangoes. This, of course, brought down the mangoes, but with them also broke down a large number of leaves, twigs and small branches, which fully covered the ground below. Sri Bhagavan heard the sound of this belabouring of the tree and with clearly discernible pain on his countenance said to the labourers: "Enough, enough, now stop your thrashing. Whoever told you to bring down mangoes in such a brutal manner? Just see what havoc you have played! How many leaves and twigs and branches you have truncated from the tree? Get aside, we don't want to have mangoes this way."

Sri Bhagavan then proceeded to the *goshala*. The labourers were puzzled and ashamed on account of the severe rebuke from Sri Bhagavan. After a pause they gathered the leaves, twigs, etc., and put them in a heap in one corner and waited with folded hands for Sri Bhagavan's return. When he passed by them,

they prayed to him to forgive them for their unthoughtful action. In reply he simply said: "Alas! How brutally you have dealt the blows to the poor tree! What an amount of green foliage you have destroyed!"

Verily Sri Ramana personified that ideal of life which is mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "One who has not a trace of malice for any living being and is friendly and compassionate to all."

Such was Bhagavan Sri Ramana, our Great Master, to whom I bow with obeisance.

## IV

### SRI RAMANA'S SERMON OF LOVE

"FROM ANGER PROCEED delusion, from delusion confused memory, from confused memory the destruction of reason, from destruction of reason he perishes." So says Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Thus, anger is the root-cause of a man's decay, and it makes him devoid of humanity. Conversely, therefore, one who has achieved conquest over anger, is a perfect man. But it is not easy to conquer anger. Various methods have been taught by great preceptors and saints for the control of anger. Of these the one taught by Sri Ramana, the Sage of Arunachala, is quite a unique and novel method.

Sri Ramana himself was a conqueror of anger and when approached by a young man with a request to show him how to conquer his anger, he showed him an unusual but effective method of doing so. It happened like this.

A young man once came to Sri Ramanasramam and entered the hall. After prostrating, he prayed: "Bhagavan! My

senses are turbulent and fickle. Do what I may, I cannot keep them in control. Please bestow your grace on me and show me the way to control them.”

“Fickleness is due to the mind,” replied Sri Bhagavan with a smile, “Once the mind is controlled, the senses will come round by themselves.”

“True, Bhagavan!” The young enquirer put in this further difficulty, “But I get excited even at trifles and the more I try to control anger, the tighter becomes its grip on me.”

“Is that so? But why on earth should you be angry at all? And if you want to be angry, why not get angry with your anger?” Sri Bhagavan questioned the youth. Explaining further, Sri Ramana said: “Whenever a fit of anger comes to you, direct it against your own self instead of fretting against others. Be angry at your own anger. If you do this your anger against someone else will subside and you will also be able to conquer it.” Concluding thus, Sri Bhagavan laughed, suggesting that it was quite easy.

The devotees sitting in the hall also joined him in his laughter. Most of them thought that Sri Bhagavan had uttered the above words in a lighter vein. Only a few who seriously pondered these valuable words could grasp the wisdom of this novel way of controlling anger.

What an apparently strange and impracticable precept! We are wont to get angry with anybody and everybody. We get angry with our servants, our children and other people and things except our own selves! Is it not strange that we never give vent to our anger against our own misconduct? The method shown by Sri Bhagavan is therefore unique and very effective.

Though Sri Bhagavan had achieved total control over anger on account of his Self-abidance, he showed the youth a practical way of conquering anger for the benefit of the world at large. He gave us the – common people – freedom to give

vent to our anger and direct it against our own anger and other vices. Just as we remove a thorn from our foot by another thorn and then throw away both the thorns, in the same manner, Sri Ramana advises us to remove our anger against others by using it on ourselves and then dispense with both angers. This indeed is a novel but most practical and effective way of conquering anger and other similar vices.

Sri Ramana was ever abiding in the self and hence no vices such as anger, jealousy, etc., could assail him and no amount of insults, harassments or even physical belabouring could ever shake him from his serenity. In all such events, he was absolutely free from anger, as can be seen from the following life-incidents.

Once when Sri Ramana was sitting in his cave on Arunachala Hill, a jealous *sadhu* poured water on him. Yet he was as unperturbed and self-absorbed as ever. Not a tinge of anger rose in his mind against the *sadhu* who was baffled on seeing his calmness. Realising that nothing could irritate Sri Ramana the poor *sadhu* quietly went away.

One day a young man visited Sri Ramanasramam with some evil purpose. Entering the hall and taking his seat in front he began to put all sorts of questions to Sri Bhagavan. He wanted to extort hush-money from the ashram by exposing Sri Bhagavan as a hypocrite. He had already tried this trick successfully with some rich monks. By repeated practice he had cultivated this art into a paying profession. Having gained success elsewhere, he had come to Sri Ramanasramam to try his trick there.

Sri Ramana's own method of meeting insolence, malice, jealousy, misbehaviour, etc., of others, was the observance of complete silence. In fact, he preached and taught also by silence. His silence was very powerful. Such a powerful weapon of his battled and disarmed all aggressive and insolent persons.

Indeed, silence had become Sri Ramana's inherent nature. It was his impregnable armour against attacks from people of

all sorts. So, when the youth tried his best to draw Sri Ramana into a hot discussion or some talk or expression to catch him somewhere, Sri Ramana remained completely silent. Hence the poor youth's purpose was foiled. Though the youth was belching out foul language Sri Ramana did not utter a single word, and was all along calm and unperturbed. At last, after exhausting all his resources, the youth saw the impossibility of achieving his object, so he had to admit defeat and quit the ashram.

Sri Ramana taught the world perhaps the greatest lesson of his life on the 26th June 1924, i.e., two years after Sri Ramanasramam was started near the mother's *samadhi* at the foot of Arunachala Hill. On this day at 11.30 p.m. three burglars raided in the hope of getting a rich haul.<sup>1</sup>

Sri Ramana did not meet the dacoits with hatred but with love, because, like Buddha, he also taught and practised that 'revenge should not be met with revenge but should be calmed down by love. He showed to the world the efficacy of his teachings by himself putting them into practice even at the most trying times.

What a grand and elevating illustration of universal love and brotherhood even for the dacoits who came to rob! Only liberated souls like Sri Ramana can show such a superb path to humanity, as it comes out of their personal experience. Sri Ramana preached only what he himself practised. That is why his teachings have such a powerful influence over a vast number of devotees who came into contact with him in one way or another.

Centuries ago Jesus Christ preached that "When anyone strikes us on our right cheek we should offer him our left cheek." Since then, hundreds of years have passed but we have not heard of anybody who has practised this precept of love in toto, except

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the biography of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi either by Arthur Osborne or by B.V. Narasimha Swami.

Sri Ramana, who followed it literally and actually offered his right thigh to the dacoit who had beaten him on the left one.

In this manner, Sri Ramana's teachings were based on actual practice and true experience of life. Only by following his teachings can we relieve ourselves of our innumerable miseries and achieve the goal of peace and happiness.

Humble salutations to Sri Ramana, the egoless and love.

## V

### HOMAGE TO SRI RAMANA

IT HAPPENED IN the month of December 1938. The dark clouds of disbelief and ignorance filled my life. I was simply dragging a weary existence. Under such circumstances, I had the good fortune of having the *darshan* of my Master for the first time. I saw Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in person. On account of his mere *darshan* the sun of spiritual wisdom appeared on the horizon, driving away the darkness of disbelief and delusion and illuminating my heart with the light of devotion. Since that blissful moment the gracious gleam of light in my heart has ever been growing into a bigger and brighter flame.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi occupies the front row even among the great *rishis* of ancient times. Such a person's *darshan* drives away impurities of mind. Mind thus purified, turns towards the Truth, as a matter of course. The first *darshan* of my Self-abiding Sadguru cast such a spell over me that I went on a pilgrimage to Sri Ramanasramam once or twice a year for his holy *darshan* without fail.

He never initiated anyone as his disciple and never agreed to be anybody's master. Yet like numerous other devotees of

Sri Bhagavan, I too, of my own accord began to regard him as my Guru.

Shortly after this self-accepted discipleship, I happened to come across a Gujarati poem by Dhira Bhagat, a well-known, poet and *jnani* of Gujarat. The poem was entitled *Guru-swaroop* (meaning “characteristics of a Guru”).

The following lines charmed me the most:

The flowers they lay at His lotus feet  
 Though lovely, sweet they be;  
 With form or scent they cannot tempt,  
 Beyond temptations, He.

These lines provoked a host of thoughts in my mind: “What wonderful self-control this Guru of Dhira had! So many devotees went to him and covered his holy feet with the most fragrant flowers, but what of it? He had such complete control of his senses that he did not even care to smell them! What of my Guru then? Shall I ever be fortunate enough to find out his reaction to such a situation? When he does not even accept garlands or flowers, how will it ever be possible?”

Several months thereafter, I went on my usual pilgrimage to Sri Ramanasramam. One day during my sojourn there I was sitting among the devotees in the hall with my eyes turned to Sri Ramana, who was as usual seated on a sofa. A lady just entered the hall with a charming full-blossomed rose in her hand. She courageously stepped forward<sup>1</sup> and ignoring the Ashram rule of ‘no flowers to be offered’, went straight to Sri Maharshi and held the rose close in front of him as a gesture of her offering. Sri Ramana, on his part, accepted the flower with a swift movement of his hand and indicated thereby his appreciation of her singular boldness and devotion. Instantaneously my eyes were fixed on the flower. I was asking myself, “What will he do now? Will he smell it or leave it?”



It is a common experience that the moment a man gets a flower in his hand, he spontaneously takes it to the nose in order to enjoy its sweet fragrance. Here at last I got the long sought for opportunity to find out Sri Bhagavan's greatness. My curiosity therefore rose to a pitch and my eyes shuttled for some time from the rose to my Master's nose, and vice versa. "What a lovely rose!" He exclaimed, and then raised the hand that held it.

"Oh my! Is he going to smell it after all"? I wondered, just for a fraction of a moment. But the hand rose higher than the nose and it reached the eyes which were softly pressed with the flower. He then laid aside the flower, of course unsmelt. My heart began to overflow with boundless joy. For some time I was floating in the ocean of divine bliss.

It may seem to be a trifling incident to others, but for me it paved the way to ardent devotion. It happened when my devotion for him was just beginning to grow.

It was the first of a series of incidents which resulted in my intimate experiences of his grace. Each one of these contributed to my ever-widening vision of Sri Ramana's state of perfect bliss, serenity, total liberation during his life itself and perennial divine consciousness.

Without break I always remember this Sadguru of mine, whose spiritual stature is indeed immeasurable.

## VI

## RAMANA - AN EMBODIMENT OF SILENCE

WHEN BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA was staying in the Virupaksha Cave, a District Collector and a Deputy Collector went there for his *darshan*. After prostration to Sri Bhagavan, the Collector began to speak, narrating at length all that he had read and done by way of *sadhana* and at the end, confessed that in spite of all that, peace was as far from him as ever before. No sooner had he finished than the Deputy Collector started to tell his story and stopped only after saying all that he had to say. These two conversations took quite a long time, but Sri Bhagavan did not interrupt them even once, observing silence all throughout.

Seeing that neither of them got any reply from Sri Ramana, the Collector once again delivered a long harangue and stopped only when he was at the end of his resources. Yet Sri Ramana spoke not a word. The Collector was a little put out at this, and drawled out: "We have been speaking to you since long, but you don't open your lips at all! Will you please tell us something at least!"

Then, of course, Sri Bhagavan spoke: "All the while I have been speaking in my own language. What can I do, when you won't listen to it?"

The Collector was intelligent and he caught the meaning of Sri Ramana's cryptic reply. He was overpowered with devotion and fell down at the feet of Sri Bhagavan, chanting a Sanskrit verse.

Then both of them sat before Sri Bhagavan in silent meditation. They got the peace they were in search of and departed fully satisfied at the outcome of their visit.

## REMINISCENCES-II

### I

*Dr. Haribhai M. Adalja*

IN 1946, I went to Sri Ramanasramam for Bhagavan's *darshan*. All devotees were as usual seated in the big hall in front of Bhagavan. On one occasion I wrote in a chit, "I feel that I have the experience of the Self, but my mind does not agree with that," and placed it before Bhagavan. After reading it Bhagavan ordered a copy of *Ulladu Narpadu*, turned to verse 33 therein, and asked someone to show it to me. It read, "To speak I have not known my Self or I have come to know my Self is ridiculous. What? Are there two selves, one to objectify the other? Experience for all is that the Self is only One."

On another occasion, when in 1947 I was coming down Arunachala Hill and Bhagavan was going up, I stepped aside to give him room to go, as the path was very narrow, and stood with closed eyes and folded hands. When Bhagavan came near me he asked, to my utter surprise, "Do you still find two?"

On a third occasion I put a question to Bhagavan, "If waking and dream states are not different, can a man realize his Self in the dream state?" To this Bhagavan graciously replied, "First realize the Self in the waking state and then raise the question."

Once when Bhagavan was quoting an example of the relation of gold with the ornaments, that only gold is real, while

the name and form of gold appearing as ornaments are unreal, I raised a query: "Though the ornament is false, we see gold with ornament which is false, which is not the case with the world, i.e., when we see the world in form we do not see the Reality, the substratum." Bhagavan explained, "In dream there is no world, and yet you see it just as in the waking state. Both name and form are illusion; you see them only when you see yourself in form and identify yourself with the ego sense."

## II

### *K. R. K. Murthi*

IT IS NATURAL for every *sadhaka* to get doubts. He tries to solve them by the study of sacred books, by questioning elders and by serious application of his own mind to problems raised by those doubts. Sometimes the mind is not satisfied with the replies or explanations of others. Sometimes the books are not sufficiently explanatory. Sometimes the mind requires certain statements in the books to be confirmed by a great living teacher, in the light of his personal experience. Sometimes it thirsts for the grace of a Guru for its rapid spiritual growth and development.

What is the value of the grace (*kripa*) of a *sadguru* in the spiritual field? How to obtain the grace? If sufficient quantity of grace is not received what should one do? Which is the easiest way to permanent happiness? Is God really so merciful? These are some of the questions which arise in the mind and the

following replies of Sri Ramana Bhagavan in this connection are very interesting and instructive.

*Question:* It is stated that “by the grace of a Guru the highest state is reached in a moment.” Is this true?

*Bhagavan:* Yes. If the disciple is in a ripe state. The *ajnana* will be removed only by the *avalokana* (look) of the *sadguru*.

*Question:* Is the *kripa*, flowing towards one proportional to one’s merit?

*Bhagavan:* If the vessel is small, the *kripa* that he receives will be small. If the vessel is big, the *kripa* will be proportionately more.

*Question:* If the vessel is small, how to make it big?

*Bhagavan:* The water in all vessels is the same. [After a pause]. There is no question of more *kripa* or less *kripa* for one who surrenders (*saranagata*).

*Question:* What is meant by surrender or *saranagati*?

*Bhagavan:* When one surrenders there is no *kartrtva bhava*, i.e., there is no sense of agency in him. There will be “*udasina bhava*” and he will not feel any anxiety about acts or results. He does not commence any work for his own sake, and he becomes a “*sarva arambha parityagi*” (*vide Gita, chapter 14*). He will have no *ahamkara* (feeling of ‘I’). The feeling of I, *ahambhava* will vanish either by *jnana marga* or by *saranagati*.

*Question:* In the books it is stated that Bhagavan, is an ocean of Mercy. Is it a fact?

*Bhagavan:* Ocean? Ocean (*sagara*) has a limit, a boundary (or coast line), but the *kripa* of Bhagavan has no such limit. It is limitless. It knows no bounds.

This explanation of Sri Bhagavan gave us great satisfaction, roused new hopes, and opened a new chapter in our spiritual lives.



### *S. Kannikeswarier*

ONE DAY WHEN Bhagavan was looking into the affairs of the temple building, I approached him and asked the following question:

“How can action which is subdued in a state of *mukti* emerge and continue to function?” Sri Bhagavan favoured me with the following reply:

“The all pervading infinite Self brings about the actions and they are done through the means of *indriya karanas*. The person’s *ahamkara* or the little self is doing nothing. It is also incapable of doing anything. When an author is writing with a pen he is so much absorbed in his ideas that he forgets that he is writing with the pen in his own hand. Nor is he aware of his body. Once the consciousness dawns that he is the person that is writing it, that it is his hand and his pen that writes it, the flow of his ideas is arrested. He comes down from the all-absorbing world of ideas and becomes aware of his pen, his hand and his body and is not able to write. The pen, the hand etc. are separate inanimate objects and the *atma sakti* alone is capable of giving life to them and make them work. Although the *indriya karanas* are there, yet at the time when they are absorbed in the *atma sakti* he will not write.

“Therefore, happiness and sorrow which are the results of actions do not affect the *indriya karanas* or the *atma*, the witness and *Karta* (Doer) of all actions. If a man were to see his reflection in the boiling water, the heat does not affect his face, nor does it harm in any way his reflection in the boiling water. So also the results of one’s own actions do not affect the *Atman* or the *ahamkara* “the little self.” It is a myth or

*maya* (delusion). A man bitten by a snake in his dreams does not, on awakening, attempt to cure himself with medicines and mantras. The feeling of tiresomeness of the *sukshma sarira* due to overwork in the *swapna* (dream world) is not at all felt on his awakening from sleep.

“If one, in his own imagination, weaves that he went around the world in a minute, his physical body does not get tired. We, the embodiment of *Atma* have no sufferings. All things appear on account of myth. The lightening and thunder produced on account of the clash of clouds in the sky do not affect the sky. If we, therefore, realise that we are part and parcel of the big *Atmic* force, there is no reason why we should falter or get confused.”

## IV

### *S. Subramania Iyer*

DURING MY FIRST visit to Bhagavan, about five or six learned pandits were discussing about *karma* – *prarabdha*, *sanchita* and *agamyā* and not arriving at a conclusion they referred to Bhagavan who at once said in one sentence that *jnana* burns to ashes all kinds of *karmas* in an instant.

In another of my *darshans* of Bhagavan, a rich *zamindar* came in a car and sat before Ramana in the midst of many devotees, without prostrating to Bhagavan as others usually do. Then he spoke thus to Ramana, “All these people bring fruits or other things to Bhagavan and prostrate before him. But I don’t bring anything, nor do I prostrate. I simply come and sit.” At once Bhagavan said, “Yes, they bring plantains, etc., just like bringing sugar-candy to sugar Ganapathi (Pillaiyar).”

Once I went for Bhagavan's *darshan* on a Mahasivaratri Day, I sat before Bhagavan from 8 to 11 a.m. and then from 2 to 5 p.m. Just before leaving Ramanashram in the presence of Sri Ramana, a thought struck me that I must have *darshan* of Sri Seshadri. Seshadri was giving *darshan* and blessings to many devotees at Tiruvannamalai for forty years, from 1889 to 1929.

Then, after taking some light meal, we went to the temple and worshipped Sri Arunachala and then went to see a play on "Markandeya" (being Sivaratri day) enacted by the local officers and gentlemen, in honour of the District Munsiff on transfer.

When we got inside the theatre and stood before the first pillar, to my extreme surprise and wonder, Sri Seshadri came before us followed by a number of devotees with fruits, soda etc. My uncle said, "This is Sri Seshadri! You are really blessed." What a blessed face with *Brahmanandam* and grace. I soon prostrated and stood before him with folded hands. He leaned on the pillar. In a few minutes, he walked up to the dais and leaned on another pillar. Then he walked to the front row of chairs which were vacated by all (out of respect and fear of Seshadri) and he sat in the central chair for a few minutes. Soon, he got up on the dais and sat in the chair vacated by the teacher who was teaching a set of boys, including the first boy Markandeya. Then he got down and sat near Markandeya as a devoted pupil, with folded hands and closed mouth.

Soon he went into the dressing room and returning through the verandah, where the women were seated, came back to the first pillar again and in a few minutes he ran away and the devotees could not follow him.

This incident shows clearly that Sri Ramana and Sri Seshadri were both one and the same and my first thought touched Sri Ramana's heart, which at once touched Sri Seshadri's, and I was soon blessed with Sri Seshadri's *darshan*. What a wonder! What a grace! Ramana and Seshadri both God incarnate! May they bless all!



## V

*R. Narayana Iyer (Sub-Registrar)*

SRI BHAGAVAN WAS not always the same. Most of the time he was a very pleasing person with a fascinating welcome smile. However, on occasion, he could be stern and look forbidding. At such moments people were struck with awe and a deep searching of the heart.

One hot Sunday afternoon an old devotee placed before Sri Bhagavan some palmyra fruits (*nongu*). Bhagavan severely remarked: "Why do you do this daily? You are a *sannyasin*. You must beg of others the wherewithal to procure these. You must say that they are for me. You know that I cannot eat them without others present sharing them and so you have to get some quantity, and this you do using my name, as though I desire it. Can't you keep quiet and mind your own business? You prostrate before me and think that you have won me over. Every prostration is like a blow on my head. All sorts of things are done outside these four walls with impunity, as though these walls hide and protect them. Who likes these prostrations?" And on and on he went in a tirade against all and sundry who posed like pious men but were hiding a lot of impurity. It was not one individual that was attacked. The atmosphere in the hall was tense, and one by one, the devotees sneaked out.

But such moods were only momentary, and he could switch to his wonted geniality the next instant. Once Sri T. P. R. and I decided to ask Sri Bhagavan for an explanation of the sixth stanza of "Arunachala Ashtakam," and went to the hall after Sri Bhagavan returned from his usual walk on the Hill. In the meanwhile something moved us. Sri Muruganar prostrated before Sri Bhagavan and went out on his usual round for begging

food from the town. We had just then ground in the mortar jack fruit for a sweet dish for the midday meal, and Sri Muruganar had given some donation for *biksha* since it was his mother's death anniversary. He was not there to taste the dish and we were sorry. The fact that he was going out after giving something for *biksha* in honour of his mother was brought to the notice of Sri Bhagavan. Instantly there was a change in the face of Bhagavan. He knew that Sri Muruganar was not a favourite with the Ashram management. "Who is to invite him to stay for meals? Chinnaswamy does not like him. He is the master here", said Bhagavan. There was tension in the atmosphere. T. P. R. and I whispered to each other that we would choose some other time for the exposition and closed our books. Sri Bhagavan saw us doing so and asked us what the matter was. We replied what we had come for. Instantly Sri Bhagavan said, "Why not now?" and started explaining. It was wonderful! Every sentence started a mighty current. It didn't stop there. Wave after wave of the same exposition came to us unsolicited for a day or two more whenever we sat before him.

Sri Bhagavan had his head shaved once a month on the full moon day. Natesan was the barber who used to do this service. Bhagavan sat on a stool and Natesan would stand and shave him. Once Sri Bhagavan suggested to Natesan in all seriousness that it would be more comfortable for the barber to sit on the stool while he himself would sit on the floor!

It was past 8.30 one night when I came to the Ashram on one of my visits. Everyone had retired to rest after the night meal. I went to the office. Chinnaswamy was sitting in his place talking to some Ashramites. When he saw me enter he said, "Narayana Iyer, don't go near Sri Bhagavan's couch. He is resting on the veranda near the well. He had a fracture of his collar bone and a plaster has been put on it. He should not be disturbed. Prostrate at a distance and come away

noiselessly.” I was shocked to hear the news. If any other reason had been given it could have restrained me, but the mention of a ‘fracture’ made me eager and anxious to see Sri Bhagavan. I went on tiptoe and prostrated quietly. He evidently saw me and said, “Narayana Iyer, come, sit by my side on the couch. Only then can I see you and talk. Otherwise the bandage they have put might be disturbed and there might be pain.” Implicitly I obeyed when he said this, notwithstanding my fear of Chinnaswamy’s reaction if he should happen to see me there. He said, “I was going up the steps. A dog was chasing a squirrel. I barred its way by putting my walking stick in front of it. The stick slipped and I fell down and got hurt on the collar bone. They say it is a fracture and the native bone-setter of the village, an old devotee, was sent for. He has put this bandage with some green leaves and black gram paste and I am enjoined not to move lest it be disturbed.”

He narrated the incident as though it was some one else’s body that was injured and was suffering!

## VI

### *K. Arunachalam*

THIS HAPPENED IN the summer of 1932. I was working in those days with a group of young men in the slums of Bangalore under the leadership of Brahmachari Ramachandra. He suggested that I should visit Sri Ramana Maharshi on my way back from Madurai. I had been to my village in Madurai district for a brief visit and I was returning to Bangalore to resume my work in the Gandhi School run by the Deena Seva Sangh.

Tiruvannamalai, the abode of the Maharshi, was not on my regular route, so I had to go to Villupuram and change trains. Tiruvannamalai is a midway station on the Villupuram-Katpadi line. I got down at Tiruvannamalai station and went to the famous Arunachaleswara Temple.

To my surprise I found there a *sannyasi* spinning on the *charkha* in one of the mandapams within the precincts of the temple. I stood in front of him for a considerably long time. Spinning was common in those days. Anyone who was politically conscious spun either with a *charkha* or with *takli*. But for one who has renounced the joys and sorrows of the world in favour of God realization to be spinning was something beyond my comprehension. Further, this *sannyasi* dressed in *khadi gerua* cloth was using a pedal-*charkha*. And that was why I stood in front of him in great amazement. Later on I came to know that this *sannyasi* was one of the disciples of the Maharshi.

After a while I made enquiry about Ramanashram. This institution solely built around the Maharshi was not as famous then as it grew to be in the forties and thereafter. I was shown the way. I walked along the road under the shadow of the hill Arunachalam.

I reached the Ashram and met the person in charge of arrangements. He showed me a place where I could keep my things and stay. After the necessary formalities – and they were simple enough – I entered the hall in which the Maharshi was seated on a sofa. In another corner of the hall there was a cupboard on top of which I saw an eighteen-inch-high statue of Mahatma Gandhi (with a khadi yarn garland). I sat in front of the Maharshi along with several others. Some of the devotees were seated in *ardha-padmasana* in meditation. A few were reading silently some religious literature. The Maharshi himself was in *samadhi*. Some were reciting *slokas* in a soft melodious tone. On the whole the atmosphere was an elevating one.

I sat in silence for hours together. When it was time for the night meal all the devotees got up and walked towards the adjoining dining hall. I also went with them. The hall was divided by a cloth curtain. On the other side of the curtain some of the orthodox devotees sat for their meal. On this side were all the non-orthodox. The Maharshi sat in a place visible to one and all, for he did not differentiate between one or another. This was a great lesson to me. After the meal some of us went back to the hall and sat there. Occasionally the Maharshi would say something which was not quite audible and the scribe sitting by his side would write it down. I decided to sleep in the hall as some others did. I could not sleep because I was inquisitive to know what the Maharshi would do. He got up from the sofa at 3 o'clock in the morning and walked towards the tank. After ablutions he had a dip in the pond. He changed his *khadi kaupeenam* (loincloth) and washing the used one, let it dry outside. After doing all this, he walked back into the hall and sat as usual on the sofa. Sometimes he reclined on the sofa and dozed off. Early in the morning the Maharshi got up, went into the kitchen and joined the group that was cutting vegetables. He supervised the breakfast and ate with the visitors and Ashramites.

During the daytime there was a stream of visitors who went near the Maharshi and prostrated before him. Sometimes he opened his eyes and blessed them with a smile. Occasionally he spoke a few words. When the daily newspaper arrived it was placed near him. He glanced through the pages and put it aside. Most of the time his eyes remained half closed. There was a calm peace in the whole environment that surpassed all understanding. I sat silently watching and enjoying the holy presence of the Maharshi. After spending a full three days like this, I wanted to take leave of the Maharshi and go to Bangalore. I was waiting for an opportunity.

The Maharshi opened his eyes. I got up and prostrated before him and requested him to clear a doubt of mine. He showed his willingness by a broad smile. Taking courage I posed the following problem: “The Maharshi by his example directs his followers to keep quiet, but Mahatma Gandhi whose statue is here, by his own example, goads everyone to be continuously active. I am puzzled as to whom to follow.” The Maharshi’s face broadened with an unparalleled smile. He asked, “Who told you that I am sitting quiet?” I replied in all humility that I had seen it with my own eyes. He said, “Why do you think that what you are seeing with your physical eyes is the truth?” I had no answer for this question.

Once again I repeated the question as to whom to follow. Then he enquired about what I was doing. I gave him an idea of the slum-settlement work in Bangalore and told him how we were intensively engaged in Harijan uplift and prohibition work. He blessed the work and asked me to continue it in the manner in which Mahatma Gandhi wanted such work done, i.e., with great devotion and detachment. I was given a set of Ashram publications to be used by the workers. I asked the Maharshi for his autograph. He did not agree but he wanted the *sarvadhikari* who was standing near by to write my name. When I gave him my name without initial, he asked for my father’s name. The Maharshi immediately said, “How can Arunachalam have a father?” and he laughed. I stood in his presence how long I don’t know. When I regained my consciousness, took leave of him and left for Bangalore.

In 1951-52, I was in the USA. On my tour of the Southern States I came in touch with a group of whites who were deeply involved in the desegregation movement. They did not differentiate between one or another, whether black or white. I found in the study of the leader of this group a photo of Sri Ramana Maharshi whom he had never seen. He revealed that it

was Maharshi's teaching that was a driving force in all his activities undertaken for bringing about equality between the two races – the Whites and the Coloured. He evinced a deep interest in the Maharshi's mode of self-enquiry for self-realization. Now I understood the true import of the *Gita* teaching: "He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is wise among men; he is a *yogi* who has accomplished all action."

## VII

### *Panthalu Lakshmi Narayana Sastri*

*The author was a great scholar and an adept in composing extempore poetry. His experiences during his visit to Bhagavan were recorded by Devaraja Mudaliar in his diary Day by Day with Bhagavan. Sri Sastri described his visit in a booklet in Telugu entitled Sri Ramana Sandarsanam, and this is an abridged translation of his booklet.*

IN 1943 A close relative of mine, Brahamashri Vedula Ramamurthy, handed me a copy of Ganapati Muni's Sanskrit work *Uma Sahasram* and asked me to translate it into Telugu. This was the first time that I had seen Bhagavan's picture and it drew me to him like a magnet. I at once agreed to translate the work, feeling that the offer was divinely prompted.

When the college where I was lecturing closed for the summer vacation in 1946, my wife and I set out on a pilgrimage to Tiruvannamalai, visiting Kalahasti and Tirupati en route. As we entered the hall on May 5th, 1946, the morning *Veda Parayana* was going on in Bhagavan's presence. Bhagavan was

seated majestically on the sofa, and even the first sight of him evoked great faith and ineffable bliss in my heart. I was so moved by my emotions that I could not restrain myself, and as Bhagavan rose for breakfast, I fell prostrate at his feet. I was so unconscious of my surroundings that all the copies of my books which I had brought to present to Bhagavan fell on the floor. One of the devotees picked them up and helped me to go to the dining room. After breakfast I went to my lodging and composed twenty verses in Sanskrit in praise of Sri Bhagavan under the title *Atmabhista Nivedanam*.

When I entered the hall again, I introduced myself to Sri Bhagavan in Sanskrit, not knowing that he spoke Telugu. When I said to him, “*Umasahasram maya Andhri kritham*” (I have rendered *Uma Sahasram* into Telugu), he replied, “Oh, you are translating *Uma Sahasram* into Telugu”, in pure Telugu, and even corrected my use of the word *Andhri kritham* which means “completed translating”. Bhagavan somehow knew that I had not actually finished the work, and when he enquired how far I had gone with my translation, I confessed that I had only so far translated a hundred *slokas* along with their commentary.

At the conclusion of this conversation, I requested Bhagavan to permit me to read out the poem I had just composed in my room. Bhagavan nodded his head and I recited the verses with a strong emotional fervour.

On the third day of my visit, I had the good fortune of reading out to Sri Bhagavan that part of *Uma Sahasram* which I had already translated. After the reading was over, I informed Bhagavan that I had written to the publishers of the Sanskrit original for permission to publish my translation, but that so far, I had not received any reply from them. Bhagavan advised me: “If you go and meet Kapali Sastri in Pondicherry, he will be able to help you to obtain the necessary permission from the publishers. The permission will come with no difficulty.”



That afternoon I said to Bhagavan: “We have stayed here for three days. If Bhagavan gives us leave to go we shall go tonight. If not we shall stay two days more.” Bhagavan gave no reply. Later, on the way to the dining room, I was talking to Devaraja Mudaliar about the publication of my book. He told me that since Bhagavan had suggested that I go to Pondicherry and see Kapali Sastri, I should go there, and that if I did, the required permission would easily be obtained. I explained that I was unable to go to Pondicherry as I had taken a vow to make a pilgrimage to Chidambaram, and that if I went to Chidambaram, my finances would not permit me to extend my journey to Pondicherry. On my request, he explained to me the best way of reaching Chidambaram by drawing a map on the floor. As the explanation was proceeding, Bhagavan passed by and he stopped and asked Devaraja Mudaliar if he was explaining the route to me. Devaraja Mudaliar said yes, and added that I was asking for instructions on how to get to Chidambaram as it was not possible for me to go to Pondicherry. “Is that so?” replied Bhagavan. “Won’t Sastriji go to Pondicherry?” and after this brief comment, he passed on his way.

That night we left the Ashram and reached Chidambaram the next morning. We accommodated ourselves in a pilgrim’s lodge and had the *darshan* of Lord Nataraja in the temple. All the time, I was spending my money very thriftily in view of my meagre finances. In the evening I was talking to the steward of the *chatram* (the pilgrim’s lodge), and I told him of my visit to Bhagavan, and how I was unable to follow his instructions to go to Pondicherry. The steward told me that it would not cost much to go to Pondicherry, and he eventually convinced us to extend our journey. He even accompanied us to the bus station and voluntarily purchased a ticket for us out of his own pocket.

We arrived at Pondicherry on 10.5.1946, and when I went to see Sri Kapali Sastri he was teaching some lessons to a student. I introduced myself in Sanskrit and presented him with a copy

of my *Andhra Dhyanyalokam*. Kapali stared at me with surprise and said to me in fluent Telugu, pointing to his student: “He is the son of Ganapati Muni’s intimate disciple, Sri M. P. Pandit. As he is preparing for his M.A. Degree examination in Sanskrit, I am teaching him *Dhyanyalokam* in Sanskrit as it is prescribed for their study. Now you arrive here with a Telugu translation of the same work. I think your book will help me a lot in teaching the lessons.”

In the afternoon I read out to him my translation of *Uma Sahasram*, along with his commentary. He listened to it carefully and commended my translation by saying that it was faithful and lucid. He promised me that he would do whatever was necessary to publish my book as early as possible. When he was about to leave he gently said to me: “As I am staying here alone without my family, I am not able to offer my hospitality to you, so you must kindly accept at least this.” As he was saying this, he was forcing five rupees into my hands.

In retrospect, when I calculated the additional expenditure I had incurred on my trip to Pondicherry, I found to my surprise that it had cost me only five rupees extra!

Before leaving, Kapali Sastri told me that I would have to travel through Tiruvannamalai on my way back to Vijayanagaram, and he asked me if I would again break my journey at Tiruvannamalai. I had not realised this before and I was elated at the prospect of being able to see Bhagavan again.

I reached the gates of Sri Ramanasramam on the morning of the 11th. As I was about to enter the Ashram, I saw some devotees standing near the gate, and I heard one of them telling the others, “Sastriji is now coming from Pondicherry.” I was so surprised that they knew of my unexpected change of route, that I went up to them and asked them how they knew that I had been to Pondicherry. One of them informed me that after I had left for Chidambaram, one of the devotees told Bhagavan

about my departure. Bhagavan had replied: “He will go to Chidambaram, from there to Pondicherry, and then he will come back here. He will leave for Vijayanagaram only after giving us a performance of his extempore poetry.”

When I entered the hall and prostrated before Bhagavan, he immediately asked me: “Did you go to Pondicherry from Chidambaram?” I replied with great devotion and excitement that only Bhagavan’s grace had taken us to Pondicherry and that that same grace had brought us back for Bhagavan’s *darshan*.

Later the devotees asked me to give them a performance of my extempore poetry, and when I humbly asked what subject I should compose on, they at once chose Bhagavan himself as the subject. As I started composing my extempore poems, I felt that some divine force had taken possession of me and was composing the poems. I remembered only the beginning and the end and I did not know what I was reciting. Sri Sambasiva Rao, an advocate from Guntur, jotted down the poems, twenty in all, on a piece of paper while the recitation was going on, but as he could not keep pace with my fast recitation he left some blanks to be filled in later. When the recitation was over, he gave me the paper and requested me to fill in the blank spaces. I told him that the poems had come to my lips quite spontaneously by Bhagavan’s grace, and that I did not myself remember what I had said. Bhagavan then remarked: “Those poems cannot be filled in. Even if he tries, the original form cannot be recaptured.”

Later I was told that after I had left for Chidambaram, Devaraja Mudaliar had said to Bhagavan: “It seems that this L. N. Sastry is a great poet. Nagamma is all praise for his poems and tells me that he is the best Telugu poet to come to Bhagavan for at least five years.” G. Subba Rao, who was also present apparently agreed with him. After listening to these comments Bhagavan remarked: “Yes, I agree he is a great poet. He is a

pandit in the Raja's college at Vijayanagaram. Nobody would take him for such a great poet, he looks like a very ordinary man, but he wants to become an *avadhani* (one who can compose extempore poems on any subject). But all this is only activity of the mind. The more you exercise the mind and the more success you have in composing verses or doing *satavadanam* (giving attention to many things at once) the less peace you have. What use is it to acquire such accomplishments if you don't acquire peace? But if you tell people this it does not appeal to them. They cannot keep quiet and they must be composing songs. As Nayana (Ganapati Muni) used to say, in going forward one can run any distance at any speed, but when it is a question of going backwards, that is, running inwards, even one step is hard to take."

When I came to hear of Bhagavan's opinions on the composition of extempore poetry, I followed his advice and greatly curtailed my poetic ambitions.

## VIII

### *B. N. Datar*

DURING MY 16 or 17 annual visits, I was generally a silent though an observing member of the group of devotees that used to assemble at the Ashram and seek blessings from Bhagavan. I was, in particular, very keen on observing the attitude of various disciples towards Bhagavan and his response to them in his inimitable ways. I remember one occasion when a great spiritual seeker had come from the West, highly perturbed over the then darkening clouds of the international situation. (This was some

time before World War II broke out in September, 1939). He came into the hall almost in a challenging and quarrelsome mood. He had brought a catalogue of questions for answer by Bhagavan. He almost took Bhagavan to task “for wasting his time and energies in a secluded corner of the earth”, though according to him Bhagavan ought to have taken active steps to turn the attention of the world from the ways of the devil to those of Divine. He gave expression to his sense of disapprobation at Bhagavan’s apparent inactivity in this respect. He challenged Bhagavan to answer his questions. His rebellious mood struck us dumb in the hall. He demanded an immediate answer from Bhagavan. Bhagavan quietly told him that he would have it. He remained quiet without saying anything further. I still visualize before me the very tense half-an-hour that passed when everybody, including Bhagavan and the stormy questioner, were all silent. I was anxious to know how the tension would be eased. We were all sitting anxiously in the tense atmosphere when, after half-an-hour, quite suddenly, the questioner broke the silence by exclaiming that he had got the answer. Bhagavan asked him to write it. He did so, and when it was read out it breathed a sense of complete submission to Bhagavan, though the questioner had begun with a challenge. He had confessed in the writing that he was satisfied that Bhagavan was serving the best interests of mankind in his own unobtrusive and silent ways, and that what was required from a seeker was not a mood of challenge but one of submission to the higher forces which were working in their own inscrutable ways through great sages like the Saint of Arunachalam.

This is how Bhagavan worked on the minds of his visitors and brought them to peace when they were itching for a fight. This man, from that time onwards, has become one of the gentlest of Bhagavan’s devotees.

I should like to mention here a very striking event that happened on the day when Bhagavan left this world. A few

days before this event the Station Superintendent of the A. I. R.<sup>1</sup> at Dharwar had requested me to broadcast a short talk on the great personages that had influenced my life. I naturally chose to speak on Bhagavan's influence on me. I prepared my speech and had sent it to him to be broadcast by me on a date to be settled later on. As destiny would have it, it was fixed for 14th April 1950, between 7.30 and 7.45 p.m. I went to Dharwar and gave the talk and proceeded to Hubli where I had an engagement for the next day.

Within half-an-hour after I reached Hubli, a friend came and told me that Bhagavan had left his mortal coil only a few minutes ago. He congratulated me upon my good fortune in having broadcast to the world my tributes to Bhagavan, just one hour before that soul departed from this world. I treat this as the highest blessing that I have received from Bhagavan, because it was really the greatest gift of my life that my tribute was accepted by him before, in the world's language, he breathed his last. I treat it as the greatest treasure of my life.

Thereafter, within a few days I paid a visit to Ramanasramam, and returned to my place. Even though Bhagavan is not with us in human form, I have never felt his absence because he is living in my house and before my eyes where ever I go. I feel the experience at every moment of my life that he has been guiding every action of mine.

---

<sup>1</sup> All India Radio.

## IX

*Mrs. Merston*

## IMPRESSIONS AND REMINISCENCES

Paris 1937-38. A small group of Ommenites meeting weekly to discuss Krishnamurti's and other teachings. All of us had read Paul Brunton's *In Search of Secret India*, so all knew the Maharshi by name and we had discussed his teaching too, but one of us, Pascaline Mallet had actually visited him in his Ashram and been much impressed. One day, she received from a friend whom she met there, a copy of his daily diary kept while at the Ashram, and this she brought to read to us. A little later, Pascaline asked me to help her to translate *Who am I?* into French. All this made so deep an impression on me that upon returning to India, and touring the South with a friend who was equally curious to see the great man so eulogised by Brunton, we decided to visit Tiruvannamalai to see him for ourselves.

That was in 1939, thus just twenty years ago, [written in 1959] Bhagavan drew me to Tiruvannamalai. All was new to me. I had known Krishnamurti, and Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, but never any Hindu Sage of the *Advaitic* tradition, yet, from the first moment in his presence he made me feel at home, and the peace of the little hall drew me as nothing had before. We had planned to stay for two days and my friend left as arranged, but still having two more days free before returning to the north, I stayed on. When finally I had to leave, I knew that sometime I should return.

The return came only about two years later, and from then on, for five consecutive years, I visited the Ashram each summer to sit in Bhagavan's presence. Then in 1944, my work in the north coming to an end, I came to live permanently near him.

In the early days of my visits, the entrance door to the little hall, where Bhagavan lived day and night, was opposite to his couch and diagonally to the exit doorway on the opposite side. Later it was moved down the hall and is now directly opposite the exit. In the early days, the women sat on either side of the entrance, facing the couch, while the men sat down on the other side at the foot of the couch. Every sort, and kind of caste, creed and nationality came for darshan. To each and everyone, from maharajah to sweeper, Bhagavan was the same gentle, twinkling-eyed friend; no one, from the tiniest child, seemed awed by him. Newcomers, including myself, would begin by asking him questions, but soon found no necessity to voice them; in one way or another, without asking, the questions would be answered and the problems solved.

Once I had been mulling over a problem for three days without finding the solution. The fourth day, sitting opposite to Bhagavan, and still harassed by the problem, Bhagavan suddenly turned his eyes upon me. After a moment, he asked one of his attendants to find him a certain book of *puranic* stories; he turned over the pages until, finding the passage he wanted, he handed the book to one of the men who knew English and told him to read the story aloud. That story gave me the answer to my problem.

At other times, from the gaze of his eyes alone, one's question would be answered. Only on rare occasions would he give advice audibly, and even then, mostly indirectly. Thus, in the following case of a young devotee from Bombay:

This young devotee was in the habit of sitting day after day in Bhagavan's presence contorting himself, twisting and turning and groaning aloud, obviously using yogic practices in his endeavour to attain *moksha*. This had been going on for some weeks, the young man was getting thin and was so clearly in danger that meeting him one day just outside the hall, I



asked him why he took that path, that it was not Bhagavan's way, and that without a Guru it was very dangerous. The young man replied that he did not care, even if he died doing the practices, so long as he got *moksha* at the end. Whereupon we entered the hall, prostrated before Bhagavan and sat down on our respective sides of the gangway. The doorways of the little hall had by this time been altered and we women sat on the exit side at Bhagavan's feet. I sat down just behind Mrs. T. Bhagavan was reading his mail. The young man had started on his contortions as usual, oblivious to everything around him. Presently Bhagavan began to read aloud from a letter from Paris in which the writer asked the value of *asanas* and yogic practices. Addressing himself to Mrs. T., Bhagavan with a smile said: "She asks the value of such practices," and he nodded towards the young man contorting, "Those sort of practices have absolutely no value. At very best, the only thing that might happen is that, perhaps, after some twenty five years of going on and on with them, you might wake up sufficiently to realize the futility of what you are doing!" The young man did not even hear the advice given, and although Bhagavan's words were repeated to him later by several people, he paid no attention but continued with his practices. As a result, he soon fell very ill and had to leave Tiruvannamalai.

Sometimes one could feel Bhagavan communicating voicelessly with someone in the hall; it was as though there were a strong current or pulsation flowing from him to the person down the hall. I had felt the like with Gurdjieff. But one special occasion in the hall where the current was reciprocated, is an unforgettable experience.

It was in the days when the door was still opposite Bhagavan's couch, and I was sitting to the right of the door opposite to him. Suddenly a shadow fell through the doorway and a fair, elderly *sannyasi* stepped over the threshold. Bhagavan,

who was reading, dropped his book immediately and looked straight up at the man who took two strides forward and stood near Bhagavan's feet, returning his gaze.

In Bhagavan's gaze was such love and joy that one could almost hear him say: "So you have come at last, my beloved brother!" The two went on gazing at each other, without a word spoken aloud, but I could literally feel them speaking to each other, the flow of the current going back and forth between them. They talked thus voicelessly for some ten or fifteen minutes, then suddenly the *sannyasi* dropped to the floor and passed into *samadhi* for the next two hours. Bhagavan quietly took up his book again and went on, remaining as though nothing had happened, as doubtless indeed for him it had not. But for us it was an unforgettable experience.

During the last years of Bhagavan's life in the body, many were the lessons we learned from him, but one, and perhaps the chief one, he never ceased, especially during the last six months, to hammer into us, namely, that he was not the body; the body might go, but he would not go, for where should he go to? He always was and always would be there, with us, as now. So true did he make this for us that when I saw his sacred frame being carried out into the big hall after his Maha Samadhi, I felt that Bhagavan was still there. He was still present, ready to be questioned and talked with as before. And so well had he prepared us to realize this, that in all the crowd of some 1,500 people present, many of them devotees, I only saw three people cry as we spent the night in vigil. We just knew that Bhagavan had not gone, so what need to cry for him, or rather, to cry for our nonexistent loss?

We who knew him in the body are not the only ones to feel his presence, even after he left the body. People in England who never knew him in the flesh, have told me that, after reading about him, they have had experiences of his actual

presence near them, even of his touch, ready with his Grace to help.

May we be worthy to receive that Grace, as he so freely offers of it!

## X

### *Sadhu Bramaniam*

AT ABOUT 8 p.m one day, Dr. Anantanarayana Rao brought a ripe guava fruit to Bhagavan, saying it was the first produce from his garden. Bhagavan asked for a knife, a plate and some chili powder to be brought. He cut the fruit into small pieces, sprinkled the *chili* powder over them, took a piece himself and asked the rest to be given to those around him. That was the only dish prepared by Bhagavan which I have eaten. I was not lucky enough to be with him when he participated in the cooking. It was the most delicious titbit I have tasted.

Once Bhagavan had a mild attack of jaundice. As part of the treatment, his diet was reduced to bare buttermilk and rice. Dr. Shiva Rao of the Ashram dispensary felt that Bhagavan was getting weaker. He wanted some protein foods and vitamins to be taken, but Bhagavan declined. I happened to be in the Ashram then. One day as Bhagavan came out of the bathroom, I prostrated myself before him and said, "Dr. Shiva Rao and others in the Ashram are very anxious about Bhagavan's health and want him to take some protein foods and vitamins. At least for their satisfaction I entreat Bhagavan to agree." He smiled and said, "Yes, you may arrange whatever is necessary." I came and told Dr. Shiva Rao. Vitamins were available in the dispensary,

but not protein food. I returned to Madras immediately and searched in all prominent drug stores. Since it was wartime, drugs were scarce and it was available only in one shop. It was a special American preparation made out of milk protein and chocolate. I bought all the seven bottles available and took them to the Ashram. I left six bottles in the office, took one with a spoon and went to Bhagavan; it was 8 p.m. There were a few devotees seated in front of him. I gave one spoonful to each first and then gave one to Bhagavan. He took it and asked what it was. I said that it was protein food and that he could mix one spoonful with the food, thrice daily. He asked me to give the bottle and the spoon to Sama Thatha with instructions. After a few days some overzealous devotee served two spoonfuls on his leaf. He immediately stopped taking it and asked the bottles to be given to the dispensary for the use of the patients.

At one time some devotees used to massage the legs and feet of Bhagavan for sometime every night. After a few days I joined the party with some hesitation. I continued for two days. The third day Bhagavan suddenly asked us to stop. He got up and began massaging his knee, saying, "You have all been gathering so much *punyam* (merit) all these days. Let me also acquire some *punyam*." That had the effect of stopping the massaging altogether.

On one of my early visits I went on *giripradakshinam* with some friends. When I returned, my feet were blistered and I entered the hall limping. Bhagavan elicited the cause of the limping and said that I should bathe the feet in warm water for a few minutes and repeat the *pradakshina* the next day and the day after. I did so; the feet gave no more trouble.

Bhagavan used to go up the hill for a short distance after midday meals. One day he did not return to the hall. When we found it empty at 2 p.m., we were nonplussed. T. P. R., Rajagopal, and I went up the hill towards Skandashram without

telling anybody. Half way up we met his attendant coming down. He told me that Bhagavan was in Skandashram, but had warned him not to give this information to anybody. We went up and saw Bhagavan sitting on a platform in front of Skandashram. We hesitated to go to him remembering his warning to the attendant. He noticed us and made a sign asking us to come. We had a delightful time as Bhagavan was narrating reminiscences of early days in Skandashram.

Another trip to Skandashram, which lasted a full day, was arranged by the devotees about a month later, but I could not join it. Over twenty-five photos were taken during the trip by Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami. I got some copies made of all the photos and prepared four albums. I had one album to spare, and Dr. V. Srinivasa Rao wanted it. I promised to give it if he would pay the price for it. He was prepared to pay and asked what the price was. I said that it was seventeen *thoppukaranams* (genuflexion, with hands holding ears usually performed in the presence of Ganesa) to Bhagavan. He took the album and ran to the hall. He placed it at Bhagavan's feet and began to 'pay the price'. Bhagavan laughed and asked him why. Then he told him the joke and showed him where I had marked the price on the album cover.

After the first operation by the Madras surgeon, Bhagavan's arm was healing well. Only a plaster dressing was applied once a day for some time. This used to be done in the bathroom soon after Bhagavan had his bath. One day Dr. Shankar Rao, Dr. Srinivasa Rao and I went in with the dressings. I dipped a wad of cotton in spirits and was cleaning the wound. The excess spirit flowed down his arm to his leg and down to the feet. Bhagavan exclaimed, "That is good. Spirit *snanam* (bath). Everybody must do Spirit *Snanam*, must be immersed in the Spirit always."

In the later days of the illness, a feeling of despair crept into everyone's mind. Many were imploring Bhagavan to cure

himself. There was a small story in the jokes column of the *Sunday Times*. It ran somewhat as follows:

“A girl about four years old had been taught by her parents to utter a small heartfelt prayer to the Lord daily before going to bed. Once the family was travelling on board a steamer during a potent storm. The girl prayed, ‘Please, God, take care of yourself! If anything happens to you, we will all be left in the lurch!’”

I read the story before Bhagavan the next day. He smiled in appreciation of the appropriateness of the story at that time.

In the final stages of the illness, the tumour growth was like a huge cauliflower and was in need of constant attention. Bhagavan himself used to lift his left arm on to the rubber sheet. I once asked him how he managed to lift so easily such a large and painful arm. Bhagavan’s reply was, “What is there in it? Four persons are needed to carry this body after death. I am now carrying it single-handed.” What a complete absence of the feeling ‘I-am-the-body!’

Some time in early February, 1950, the correspondent of the P. T. I. interviewed me in Madras about Bhagavan’s health. I indicated that the medical opinion was that the progress was bad and life might last only for two or three months more. This news, issued by the P. T. I. to all newspapers in India, caused a stir in the minds of devotees far and wide, and they all began to come to the ashram for a last *darshan* of Bhagavan. Such a large influx of visitors was naturally a strain on the Ashram resources. In one of my weekly visits, Chinnaswami told me that I should not have given such news to the Press. I apologised and went to see Bhagavan. Chinnaswami came and stood at the doorstep and again took me to task. I stood listening calmly, looking at Bhagavan’s face all the time. Bhagavan gave me a very gracious smile in full approval of what I had done.

The third operation was done in the dispensary room. Bhagavan took some time to get out of the anaesthesia. Visitors

were prohibited. Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami alone remained with Bhagavan. Crowds of devotees gathered outside and filled the open space in front. They were all anxious to see Bhagavan and know his condition. Despite doctors' instructions, Bhagavan insisted on being helped outside to lie on a bench on the verandah. Devotees were asked to pass in a single file before him. He continued on the verandah despite a drizzle and asked devotees to be allowed to see him at any time. Bhagavan showered his Grace on his devotees profusely and gave *darshan* till the last day.

## XI

### *Bharatananda*

*Reminiscences of a visit to Bhagavan by Rajendra Prasad, who was later to become President of India, with the industrialist Jamnalal Bajaj and others, in 1938.*

*J. B:* How is *sadbuddhi* to be steadily kept up?

*Bhagavan:* All living beings are aware of their surroundings and therefore intellect must be surmised in all of them. At the same time, there is a difference between the intellect of man and that of other animals, because man not only sees the world as it is and acts accordingly but also seeks fulfilment of desires and is not satisfied with the state of affairs. In his attempt to fulfil his desires, he extends his vision far and wide; and yet he turns away dissatisfied. He then begins to think and reason out.

The desire for permanency of happiness and of peace bespeaks such permanency of his own nature. Therefore, he

seeks to find and regain his own nature, i.e., his Self. That found, all is found.

Such inward seeking is the path to be gained by man's intellect. The intellect itself realises after continuous practice that it is enabled by some Higher Power to function. It cannot itself reach that Power. So it ceases to function after a certain stage. When it thus ceases to function, the Supreme Power is still left there all alone. That is Realization; that is the finality; and that is the goal.

It is thus plain that the purpose of the intellect is to realise its own dependence on the Higher Power and its inability to reach the same. So it must annihilate itself before the goal is gained.

*J.B. (quoting)* "I do not desire kingdoms, etc. Only let me serve Thee for ever; there is my highest pleasure." Is that right?

*Bh:* Yes. There is room for *kama* (desire) so long as there is an object apart from the subject (i.e. as long as there is duality). There can be no desire if there is no object. The state of no-desire is *moksha*. There is no duality in sleep, and so also no desire. Whereas, there is duality in the waking state and so desire also is there. Because of duality, a desire arises for the acquisition of the object. That is the outgoing mind (*bahirmukha vritti*), which is the basis of duality and of desire. If one knows that the Bliss is none other than the Self, the mind becomes inward turned. If the Self is gained, all the desires are fulfilled. That is said to be '*avaptakama*' in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. That is *moksha*.

Jamnalal Bajaj, trying to make himself clear by saying that what is meant by *sadbuddhi* is not the same as *buddhi*, but means that which holds fast to the good, the right and the chosen path, wanted to know how such steadfastness could be gained.

*Bh:* What is wanted for gaining the highest goal is the loss of individuality. The intellect is co-existent with individuality.



The loss of individuality can only come after the disappearance of buddhi, *sat* or *asat*. The question therefore does not arise.

*J.B.*: But yet one must know the right thing, choose the right path, practise the right *dharma* and hold fast to it. Otherwise one is lost.

*Bh.*: True, strength accrues by holding to the right direction, without swerving from it.

*J.B.*: Difficulties are met with. How is one to get the necessary strength to overcome the obstacles which beset one's path?

*Bh.*: By *bhakti* and *satsang*.

*J.B.*: Loss of individuality has just been mentioned as a prerequisite for *moksha*. Now devotion and association with the wise are advised as the methods. Is individuality not implied in them: e.g., 'I am a *bhakta*,' 'I am a *satsangi*'?

*Bh.*: The method is pointed out to the seeker. The seeker has certainly not lost his individuality so far. Otherwise the question would not have arisen. The way is shown to effect the loss of individuality of the seeker. It is thus appropriate.

*J.B.*: Is the desire for political independence right?

*Bh.*: Such desire begins with self-interest. Prolonged practical work for the goal gradually widens the outlook so that the individual becomes merged in the country. Such merging of the individual is desirable and the karma is *nishkama*.

*J.B.*: If independence is gained after a long struggle and terrible sacrifice, isn't the person justified in being pleased with the result and elated by it?

*Bh.*: He must have in the course of his work surrendered himself to the Higher Power, whose might must be kept in mind and never lost sight of. How then can he be elated? He should not even care for the results of his actions. Then only it becomes *nishkama*.

*J.B.*: How can unerring rectitude be ensured for the worker?

*Bh:* If he has surrendered himself to God or Guru, the Power to which he has surrendered will guide him in the right way. The worker need no longer concern himself about the rectitude or otherwise of his course. The doubt will arise only if he did not obey the master in all details.

*J.B:* Is there not any Power on earth which can bestow Grace on Its devotees so that they may grow strong to work for the country and gain independence? (Sri Maharshi remains in silence).

*J.B:* Is not the *tapas* of the ancient *mahatmas* of the land available for the benefit of its present day inheritors?

*Bh:* It is. But it must be remembered that no one can claim to be the sole beneficiary. The benefits are shared by all alike. (After a pause) Is it without such Grace that the present awakening has come into being?

*J.B:* (After a short pause) Sri Rajendra Prasad is such a noble and selfless worker for the country that he has sacrificed a very lucrative career for this work. The country needs him. And yet he is not in good health, and is always weak and ailing. Why should there be such cruelty to such a noble son of the country? (Sri Maharshi simply smiled benignantly).

## XII

### *Srimat Puragra Parampanthi*

I SAW BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA for the first time in my life during the memorable night of 10th December, 1949. I had reached the Ramanashram in the evening and a very friendly and helping monk of the Ashram had informed me

that I might be able to have *darshan* of the Maharshi from a distance that very night; and I was waiting with bated breath for this rare privilege. Then, all of a sudden I saw him when he was slowly emerging from the bathroom leaning heavily on the arms of two.

I was simply astounded and thrilled by the vision before me. I saw a tall, lean man in loin cloth; the limbs were well proportioned and well-knit and long; the skin was smooth and glowing and the quivering head was inclined towards the right side. There was a white bandage on the left arm which had been operated upon to remove a tumour. The eyes were neither big nor small but clear, deep and mystical and the clean-cut, handsome face was in perfect repose and serene tranquillity. The intense physical suffering had not touched or intruded upon the sovereign realm of his soul. His eyes shone with kindness and love for all mankind, his face was lit up with a beatific smile of benediction. I saw before me a Yogi of the highest order – a mystic of the supreme realisation, for, he radiated the living presence of divinity within and without. Verily, such persons live and move and have their being in God alone.

The next morning I saw him again. Slowly and with a spirit of high expectancy I entered the spacious hall where he was giving *darshan* to the gathering. I sat down quietly in one corner after tendering my salutation which he promptly accepted smilingly by nodding his head slightly. I saw around me rows of sitting men and women of different races and religions, of different stations and positions. I saw European, Parsi, Muslim, Hindu gents and ladies sitting calmly in *asanas*. In a big utensil the incense burnt and suffused the air with a soothing aroma, while the silence was broken by vibrant chanting of holy hymns by a few young ashram *brahmacharins*.

Almost at the centre of the hall on an elevated, white bed sat the Maharshi. Only a white loin cloth was on his person; his right hand held a fan with which he fanned himself indifferently and infrequently. I saw the same quivering and slightly inclined head and in the clear morning light the mystic lines of his face were deep and sharply drawn. His ever-smiling face was completely free from the ravages of illness which was slowly and steadily ruining the body. His spiritual presence was dynamic and clearly perceptible. It touched and inspired us and simultaneously took us to the high and rare sphere of spirituality. I felt suddenly the presence of a spiritual power which was ambient and edifying and it raised the expectancy of all to a high pitch. The atmosphere of the hall was distinctly attuned to a higher will and power which influenced the entire gathering.

All eyes were fixed on the Maharshi; every soul was raised to a high spiritual level by the nearness and influence of his great personality. I intensely reflected on the unique phenomenon and tried hard to find an answer to this unheard of event. I wanted to know how and by what irresistible force it had been possible for persons – young and old, rich and poor, wise and simple, belonging to different races and religions – to gather at the feet of this great Yogi. I wanted to know how and why the stubborn diversity has transformed into unity here – the persistent dissimilarity, into perfect harmony – the many-ness into oneness!

Suddenly the answer came and I realised that it had been possible solely due to the unifying presence, the realisation of the Maharshi. I realised that the Maharshi was the living embodiment of Advaitic truths of Vedas. He was the complete realisation of the eternal truth of Vedanta – the truths which are ever universal and transcendental, harmonious and cohesive. And he was not only the preacher

of truths of unity and oneness, of identity of man and God, of spiritual brotherhood of mankind irrespective of caste or creed, time or clime, race or position, he was the living symbol of these truths – the perfect realisation in real life. That was why his all embracing personality had become the centre of universal truth and the unifying force cementing diverse races and religions into a harmonious concord. That was why hundreds of people of diverse conditions and ways, of different aspirations and hopes had gathered at his feet spontaneously to receive the benediction of peace and contentment, spiritual illumination and the eternal gospels of truths and edifying yogic energy.

A few days later when I left Ramanasramam my heart was full to the brim. But deep within I felt, just as all the ashram people felt, that the Maharshi would shortly cease to grace the earth by his physical presence. For, he was on the verge of departure.

Afterwards, one day we heard over the radio that the sage had laid down his mortal coil on 14th of April, 1950.

He has passed away – but have we known him thoroughly and fully? Our narrow understanding cannot fully comprehend him; his greatness is too vast – too immense to be captured within our mental orbit. Just a part of his spiritual self, a tiny fraction of it is visible to us and we rejoice in the partial vision of him because we are in the dark and bound by the sad limitations of our senses. He has passed away, yet he lives perpetually in the evergreen memory of his thousands of devotees the world over, in his own undying gospels and messages which will continue to uplift, inspire and guide all along the right path towards the right and the highest goal – God-realisation.

## XIII

*Dr. T. N. Krishnaswamy*

*Here Dr. T. N. Krishnaswamy gives an account of his experiences as the 'official photographer' of the Ashram. As confirmed by Sri Bhagavan, the Divine assumes a visible, physical form out of Grace to give solace and guidance to devotees. The importance of Sri Bhagavan's pictures is therefore obvious.*

OWING TO MY busy life in Madras I could usually spend only a day or a part of a day at Tiruvannamalai when I went there. I always took my camera with me and I used to spend the whole time with the Maharshi and take as many photos of him as I could. I was afraid he would get annoyed at my persistence, but he never did. I have photographed him walking, sitting, eating, wiping his feet. I have caught him smiling and laughing, speaking and silent, and also in *samadhi*. Once he was going up the Hill when it started to rain and he was offered a home-made palm-leaf umbrella and I snapped him using it. I took another picture of him using an ordinary umbrella and smiling broadly as he did so.

Sometimes I used to wonder if it was not ridiculous of me to pay so much attention to photography when his teaching was that "I am not the body". Was I not chasing the shadow and even trying to perpetuate it? At the time I paid very little attention to his teaching. I was attracted only by the beauty and grace of his person. It gave me immense pleasure to take pictures of him. He was more important than, his teaching.

Later, when he was no longer bodily with us, I turned to his teaching; and then I found that the Grace of his Presence

had prepared me for it. I had been attracted to him as a child is to its mother, without knowing why I had derived sustenance from him as a child does from its mother. I was glad afterwards that I had enjoyed his presence when he was bodily with us. The following little incident shows how he himself approved of people worshipping the physical form assumed by the Divine.

One day I was walking on Arunachala with the Maharshi when he picked up one small stone from the path and held it out to me saying, "Someone has written from abroad asking for a stone from the holiest part of the Hill. He does not know that the whole Hill is sacred. It is Siva himself. Just as we identify ourselves with a body, so Siva has chosen to identify with the Hill. Arunachala is pure Awareness in the form of a Hill. It is out of compassion to those who seek him that he has chosen to reveal himself in the form of a Hill visible to the eye. The seeker will obtain guidance and solace by staying near this Hill."

## XIV

### *Swami Satyananda*

I was born in 1916 in Mavelikara, a village in South Kerala. My mother who was of a pious disposition used to serve *sadhus* and was happy to help them in various ways. Her piety made me turn to the spiritual path when I was only eighteen, though I only left home later. Meanwhile, I ran a small school for children on the *verandah* of our house. After four years I went on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram in the company of some *sadhus*. In the course of my pilgrimage, I halted at an abode of *sadhus* called Pandikkan Mazhi Matham, situated between Madurai

and Manamadurai. This *matham* was managed by one Narayanaswami, who had stayed at Sri Ramanasramam for some time. He was the first person who spoke to me about Sri Bhagavan and his greatness. He wrote out the full address of Sri Ramanasramam on a piece of paper and gave it to me.

From Rameswaram I came directly to Tiruvannamalai. This was in 1938. I was overcome with joy when I saw Arunachala. After spending a few days at the Virupaksha Cave I came down one day to Sri Ramanasramam in the company of a *sadhu*. When we arrived, Sri Bhagavan had just returned from his afternoon walk and was sitting in the hall alone. He looked at us and smiled. I can never forget that smile. After sitting in his presence for some time I returned to the cave. Thereafter I used to visit the Ashram daily and have *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan. I changed my abode from the Virupaksha Cave to the Mango Tree Cave, Skandasramam, etc., from time to time and spent seven years in this manner, begging my food in the town. I then obtained, by Sri Bhagavan's grace, the good fortune of serving him as his personal attendant from 1946 till his final Nirvana on 14th April 1950.

One day Sri Bhagavan described to me how one Sadguru Swami from Kerala, under the influence of some intoxicating drug, kept on embracing him tightly saying, "You are a good boy. It is a pleasure to see you." Sri Bhagavan acted the part of the *sadhu* in his inimitable way while narrating the incident. I was alone with him at the time and still remember the scene with joy!

I was present when the tumour on Sri Bhagavan's arm was operated upon in 1949. Although I cannot stand the sight of blood I managed somehow to control myself. On the evening of the 14th of April 1950 we were massaging Sri Bhagavan's body. At about 5 o'clock he asked us to help him sit up. Precisely at that moment devotees started singing "Arunachala Siva,



Arunachala Siva. ”When Sri Bhagavan heard this his face lit up with radiant joy. Tears began to flow from his eyes and continued to flow for a long time. I was wiping them from time to time. I was also giving him spoonfuls of water boiled with ginger. The doctor wanted to administer artificial respiration but Sri Bhagavan waved it away. He also wanted to give some fruit juice, so I begged Sri Bhagavan to agree to this and when he graciously consented the doctor gave it to him. Sri Bhagavan’s breathing became gradually slower and slower and exactly at 8-47 p.m. subsided quietly. At that very moment, as is well known, devotees who were outside saw a big, bright meteor in the sky.

# HUMOUR OF SRI BHAGAVAN

*Evelyn Kaselow*

WHEN I asked whether Bhagavan ever made jokes and whether he was ever in a lighter mood, Sri Kunju Swami jumped at me, as it were, to correct me and went into an ecstatic mood. With tears in his eyes he said: "Bhagavan is the most natural man you can ever conceive of. He had a very subtle sense of humour; it never hurt anyone and was never aimed at anyone. He also appreciated others' jokes, even those at his cost!" I became impatient and wanted him to tell me a few instances. He narrated the following:

Once, a boy was seated in front of Sri Bhagavan. Flies were troubling him and he was killing them. Seeing this Bhagavan told him: "Don't kill them; it is wrong." After some time the boy looked at Bhagavan intensely and remarked: "You say killing is wrong. I was only killing little flies which were giving me trouble, but you have killed a big tiger and you are sitting on its skin. How can it be?" Bhagavan laughed and said: "Yes, what he says is quite right!"

The same boy had the habit of wasting food served on his leaf-plate while seated with others. Once Bhagavan told him that he should not leave anything on the plate when he finished eating. That day too the boy could not eat everything, but stuffed something into his mouth and took out the empty leaf. Bhagavan saw him take out the empty leaf. However, the boy after throwing away the leaf also spat out the food that he had stuffed in his mouth. It was reported

to Bhagavan. He enjoyed the trick of the boy and gave a hearty laugh.

Another boy who used to go round the Hill with Sri Bhagavan and other devotees was always silent, though others used to sing hymns and prayers and chants. (Bhagavan sometimes even used to hold this boy's shoulder while walking round the Hill.) One day Bhagavan, after everyone of the party had sung some song or other, asked this boy why he alone did not sing. The boy's spontaneous reply made Sri Bhagavan laugh to his heart's content. It was: "Do *jivanmuktas* ever sing?"

The author of *Sat Darshana Bhashya*, Sri Kapali Sastriar, was very close to Sri Bhagavan from his early youth, so much so he was one of the very few whom Bhagavan addressed intimately without prefixing or suffixing respectful terms (Bhagavan was very particular in addressing all, even children, only with respect). His parents were very keen to get him married and he himself was stoutly opposing it. They even approached Bhagavan to persuade him to marry. One day, Sri Kapali Sastriar went near Bhagavan and said: "Bhagavan, tomorrow I intend taking up *asrama*<sup>1</sup> (stage in life)." Bhagavan, who knew his aversion to marriage and the anxiety of his parents, was surprised and said "Kapali, what are you saying? Have you taken the permission of your parents?"

Meekly he replied: "Yes, Bhagavan! I am going to enter into the second *asrama*<sup>1</sup> (meaning, marriage)!" Bhagavan laughed heartily and enjoyed the joke.

A young girl, named Rukmini, aged ten, the daughter of Vilacheri Ranga Iyer, used to meditate in front of Sri Bhagavan, seated like a statue. Some older boys or girls sitting next to her

---

<sup>1</sup> Four *asramas*, viz., *brahmacharya*, *grihasta*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*. Usually when a person says he would take *asrama* it meant only *sannyasa asrama*.

used to tickle her to disturb her. Bhagavan used to watch all these in amusement. One day, after having had her bath, Rukmini, as usual, sat for meditation in right earnest (like a yogi). A boy nearby (who had not had his bath yet) teased her, saying: “I am going to touch you.” Rukmini firmly replied: “No one can touch me!” Bhagavan was looking at them. She turned to Bhagavan and then asked, “Yes, none can touch me, they can touch only my body. How can any one touch ME?” Bhagavan gave an expression of wonder and appreciation at the depth of her statement!

Mudaliar Patti, who used to feed Sri Bhagavan daily, always tried to serve more cooked rice to him, by making a ball of rice by pressing it hard into a certain shape. One day, Sri Bhagavan, noticing her trick, commented, “She is clever. She feels she could serve me more food through making it appear less. I know her trick!” Bhagavan made gestures of her pressing the rice with her hands. Taking the cue, straight came Mudaliar Patti’s reply: “Bhagavan! What is more and what is less? There is nothing that is either big or small. Everything is only our *bhavana*<sup>2</sup> (thinking).” She made similar gestures as made by Bhagavan. Bhagavan enjoyed the joke and remarked, “See, see! How well she is giving back to me my own teaching.”

---

<sup>2</sup> *Bhavana* also means gestures.

# CONVERSATIONS WITH BHAGAVAN

*Swami Madhava Thirtha*

## I

*These conversations were originally printed in the author's Gujarati book, Ramana Maharshi – Introduction and Teaching.*

**S**WAMI *Madhava Thirtha*: It is said by some that God has created various kinds of worlds and is still going to create a new world.

*Sri Bhagavan*: Our present world itself is not true. Each one sees a different imaginary world according to his imagination, and so where is the guarantee that the new world will be real? The *jiva* (individual soul), the world and God, all of these are dependent on the True State. As long as there is the individual sense of 'I', these are also there. From this individual sense of 'I', from the mind, these three have arisen. If you destroy the mind, the three will not remain, but *Brahman* alone will remain, as it remains and abides even now.

We see something incorrectly. This misperception will be rectified by enquiring into the real nature of this *jiva*. Even if the *jiva* enters super-mind, it will remain in mind; but after surrendering the mind, there will be nothing remaining but *Brahman*. Whether this world is real or unreal, *chetana* or *jada*,

(conscious or inert), a place of happiness or a place of misery, all these states arise in the state of ignorance. They are not useful after Realisation. The state of *Atma Nishta* (being fixed in the Self), devoid of the individual feeling of 'I', is the Supreme State. In this state, there is no room for objective thinking, nor for this feeling of individual being. There is no doubt of any kind in this natural state of Being-Consciousness-Bliss. So long as there is the perception of name and form in oneself, God will appear with form, but when the vision of the formless Reality (*arupa drishti*) is achieved there will be no modifications of seer, seeing and seen. That vision is the nature of consciousness itself, non-dual and undivided. It is limitless, infinite and perfect. When the individual sense of 'I' arises in the body, then the waking state appears. If this sense is absent, who then will see the world?

*Q:* It is believed by some that just as we can subdue the material nature residing in our body, the sage, in the same way, must have such power in himself that he can change other's material nature, because the Self is common to all.

*A:* The *jnani* does not believe that there are others, and so there is no question of changing anyone's material nature. When others are seen, that is ignorance.

*Q:* Though Janaka was a *jnani*, he was a ruling monarch, but his Guru, Yajnavalkya, who was also a *jnani* renounced the world and went to the forest. Why was this so?

*A:* All happens according to the *prarabdha* (destiny) of each *jnani*. Krishna was an enjoyer of pleasures (*bhogi*), whereas Sukadeva was an ascetic (*tyagi*). Janaka and Rama were kings, but all of them were *janis*. Their inner experience was the same, and their external life was in accordance with their *prarabdha*.

*Q:* Some see a serpent in the rope, some a stick, some a garland, and some a flow of water, but the one who sees the

rope as the rope has the true knowledge. The knowledge of the other seers is not true.

*A:* It is not necessary to think of the view of other seers. Those others are only in your imagination. Know the one seer, and all will be well.

*Q:* How?

*A:* In a dream, many are seen, but they are all in the imagination of the one seer. When you wake up from the dream, the dream and those seen in the dream will take care of their own *prarabdha*.

*Q:* Then there will be no others?

*A:* It is the same with the world. In *Aparokshanubhuti*, (an *Advaitic* work attributed to Sankara), the author says: “In the state where there is no existence of seer, seeing and seen, the sight should be fixed there (in that state) and not on the tip of the nose.”

*Q:* A question arises from this: How can daily life go on if the sight is fixed in this way?

*A:* *Jnanis* fix their sight in the substratum (*adhishtana*) even during *vyavahara* (wordly activities), because nothing else becomes the truth except *adhishtana*. To feel that there is earth in the pot is the proper attitude (i.e., see the essence and not the form).

*Q:* A pot can be filled with water, but one cannot achieve the same result by pouring water on earth.

*A:* I do not tell you to see earth after breaking the pot. Even when the pot is whole, you can see it in the form of earth. In the same way, the world can be seen as the form of *Brahman*. To have the knowledge of *Brahman* in the waking state is similar to having the knowledge of clay in the pot.

*Q:* Are the name and form real?

*A:* You won't find them separate from *adhishtana* (the substratum). When you try to get at name and form, you will

find Reality only. Therefore attain the knowledge of that which is real for all time.

Q: Is it a fact that dreams arise because of the impressions received during the waking state?

A: No, it is not true. In your dream you see many new things and many new people whom you have never seen before in your waking state. You may even see a second dream within the dream. After waking up from the second dream, you feel that you have woken up, but that is the waking state of the first dream. In the same way, man wakes up daily, but it is not to a real waking state.

Q: Why does the waking state look so real?

A: We see so much on the cinema screen, but it is not real; nothing is real there except the screen. In the same way, in the waking state, there is nothing but *adhishtana*. *Jagrat-prama* (knowledge of the world) is the *prama* of *jagrat-pramata*. (Knowledge of the knower of the world). Both go away in sleep.

Q: Why do we see such permanency and constancy in the world?

A: It is seen on account of wrong ideas. When someone says that he took a bath in the same river twice, he is wrong because when he bathed for the second time the river was not the same as it was when he bathed for the first time. On seeing the brightness of a flame, a man says that he sees the same flame, but this flame is changing every moment. The waking state is like this. The stationary appearance is an error of perception.

Q: Whose is the error?

A: *Pramata* (the knower).

Q: How did the knower come?

A: On account of the error of perception. In fact, the knower and his misperceptions appear simultaneously, and when knowledge of the Self is obtained, they disappear simultaneously.



Q: From where did the knower and his misperceptions come?

A: Who is asking this question?

Q: I.

A: Find out that 'I' and all your doubts will be solved. Just as in a dream, a false knower, knowledge and known rise up, in the waking state, the same process operates. In both states, on knowing this 'I', you know everything, and nothing remains to be known. In deep sleep, knower, knowledge and known are absent; in the same way, at the time of experiencing the true 'I', they will not exist. Whatever you see happening in the waking state happens only to the knower, and since the knower is unreal, nothing in fact ever happens.

Q: After waking from sleep, why does the world of the previous day appear the same?

A: The world seen on the previous day was not real. It was the knowledge of an unreal knower; similarly, the world of the next day is also the knowledge of an unreal knower. Truly, there is no real world. What appears separate from us is called by us "the world". It appears separate to us due to ego-consciousness (*ahamkara*). When *ahamkara* goes there is nothing separate and then there is no world. Time also arises from *pramata* (the knower). Because *pramata* is not real, time is also not real. Prof. Einstein has also stated this in his theory of relativity.

Q: How then do the affairs of daily life go on?

A: At present the government has changed the time by putting it an hour in advance. Though the time is wrong, daily life still continues.

Q: In *Panchadasi* there is an example that if you wish to hear the music of your son who is singing along with all the boys attending the same school, you have to ask the other boys to be quiet. Similarly, to hear the voice of the Self, you have to stop all other activities.

*A:* In this particular example, even if your son is not present, you will hear the music of the other boys, so the analogy does not fit well. Truly speaking, if there is no Self, no other work can be done. According to another example, if we fix our attention on the main tune of the harmonium, then there will be no difficulty in listening to that tune, even if many other tunes were going on along with it.

*Q:* Just as a mirage, though believed to be unreal, appears again, similarly, though the world is believed to be unreal, it reappears.

*A:* Just as the knowledge of water in the mirage is not true, similarly, the knowledge of the world in *Brahman* is not true. All is one *Brahma rupa* (form of *Brahman*). That alone is true knowledge.

*Q:* According to the old system of Vedanta, it is seen that ignorance arises first, and then arises the idea of individual existence, but according to the new system, there seems to be nothing before or after. The idea of individual existence, ignorance and the world arise simultaneously, and on attaining knowledge, all these three disappear.

*A:* It is true. “See the world as consisting of *Brahman*, after making your vision *jnanamaya*” (consisting of knowledge) (vide., *Yoga Vasishtha*).

*Q:* Such a state can only be obtained by *sat sang* (association with holy men).

*A:* Do not think that *sat sang* means only talks and conversations. It means abidance in being as the form of the Self.

*Q:* What is the meaning of ‘*atma is swayam prakasa*’ (The Self shines by its own light)?

*A:* Just as the sun has never seen darkness, similarly, the Self has never seen ignorance. The Self is unknowable, but it can be experienced by *aparoksha anubhava* (knowledge of the Self by direct perception). This is called *swayam prakasatwa* (Self-illumination).

## II

*SWAMI MADHAVATHIRTHA*: In the *Vedanta* of Sri Sankaracharya, the principle of the creation of the world has been accepted for the sake of beginners, but for the advanced, the principle of non-creation is put forward. What is your view in this matter?

*Maharshi*: “There is no dissolution or creation, no one in bondage, nor anyone pursuing spiritual practices. There is no one desiring liberation nor anyone liberated. This is the Absolute Truth.”

This *sloka* appears in the second chapter (the chapter on falsity) of Gaudapada’s *Karika* (a commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad*). It means that really there is no dissolution and no creation. There is no bondage, no one doing spiritual practices, no one seeking spiritual liberation and no one who is liberated. One who is established in the Self, sees this by his knowledge of Reality.

*S.M.*: Is not surrender the chief *sadhana*?

*M.*: The *sadhana* of surrender is accepted, no doubt. But when surrender is complete, there will be no distinction. Often, when a disciple gets initiation into a *mantra* from a Guru and believes that he has surrendered, his surrender is not real. In surrender, one has to give up one’s mind, and after the mind is given away, there will be no duality of any kind. He who remains separate from God has not surrendered.

*S.M.*: If all actions and their results are surrendered to God, will the mind be controlled or not?

*M.*: By doing so, the heart will be purified but the mind will not die. Suppose a drunkard thinks that he has surrendered his *karma* and its fruits to God, and in his drunken state, if he commits a mistake and someone beats him with a stick for that mistake, he must surrender this

beating also to God. But no one acts like that. His state changes at the time he gets the beating. Thus by surrender, the mind is not completely destroyed.

*S.M.*: It is believed that if we surrender to Guru or God, then the reality of the individual goes away, and in exchange we get the support of a bigger Reality and Divine power shines in us.

*M.*: To expect to receive a bigger Divine power after surrendering is not the true attitude of surrender.

*S.M.*: It is believed by some that the human body is not the last on this earth. Establishment in the Self is not perfectly attained, and Self Knowledge is not imbibed naturally in a human body; therefore *vijnanamaya sarira* (literally the body made of pure knowledge) in which Self-Knowledge can work naturally must be brought down on this earth.<sup>1</sup>

*M.*: Self-Knowledge can shine very well in the human body, and so there is no need of any other body.

*S.M.*: It is believed that the *vijnanamaya sarira* will not be attacked by disease, will not grow old, and will not die without one's desire.

*M.*: The body itself is a disease. To wish for a long stay of that disease is not the aim of a *jnani*. Anyhow, one has to give up identification with the body. Just as "I-am-the-body consciousness" prevents one from attaining Self-Knowledge, in the same way, one who has got the conviction that he is not the body will become liberated even without his desire.

*S.M.*: What about bringing down God's power in the human body?

*M.*: If after surrendering, one still has a desire, then surrender has not been successful. If one has the attitude, "If

---

<sup>1</sup> Usually in *Vedanta*, the body of pure knowledge refers to the intellect, but in this case, the questioner is probably referring to the ideas of Sri Aurobindo, who was known to hold similar views to those of the questioner.

the higher power is to come down, it must come in my body.” This will only increase identification with the body. Truly speaking, there is no need of any such descent. After the destruction of the “I-am-the-body ” idea, the individual becomes the form of the Absolute. In that state, there is no above or below, front or back.

*S.M:* If the individual becomes the form of the Absolute, then who will enjoy the bliss of the Absolute? To enjoy the bliss of the Absolute, we must be slightly separate from it, like the bee which tastes honey from a little distance.

*M:* The bliss of the Absolute is the bliss of one’s own nature. It is not born or created from anything else. Pleasure which is created is sure to be destroyed. Sugar being insentient cannot give it’s own taste; the bee has to keep a little distance to taste it. But the Absolute is Awareness and Consciousness. It can give it’s own bliss, but it’s nature cannot be understood without attaining that state.

*S.M:* What about bringing a new Divine race on this earth?

*M:* Whatever is to be in the future is to be understood as impermanent. Learn to understand properly what you have now so that there will be no need of thinking about the future.

# DREAMS

*Sadhu Arunachala (A. W. Chadwick)*

“WE ARE SUCH stuff as dreams are made of and our short life is rounded by a sleep.”

Shakespeare really did know what he was talking about, it was not just poetic effervescence. Maharshi used to say exactly the same. Though I questioned Bhagavan more often on this subject than any other, some doubts always remained for me. He had always warned that as soon as one doubt is cleared another will spring up in its place – there is no end of doubts.

“But Bhagavan,” I would repeat, “dreams are disconnected, while the waking experience goes on from where it lets off and is admitted by all to be more or less continuous.”

“Do you say that in your dreams?” Bhagavan would ask. “They seemed perfectly consistent and real to you then. It is only now, in your waking state that you question the reality of the experience. This is not logical.”

Bhagavan refused to see the least difference between the two states, and in this he agreed with all the great Advaitic Seers. Some have questioned if Sankara did not draw a line of difference between these two states, but Bhagavan has persistently denied it. Sankara did it apparently only for the purpose of clearer exposition, he would explain.

The answer I received was always the same, however I tried to twist my questions. “Put your doubts when in the dream state itself. You do not question the waking state when you are awake. You accept it in the same way you accept your dreams.

Go beyond both states, all three states including deep sleep, and study them from that point of view. You now study one limitation from the point of view of another limitation. Could anything be more absurd? Go beyond all limitation, then come here with the problem.” But in spite of this, doubt still remained. I somehow felt at the time of dreaming there was something unreal in it, not always of course. But just glimpses now and then. “Doesn’t that ever happen to you in your waking state too?” Bhagavan queried. “Don’t you sometimes feel that the world you live in and the thing that is happening is unreal?”

Still in spite of all this, doubt persisted.

But one morning I went to Bhagavan and much to his amusement handed him a paper on which the following was written:

“Bhagavan remembers that I expressed some doubts about the resemblance between dreams and waking experience. Early in the morning most of these doubts were cleared by the following dream, which seemed particularly objective and real:

“I was arguing philosophy with someone. I pointed out that all experience was only subjective, that there was nothing outside the mind.

“The other person demurred, pointing out how solid everything was and how real experience seemed. It could not be just personal imagination.

“ I replied, ‘No, it is nothing but a dream. Dream and waking experience are exactly the same.’

“‘You say that now’, he replied, ‘but you would never say a thing like that in your dream.’”

And then I woke up.

# LEST WE FORGET...

## I

### *Natesan*

*Sri Natesan, a staunch old devotee of Sri Bhagavan, had the unique privilege of shaving Bhagavan for an uninterrupted period of twenty five years.*

SRI Natesan is a native of Polur, a small village to the north of Tiruvannamalai. His father, a staunch devotee of Lord Arunachaleswara (the deity in the Tiruvannamalai temple) used to visit Tiruvannamalai, walking the distance of twenty miles on the first day of each Tamil month in order to do a *pradakshina* of Arunachala. After reaching a ripe old age, his father eventually died during one of his walks around the mountain, and Sri Natesan considers that it was the merit earned by his father which eventually earned him the privilege of serving Bhagavan.

After his father's death, Natesan was adopted by his uncle, Subbarayan. His uncle first saw Bhagavan at Gurumurtam, the period when he had long matted hair. On seeing Sri Bhagavan, Subbarayan asked for permission to give him a shave. Bhagavan remained silent and Subbarayan took this to be a negative answer, but later, when some of the devotees wanted to give Bhagavan a shave, he was approached by them and he happily accepted their invitation. From that time on, he shaved Bhagavan regularly, and when he became too old to continue the work,



he advised his nephew, Natesan, to continue the service. Natesan gladly accepted the honour, and he shaved Sri Bhagavan on the morning of each full-moon day.

On the mornings when he was due to shave Bhagavan, Natesan would first have a bath, smear *vibhuti* (sacred ash) on himself and then respectfully approach Bhagavan at exactly 9 a.m. At this time of day, Bhagavan would normally have just returned from his morning walk, and on seeing Natesan Bhagavan would apply oil to the rheumatic swelling in his joints and then slowly walk to the *goshala* (cow shed). A special place was set aside in the *goshala* for shaving and on the days when Bhagavan had his shave it would be specially cleaned and decorated with *rangoli* (floor patterns). Natesan would prostrate before starting the shave, and then complete the shave in silence; only when it was completed would he say a few words to Bhagavan.

On one occasion, Sri Niranjanananda Swami called Natesan and asked him to start the work an hour earlier. Niranjanananda Swami thought that in the heat of the summer this would be more convenient for Bhagavan. Natesan turned up at the newly appointed hour, and in response to Bhagavan's questioning gaze, he narrated Niranjanananda Swami's new plan. Bhagavan said that the heat was of no importance, and the former timetable was restored.

Natesan also used to play pipe-music for weddings and other festivities, and once when he was shaving Bhagavan, his uncle Subbarayan came to see him and told him that he was required in town to play some music as soon as he had finished shaving Bhagavan. On hearing this Bhagavan remarked: "It seems that Natesan has to go to town by noon, and he has not taken any food since this morning." His attendants who were standing nearby took the hint and brought him some lunch from the kitchen. Barbers are normally treated as outcasts, and

caste Hindus would normally only offer them food after they themselves had finished eating. Natesan was overwhelmed by this show of compassion by Bhagavan and felt that only Bhagavan could love like this. Recalling this incident in later years, Natesan was moved to tears and pointed out that Bhagavan always treated devotees equally, and was particular that none went without food.

Natesan considered his service to Bhagavan to be his highest priority, and never failed to appear for the monthly shave. On one occasion, on the day before full-moon, Natesan's brother who was living in a village nearby, fell sick and his life appeared to be in danger. Natesan explained his position to his relatives and they wisely advised him to go at once to Tiruvannamalai and do his sacred duty.

Soon after the shave the following day, one of his relatives came to inform him that his brother had died and that he was required immediately for the last rites. Bhagavan heard this information being passed on and remarked: "It seems that Natesan's brother has passed away and he has to go at once to Polur. He could not have taken his food yet and it is not known whether he has money to travel." On hearing this, one of Bhagavan's attendants, Ramakrishna Swami went to the kitchen and brought some food. Natesan had little appetite for food, but he took three cups of coffee and was given five rupees for his journey home.

Natesan once prostrated to Bhagavan when he met him walking on the hill. "Why here?" questioned Bhagavan, and Natesan took this to mean that his prostration in the *goshala* was a sufficient expression of devotion and that he need not do it elsewhere.

Natesan always used to spend a few minutes with Bhagavan after his monthly work had been completed. In those few minutes he would have Bhagavan's uninterrupted and undivided

attention. Natesan now considers these short sessions listening to the compassionate words of Bhagavan to be the happiest moments of his life.

## II

### *K. Venkataraman*

*K. Venkataraman, who was absorbed in Arunachala in 1994, was fondly addressed as K. V. Mama by the Ashram inmates.*

K. Venkataraman comes from a family totally devoted to Sri Bhagavan for several generations. His grandmother was Echammal, Grand Old Lady of the Ashram, who for 38 years, till her death in 1945, would not partake of her food until she had first sent food to Sri Bhagavan and his devotees. His mother, Chellama, was an ardent devotee from her childhood till her death in 1922. When the news of her death was conveyed to Sri Bhagavan, he was so moved that tears came to his eyes. From his earliest days “Ramanan” has experienced the protection and guidance of Bhagavan, who has been his only refuge. He feels himself especially blessed to have come from such a family marked by unique dedication.

His first memory of Sri Bhagavan’s Grace goes back to about 1925, when he was four years old. It was then a routine that twice a year Ashram inmates were treated for cleaning their stomachs by doses of castor oil and herbal *kashayam*. After a dose of oil at night, followed by one of *kashayam* very early the next morning an early and frugal lunch consisting of a small quantity of rice mixed liberally with a special light *rasam* and

mango kernels was served. On one such morning, Venkataraman was being served much more *rasam* than he wanted, and he blurted out ‘BUS’ (Hindi for ‘enough’) to stop the server, uncle Ranga Rao, from giving him more. Sri Bhagavan heard this remark and, punning on the word, regaled the diners with laughter by saying, “Yes, BUS, runs outside on the Chengam road to your father’s place.”

On Kartika day in 1931, when he was about 11 years old, he was staying with his grandmother Echammal. Finding her busy with the *sraddha* ceremonies for her late husband, he took her permission to go to the temple for puja. Before going into the Sanctum Sanctorum, he decided to have his bath inside the temple compound. He went down the steps and entered the water carefully, as he did not know how to swim, but despite his care, he slipped and went down deep into the water. With great effort he was able to come to the surface several times and shout for help, yet no one took any notice of him. After his third unsuccessful attempt, he sank deep into the water, without any hope of survival. Suddenly he saw a very bright light inside his head in the midst of which Sri Bhagavan’s face shone. This phenomenon which came in a flash, and disappeared immediately. A little later he felt something catch his ankles and he experienced a similar flash in exactly the same manner and intensity as before. By then he was unconscious. When he awoke as if from a deep sleep he found himself on the steps of Siva Ganga tank. After looking around carefully and reassuring himself that he was really alive, he asked people around him how he had come there. He was told that an old man who was doing *pradakshina* of Kambathu Ilayana had run down the steps, jumped into the tank, brought him out of the water and laid him down, and then had gone away as swiftly as he had come. Venkataraman then quickly had his *puja* performed and went straight home, without mentioning a word about it to his

grandmother. The next morning they went together to the Ashram as usual and prostrated before Sri Bhagavan. Bhagavan looked at them and asked how deep Siva Ganga tank was. The lad could not understand the import of question, and ran out of the hall silently. It was only later in life that he realised that his saviour had been none other than Sri Bhagavan himself. It is true that Sri Bhagavan shunned occult powers as an obstacle to pure *sadhana* but it is also true that Sri Bhagavan is all grace and compassion and never fails his devotees.

Another incident he recalls happened about a year later when he had come from his father's home to stay with Echammal for his school vacation. One morning at the Ashram he noticed that almost everyone had copies of a new book which he found was Suddhananda Bharati's biography of Sri Bhagavan, *Sri Ramana Vijayam*, fresh from the press, and presented it to all inmates. Disappointed at not getting a copy, he went to Chinna-swamy to ask for one. After Chinna-swamy refused to give him one, he went where Sri Bhagavan was and stood weeping. Bhagavan asked why he was crying and Venkataraman told him what had happened. Bhagavan then sent an attendant to the book stall for a copy of the book. After writing "Ramanan" on the flyleaf, he handed it the boy, who was filled with joy and thanked him for it. Sri Bhagavan then observed: "Oho! You are all joy now and your weeping vanished so soon." Venkataraman then went out of the Hall to tell Chinna-swamy that he had got what he wanted from the hands of Sri Bhagavan himself.

# THE TURNING POINT

*Natanananda*

I WAS twenty years old in 1917-18 and a schoolmaster. Being naturally of a pious disposition I used to go about from place to place frequently to have *darshan* of the deities installed in temples. A noble soul who saw this, brought to me of his own accord, the two books (in Tamil), *Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam* and *Sri Vivekananda Vijayam*, and asked me to read them. As soon as I had read them I was seized with an intense longing for obtaining the vision of God and for finding out the Guru who would show the way to it. While I was engaged in this search, I heard about the extraordinary greatness of Bhagavan Sri Ramana through a holy person whom I happened to meet at Sriperumbudur. On 2nd May 1918, I saw Sri Ramana for the first time at Skandasramam on Arunachala.

I beseeched him fervently thus: "It is my great desire that I should actually experience your gracious wisdom. Kindly fulfil my desire." In those days Sri Ramana was not speaking much. Still he spoke kindly as follows: "Is it the body in front of me which desires to obtain my grace? Or is it the awareness within it? If it is the awareness, is it not now looking upon itself as the body and making this request? If so, let the awareness first of all know its real nature. It will then automatically know God and my grace. The truth of this can be realised even now and here."

Besides telling me this, he also explained it as follows through my own experience. "It is not the body which desires to obtain the grace. Therefore it is clear that it is awareness

which shines here as 'you'. To you who are of the nature of awareness there is no connection during sleep with the body, the senses, the vital airs and the mind. On waking up you identify yourself with them, even without your knowledge. This is your experience. All that you have to do hereafter is to see that you do not identify yourself with them in the states of waking and dream also and try to remain yourself as in the state of deep sleep – as you are by nature unattached you have to convert the state of ignorant deep sleep, in which you were formless and unattached, into conscious deep sleep. It is only by doing this that you can remain established in your real nature. You should never forget that this experience will come only through long practice. This experience will make it clear that your real nature is not different from the nature of God.”

# BEYOND CATEGORIES

## “*Sein*”

HERE is one section of the devotees of Bhagavan who attach great importance to his being an *avatara*, while others overlook or even deny such over emphasis. Why should we worry? We know that he is more than an *avatara*. Indeed, Bhagavan himself once said: ‘The *Jnani* is more than an *avatara*.’

There are Hindus who make much of his being a Hindu. Of course, he was brought up a Hindu. He participated in a certain amount of Hindu ritual. But then, as others point out, he did not exclusively advocate Hindu ritual or expect any of his followers to become Hindus. What does it matter? He was more than a Hindu.

Even within Hinduism, was he a *brahmin* or a *sannyasi*? Once again, what does it matter? He was brought up a *brahmin*; he left his family and came to Arunachala; but he never took *sannyas*. He himself declared that he was ‘*athiasrami*’, outside the castes and categories, neither *brahmin* nor non-*brahmin*, neither householder nor *sannyasi*.

Was he a Guru? He gave no formal initiation, he sometimes denied that he was a Guru, but he joined in singing ‘Ramana Sat-Guru’, and many experienced his grace and guidance and still do.

Did he teach prayer and belief in God? He said that it is always good to pray and that without God’s Grace even the movement of a blade of grass is impossible; but on another occasion, speaking to a different type of person, he said: “Why



worry about God? Let him worry about himself; find out who it is that asks whether there is a God.”

I do not wish to argue that Bhagavan was a Hindu or not a Hindu, an *avatara* or not an *avatara*, a theist or a non theist; what I say is that his purpose was to divert our minds from all forms and categories to the pure Truth of the Self. Let us not waste our time trying to define what Bhagavan was but try to follow him to what IS.

Many great Teachers throughout the ages have set up signposts to the Truth, but multitudes have gathered around these signposts and built churches and temples there, marvelling how beautifully they were painted, and forgetting that they were only indicators to the Truth beyond. Therefore Bhagavan constantly warned us not to be enthralled by the beauty of any path or any scripture but to turn our minds inwards to find out who it is that follows the path or scripture. All the signposts point to the One Truth, and that is to be found within. That is why Bhagavan said that Truth is simple but men do not want truth, they want mystery. Let us, therefore sacrifice to Bhagavan the mind that seeks to build doctrines and turn instead to the simplicity of Truth that is the very Self of us.

“My obeisance to Thee

I bow down to Thee, O Lord!

Thou facest the south.

Thou art the Ancient One. I bow down to Thee.

Thou art Supreme. I bow down to Thee.

Thou art Mighty. I bow down to Thee

Thou art Time. I bow down to Thee.

Thou art the Word that is in the beginning. I bow down to Thee.

Thou art the Ruler of the mind. I bow down to

Thee.”

– *Yajur Veda.*

# ARUNACHALA ASHTAKA AND SIDDHA PURUSHA

*Dr. M. Anantanarayana Rao*

*Legends say that there is an invisible Siddha Purusha on the slope of the Arunachala Hill and Bhagavan often confirmed this. The writer of this article, a staunch devotee who was in close contact with, and doing personal service to Sri Bhagavan in the last days of his illness, concludes that Bhagavan himself is the Siddha Purusha.*

WE see the light of the sun, stars galaxies and the rays of light from them help an astronomer to measure the colossal distances between stars and galaxies, their speed of travel and so on. We are told how fast light travels per second and that if a body travels at that speed, time and space do not exist for it. We understand and believe all that, it being at the mental level. We do not know exactly what light is, yet we know some of its qualities. When a scientist tells us something which we cannot ordinarily perceive with our senses, for example, radioactive waves, we believe him. But when a saint or sage tells us that there is a spiritual entity in us, something not of the mind, and beyond our senses, something which is not of time and therefore immortal, we hardly believe him. Just as a scientist gives us relative knowledge, the realised person or Sage gives us an insight which leads us to spiritual knowledge, but the ways of expression employed by the latter are different. Words cannot

directly describe a spiritual entity because it is beyond the mental level, therefore analogies are employed. Analogies have their limitations and therefore are not perfect in giving us a correct knowledge of the Spirit or *Atman*. The sage tells us that man is a combination of body, mind and *Atman*. The body and mind are described as *upadhis* or vehicles of the *Atman* or Spirit. The body is inert and the mind makes it act in the way it wants it to. Mind is a very complex thing according to psychologists, but Sri Bhagavan Ramana makes the study of mind simple enough for us to follow his teachings. He divides the mind into three parts – *manas*, *ahankara* and *buddhi*. *Manas* is a bundle of thoughts, and memory is also included in it; *ahankara* or ego is the dominating principle which takes hold of thoughts and makes the body act; and *buddhi* is the discriminating principle which has the power to damp or curb the ego. The ego can be likened to the powerful secondary current or high-tension current which can only become apparent under the influence of a primary current of electricity. The high tension current derives its power from the primary current and is also a reflection of the latter, so to say. Similarly, the ego can be likened to the high-tension current, drawing its power from, and a reflection of the primary called the *Atman* or Spirit. From what has been described above, it should be easy to understand that man is an ‘embodied soul’. Soul is a synonym for *Atman* or Spirit. If so, can there be a ‘disembodied soul’? A disembodied soul should be limitless as opposed to an embodied soul which is limited by the body. The disembodied soul, being limitless, therefore infinite, has the same qualities or nature of God. *Arunachala Purana* and some poet-saints have mentioned the existence of a disembodied soul, whom they name *Siddha Purusha*, sitting under a banyan tree, somewhere on the northeast peak of the Arunachala Hill. If such an entity exists, how does it contact men or *jivas* like us? *Arunachala Ashtaka* composed by

Sri Ramana Bhagavan seems to contain the answer and an attempt is made here to explain the same. The verses often have a double meaning – autobiographic and deeply *Advaitic*.

In the first verse of the *Ashtaka* Sri Bhagavan says:

“Hearken! It stands as an insentient hill. Its action is mysterious and past understanding. From the age of innocence, it had shone in my mind that Arunachala was something very sublime and grand, but even when I came to know through another that it was the same as Tiruvannamalai, I did not realise its meaning. When It drew me up to It, stilling my mind, and I came close, I saw It stand unmoving or as Absolute Silence.”

The pronoun ‘It’, at the very beginning of the verse, clearly refers to an Entity. Later in the verse, it is seen that Sri Bhagavan had deep down in his memory, even at the age of innocence, that ‘It’ or Arunachala, was something grand and transcendental. As a child he could not have known what a hill meant or what it was like, and the reasons for this are obvious. Therefore his memory of something sublime not in the shape of a hill at that tender age, suggests that it was brought forward from a previous birth or incarnation. A hint about a previous birth or incarnation can be deduced from the latter part of the 25th verse in the *Aksharamanamalai*. It reads: “What austerities left incomplete in previous births have won me Thy special favour, O Arunachala?” The same idea can also be got from the third verse in *Sri Arunachala Padikam* composed by Sri Bhagavan. He says, “Drawing me with the cords of Thy glance, although I had not even dimly thought of Thee, Thou didst decide to kill me (ego) outright. How then has one so weak as I offended Thee that Thou leave the task unfinished? Why dost Thou torture me thus, keeping me suspended between life and death? O Arunachala, fulfil Thy wish and long survive me all alone, O Lord.”

A *nitya siddha*, says Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, is an ever-perfect one, who from his very birth seeks God or *Atman*,

and an *Isvara-koti* is one who always remains in the highest plane of consciousness and can return to the plane of relative consciousness whenever he wishes to do so. This he does in order to help mankind (*jivakotis*) on the path towards perfection. A *jivakoti* may obtain *samadhi* through spiritual discipline and merge with *Brahman* in the end and once that happens he cannot return to the relative plane. An *Isvara-koti*, on the other hand, is an incarnation of God and has with him the power to be born as man as often as is necessary, and this he does by retaining the ego of knowledge.

Sri Bhagavan Ramana was an *Isvara-koti*, as defined by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and a *Nitya* (eternal) *Siddha* also. He therefore had the power to take birth in a human body.

In the second verse of the *Ashtaka* Sri Ramana says:

“Who is the seer? When I sought within I watched the disappearance of the seer and what survived it. No thought arose to say ‘I saw’, how then could the thought ‘I did not see’ arise? Who has the power to convey this in words when even Thou (appearing as Dakshinamurti) couldst do so in ancient days by silence only? Only to convey by silence Thy (transcendental) State Thou standest as a Hill, shining from heaven to earth.” In this verse it is clear that ‘Hill’ represents the Entity presiding over it. That Entity is known as Dakshinamurti, or the *Siddha Purusha* mentioned in the *Purana*. References to previous births, ‘kill me outright,’ suspended between ‘life and death,’ ‘long survive me alone,’ and ‘ancient days’ – when considered together, suggest the possibility of Bhagavan Sri Ramana having taken births many times for helping *jivakotis* reach their goal rapidly.

In the third verse he says: “When I approach regarding Thee having form, Thou standest as a Hill on earth. When I came to realise who I am, what else is this identity of mine (but Thee), Thou who standest as the towering Aruna Hill?” In this

verse there is a definite hint as regards his identity. Vedantists say that *Brahman* associated with *upadhi* (adjunct) is *Ishvara* or *Saguna-Brahman* (*Brahman* with attributes), who corresponds to what may be called the personal God of various religions. Dakshinamurti is an aspect of *Ishvara* and therefore He is endowed with the qualities of *Ishvara* such as universal lordship, unlimited powers, etc.

In the fourth verse, Sri Bhagavan says, “To look for God ignoring Thee who art Being and Consciousness, is like going with a lamp to look for darkness. Only to make Thyself known as Being and Consciousness Thou dwellest in different religions under different (names and) forms. If (yet) men do not (come to) know Thee, they are indeed the blind who do not know the sun. O Arunachala the Great, Thou peerless Gem, abide and shine Thou as my Self, One without a second.” This verse is important. Here Sri Bhagavan definitely says that one has to look upon Arunachala as the Self. In the previous verse Sri Bhagavan has identified himself with That – as no other than Dakshinamurti.

Let us now go back to the early life of Sri Bhagavan. In his early boyhood, he often felt a sort of *mayakkam*, a Tamil word which means fainting. His sleep was deep and heavy and it was only with some effort one could wake him up. The so-called *mayakkam*, the deep sleep, etc., seems to show that Sri Bhagavan, Venkataraman as he was then called, was going into *samadhi* without himself knowing about it. It is during one of such *mayakkams* perhaps that he was seized with the idea or fear that he was going to die and the conscious rehearsal of death put him into a conscious *samadhi* in which he realised that he was not the body and that he was only the *Atman* – eternal and deathless. At that time and until his first attendant Palaniswami brought him some books on philosophy, he was not aware of the technical terms like *Brahman*, *koshas* (sheaths) and the like. When he read the books he understood that he had already

experienced all that was named and classified therein. Sri Bhagavan had not read about a *Siddha Purusha* (Realized Being) under a banyan tree on the hill, but he had only the memory of something great and sublime attached to the hill.

One day he saw a very large leaf of a banyan tree at the bottom of a dry waterway running down the hill. He wondered at the large size of the leaf. Some time later when he was going up the hill he saw from a distance a large banyan tree growing on a very big rock. He drew nearer to the tree after a precipitous climb, but his further progress was halted by hornets which stung him and he had to return giving up his quest. He narrated the incident to the devotees who were anxiously awaiting his return. Some days after the event, he happened to read in some books about the existence of a *Siddha Purusha* under a banyan tree on the north east peak of the hill. (In passing it may be said here that some of the devotees wanted to find out the place where the tree stood and told Sri Bhagavan about their intention, but they were not encouraged by him to do so. In spite of it, they climbed the hill and after undergoing very great hardships, returned with cuts and bruises without finding the location of the tree.)

Every great teacher has told us that he who succeeds in getting rid of his ego or individuality immediately experiences *Atman*. A *jiva*, after great effort or *sadhana*, obtains the experience of *Atman*. His individuality then disappears and he merges in *Brahman*. That union is likened to a river flowing into the sea or ocean in which the river loses its identity.

When the ego of the *jiva* is destroyed, the *jiva* becomes Siva. In that condition there is no seer or the seen, enjoyer and the enjoyed, speaker and the hearer – no duality. That condition is also described as ‘One without a second’. If egoless *jiva* is absorbed in *Brahman*, how then can a *Siddha Purusha* be identified and remain as an entity under the banyan tree on the

top of Arunachala Hill? Here is a poser which I could not understand. I had to clear my doubt and only Sri Bhagavan could do so. On the evening of June 6, 1949, I went to Sri Bhagavan as usual after his evening meal and in the course of conversation, said: "I have read Sri Shankaracharya's *Atmabodha*. In the 53rd verse of that book it is stated that the contemplative one, on the destruction of the *upadhis*, is totally absorbed in the all-pervading *Brahman* like water in water, space in space, and light in light. If that were so, how can I believe in the existence of a *Siddha Purusha* under a banyan tree on this hill? I can fully believe in the existence of a banyan tree because such a thing is common on a hill and, further, you saw it and told us." Sri Bhagavan had a hearty laugh in which I also joined. There was silence for a while and then Sri Bhagavan said, "A *Siddha Purusha* does exist. He explained that a *jnani* is like a red-hot ball of iron. That ball has the qualities of fire, but the fire is limited to the size of the ball. Similarly, a *jnani* is Spirit but is limited by his *upadhi*. A *Siddha Purusha* also has an *upadhi*, but it is extremely subtle and pure and does not limit him. His *upadhi* can be likened to a line drawn on water. The *Siddha Purusha* is consciousness itself and whatever he has to do simply happens, not by any desire or will of his own. Even if miracles happen they happen as a matter of course."

These words were followed by silence during which very many thoughts crossed my mind. Two of the important ones are noted here. Some years ago, when Sri Bhagavan was sitting with the devotees in the old hall in the Ashram, he described a vision he once had. He saw that Arunachala hill was hollow and that in it stood a beautiful town with tanks and gardens. In one of the gardens he saw a big gathering of *sadhus* and *sannyasis*. It was a conclave presided over by a *sannyasi*. He recognised in the gathering many familiar faces of the devotees who were then sitting in the hall. When he looked at the person presiding



over the conclave he recognised him as himself. At that stage of the narrative he was interrupted by one of the devotees sitting in front, who said that visions are like dreams hence untrue. This ended the narrative. The information that Sri Bhagavan himself was presiding over the conclave is important. It connotes that Sri Bhagavan is the *Siddha Purusha*.

About the end of May 1949, Sri T. P. Ramachandran and Dr. Padmanabhan went into the temple hall where Sri Bhagavan was sitting. It was fairly late in the evening and the writer also went there for some work he had to do. The two devotees went behind the stone sofa on which Sri Bhagavan was sitting. There they were sobbing as they had come to know that the tumour on Sri Bhagavan's arm was a type of cancer. Sri Bhagavan called them and asked them why they were weeping. When they gave the reason Sri Bhagavan said, "Where can I go? Where is it possible for me to go?" The upsurge of thoughts in my mind brought in their wake the strong conviction that Sri Bhagavan was no other than the *Siddha Purusha* on the hill but limited by his body or *upadhi* which we saw before us. I also felt that most of his words and writings had in them hints about his identity. I broke the silence and addressed Sri Bhagavan thus: "Bhagavan, you had from your childhood the memory of Arunachala which brought you here. Ever since you came here you have not left the precincts of the Hill, nor even gone beyond the shadow of the Hill. You were drawn mysteriously to the vicinity of the banyan tree somewhere on the top of this hill. When you attempted to go near the tree you were attacked by hornets and you had to return giving up the attempt to reach the tree. I strongly feel that if you had gone there you would have left your body there and you would not have returned to us. You are to me no other than the *Siddha Purusha*. Tell me please." Sri Bhagavan was listening with a smile but suddenly he became stiff and silent with an awe-inspiring face. I stood there for

some time and as the minutes passed by, the conviction that I had in my mind, grew stronger. I, therefore, felt that no answer was needed. I then prostrated before Sri Bhagavan and stood up and found Sri Bhagavan looking at me with his usual smile beaming with benevolence!

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna said: “The manifestation of God is through his incarnation. The devotees should worship and serve an incarnation as long as he lives in a human body . . . Not all, by any means, can recognise an incarnation of God. Assuming a human body, the incarnation falls a victim to disease, hunger, thirst and all such things like ordinary mortals . . . However great the infinite God may be, his essence can and does manifest itself through man by his mere will. God’s incarnation as man cannot be explained away by analogy. One must feel it by direct perception. An analogy can give us only a small glimpse. . . We see God Himself when we see His incarnation. Suppose a man goes to the Ganges and touches its water. He will then say: ‘Yes, I have seen and touched the Ganges.’ To say this it is not necessary for him to touch the whole length of the river from Hardwar to Gangasagar.” These words of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa tell us positively the greatness of an incarnation. Sri Swami Vivekananda, Mahendranath Gupta and many other devotees of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa looked upon him as an incarnation and he is worshipped as such. The devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana also do likewise, and it is hoped that the writer of this article has made it clear that Sri Bhagavan is an incarnation of the *Siddha Purusha* presiding over the Arunachala Hill. The writer feels that he is not able to understand the attributeless Absolute, but he can understand and fully believe that Sri Bhagavan came to us as an incarnation of the *Siddha Purusha*.

Sri Bhagavan has shown us the way. Let every one of us who came in contact with him, either in person or through his teachings, walk determinedly on that path and thus obtain his Grace to reach his Lotus Feet. So help us Sri Arunachala Ramana!

# IN TO BHAGAVAN'S FOLD

*K. Padmanabhan*

IT was in the year 1918, when I was thirteen years old, that my uncle who was the Tashildar of Tindivanam celebrated *Upanayanam* (investing a boy with the sacred thread) of his eldest son at Tiruvannamalai. The *Upanayanam* of my elder brother was also celebrated along with his son's *Upanayanam*. The function gave me the first opportunity of going to Tiruvannamalai. I had not till then heard of the place or the temple, much less about the Maharshi who was then living at Skandasramam on the Arunachala Hill. While the ceremony was going on, a few of us boys who were not interested in the rituals began to climb the hill from the side of the temple. There was no regular pathway at that time as it is today and we had to make our way through many shrubs. The climbing was also tiresome, but at last we reached Skandasramam. We were not particularly eager to see the Maharshi, but having gone up to the Ashram we were curious to see him. After seeing him we returned. I was limping with a thorn in my foot and bleeding with several cuts and bruises. I was cross and cursed the day. Little did I know that it was the most auspicious and blessed day in my life!

Years later, in 1929, when I was a graduate-engineer undergoing practical training under the well-known firm of Gannon Dunkerley & Co., building contractors, and supervising the construction of the Turinjalur bridge at Tirukoilur, a small town twenty miles distant from

Tiruvannamalai, I paid my second visit to Tiruvannamalai. I was one of a party of four tennis players who had been invited by the Tiruvannamalai Club to play a few matches there. After the play we had to wait a few minutes to catch our train back to Tirukoilur. So we decided to go to Sri Ramanasramam and have *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan. This time also, I was not particularly anxious to see him. We reached the Ashram at about 8 p.m. and sat in the meditation hall in front of Sri Bhagavan for about half an hour. Although his glance fell on me for a moment I was not impressed at all by him or the complete silence in the hall. However, before leaving the hall I prostrated myself before him although, rather reluctantly. I was too young and immature then to understand his greatness in spite of the pious and religious spirit in which I had grown up.

The train was late and when we alighted at the railway station of Arayaninallur, it was nearly 11 p.m. We had to cross the river Pennar over a narrow causeway of irregular stones, before we could reach Tirukoilur. When we came to the causeway there was only a few inches of water flowing over it. But, as we proceeded, to our great alarm the water began to rise very rapidly. We had covered only 100 feet and had almost the same distance to cover to reach the other bank of the river. We could not go back, nor could we hurry forward on account of the irregular stones and the force of the stream. We became panicky and caught hold of one another to prevent ourselves from being washed away. In complete silence we waded through the water upon which were now floating all sorts of things. My thoughts went back to Sri Bhagavan. I feared that I had offended him and that this was his punishment for my disrespect. I prayed for his forgiveness. At last we reached the other bank half dead with fright. We stood for some time looking at the flood which was now carrying away bullocks, carts, bundles of straw and hay, etc. I was convinced that it was Sri Bhagavan's Grace which

had saved us from a similar fate. But this conviction was short lived. I did not even go to the Ashram to show my gratitude to Sri Bhagavan. However, I did not forget the incident and I went to the Ashram again only in 1962, more than thirty years later!

This time also it was sheer chance which took me there. A friend of mine took me to Chingleput to look at the new hospital that was coming up there. After examining it, suddenly I decided to go to Tiruvannamalai. We spent the night at a hotel and the next day proceeded to the Ashram where the President, Sri T. N. Venkataraman, after making kind enquiries, requested me to assist him in preparing a layout for a few small buildings on a plot of land which had been acquired by the Ashram across the road. This was the turning point in my life. My association with the Ashram has ever since been growing stronger day by day.

Looking back upon the incidents narrated above I feel convinced that Sri Bhagavan's Grace was evident throughout. I have no doubt that it still exists strongly, although he is no longer with us physically. Blessed am I to be in his fold again!

# MORE THAN A DREAM?

J. P. R

“IS there any significance in a dream or is it a mere phenomenon?” was the question I addressed to Sri Bhagavan in writing, in my earlier days. In those times, the subjects of ‘Guru and *sishya*,’ of ‘initiation and *diksha*’ were the foremost topics of general discussion. Does Sri Bhagavan give *diksha* to us and if not, why not? In earlier days, the presence of Sri Bhagavan was sought above all by people who desired liberation. Our ambitious aspirations saw no bounds in the grace of his presence. My intense feeling was, that whether there was significance or not in all these *dikshas* and initiations, if Sri Bhagavan was to do it, it would be a blessing for me in any case. His pithy utterances then were very cryptic and yet have ever been pregnant with meaning, and power. “Who is the Guru? Who is the *sishya*? Who is to give and to whom? What is there to give? You think the ‘Self’ to be the body and take yet another body for the ‘Guru’ and demand of the one to bless the other. Is the ‘Guru’ regarding the body as the ‘Self’? There is neither Guru nor disciple other than the ‘Self’. Guru is Self.”

Though convinced by his presence and utterances, there yet remained a lurking sense of something missing and unfulfilled. It was at that time that I had an extraordinary experience which left a deep impression on my whole being. It was neither in dream, nor in waking state, when this happened. I was perfectly alive to it, and aware of the permeation which was consuming and overpowering me. I described the following

immediately in my notebook and later went to the Ashram. Reaching Sri Bhagavan's presence before dusk I left my notebook with him for his perusal. This was the record:

“18th November 1936, 3:00 a.m.”

It was an apparent dream. I was in a huge quadrangle of some college buildings. I was studying and suddenly I saw Sri Bhagavan had come down, youthful and vigorous in appearance, and had the impression that he was going to manifest himself and speak. Oh, it was a wonderful sight. Thousands of people gathered round at a distance, encircling Bhagavan and perched on all walls, upper floors and any available space around. I saw Dandapani sitting at a distance, echoing Sri Bhagavan's speech which was in turn echoed by another. It had never occurred to me that this would happen or that Sri Bhagavan would ever come here and I who was at a distance could not stand the separation. I darted forward to Sri Bhagavan and embraced him with so firm a grip, the like of which I have not the strength to do or achieve in physical consciousness. And Sri Bhagavan embraced me. In each others' embrace, we left the place. At once I found him in my house. I first saw my mother, more robust than she ever was in life, welcoming Sri Bhagavan; my father calm and unperturbed as he always was in physical life, and my sister the same. Sri Bhagavan had a cold bath, myself pouring pots and pots of water over him. Then in a few moments he went up and down our house, throwing us all in confusion, but I alone followed him without a second thought. My mother would by this time appear to be losing her confidence and faith. In the midst of this embarrassment, and in her presence, Sri Bhagavan appeared to put me to the test as it were, and asked me, pointing to my sacred thread and other things: 'What is all this! Now I say, throw, throw them away and I shall give you this?' He was holding in his hands a bunch of *darba* (kusa grass) and I did not perceive how it came into his hands. At first I

hesitated for a moment to discard my sacred thread for 'kusa grass' but a moment's reflection made me surrender to his will and with all vehemence I tore off the sacred thread and flung it on the ground, to the dismay of my mother and perplexity of my father. Immediately Sri Bhagavan gave me two handfuls of kusa grass in horseshoe shape, and the moment I touched and received them a great serenity pervaded my entire *being*.<sup>1</sup>

With courage and determination I looked up at Sri Bhagavan to ask him what all this was about? There was no answer, but I saw Sri Bhagavan's form change into the shape of Sri Rama or Hanuman and tell me something that I could not catch. So I asked, 'Who are you?' and the reply was 'I am Sri Rama, Sri Rama', whereupon this vision disappeared and I saw Sri Bhagavan in its place. My mother began to cry aloud having lost her balance of mind by this time, and said: 'I will die, I will die, thinking I fell a prey to Sri Bhagavan's lures.' The mention of death caused irrepressible laughter in me and Sri Bhagavan said at once: 'Yes, die; you should die.' When Sri Bhagavan said so, I turned round to my mother and with ferocity cried out, 'Yes, die, die.' She was rolling on the ground when Sri Bhagavan asked me, 'What is the earliest train to Bombay and the cheapest route?' He said he had to go there, and to one or two more places, and then go on a tour to the north. I was thinking how best to take Sri Bhagavan and go with him, when I felt completely awake and began to reflect on the event. Is there any significance or is it merely a phenomenon of dream?"

The following morning, as usual, I entered the Hall. Sri Bhagavan's welcome nod and penetrating look overwhelmed

---

<sup>1</sup> I experienced the descent of a dynamic force into my being, flowing as it were from and through the *sahasrara*, permeating downwards and downwards slowly to the heart-centre, and upon reaching the same, I felt apprehensive that my physical frame could not stand this permeation and impact any more, without jeopardy.



me, and even as I was half doing my obeisance he turned to the shelf beside him, took out the notebook and handed it to me. Immediately he began, “Don’t you know what Madhavan did? One day he was massaging my limbs. Leaving him to his job I reclined, closing my eyes. After some time I felt some variation in the friction, so I opened my eyes and saw him with head bent down clutching my feet in his hands. I asked, ‘What are you doing?’ ‘Nothing, nothing’, he replied, resuming his task. He took it as *diksha* by the feet.” Immediately I said that I had had an unusual experience by Sri Bhagavan’s touch, which stirred my being, though in a dreamy condition, and asked if initiation or *diksha* could be had this way, and whether these experiences were real and effective, regardless of the *swapna* state? Sri Bhagavan slowly spoke with short intervals of silent gaze: “*Jagrat* and *swapna* are states that come and go. If these states are real, they must be unchanging, permanent.

“Our real nature is constant being. It never changes. Be it *upadesa* or *diksha* the efficacy of the guru’s influence or God’s grace is not conditioned by the different states. The influence is an experience being itself. Guru, God and Self are one and the same. So long as the Guru, God or the Self are deemed external, all *upadesa*, initiation and several *dikshas* mentioned have a relative meaning and significance. But ‘Guru’ is external and internal, and is the very ‘Self’. Such influence is efficacious whether the experience is in the *jagrat*, or *swapna* state.”

# RAMANA AS I KNOW HIM

## I

*C. Rajagopalachari*

I VISITED the ashram in January 1936. Besides the Indian devotees of Sri Bhagavan, I found some foreign devotees also seated in the Hall.

I was struck with the high spiritual atmosphere of the place surcharged with deep silence, Bhagavan radiating love and simplicity.

I am a man belonging to the *Visishtadvaita* school of thought and a reader of that literature. Being impressed with Bhagavan, I asked him how to reconcile it with the *Advaita* School.

After a pause Bhagavan said, 'You have to work out your *karma* anyhow and you are saved'. Ever since I have been pondering over that *upadesa* and felt benefited.

The *mulasthanams* of temples are places where saints lived and had visions of him. The ashram is such a place and I feel convinced that the aura that was there continues today.

## II

*P. S. Jivanna Rao*

I FIRST KNEW about Sri Ramana Maharshi about seventeen years ago (December 1937) in my fifty-first year. I soon read

about his life and teachings from that excellent book *Self-realisation*, by Sri B. V. Narasimhaswami and at once made up my mind to see him. The opportunity came almost immediately and I saw Maharshi for the first time on 31-12-1937. The desire to know everything about him and his teachings having increased, I secured all the books I could get at the ashram book depot, by and about Maharshi and read them all closely, also at the same time reading and taking cuttings of the articles by devotees that appeared from time to time in the dailies and weeklies especially the *Sunday Times* of Madras. From 1938 onwards I was a frequent visitor at the ashram for a number of years. I have even talked to him which event I consider as the rarest privilege of my life. I will always remember the beautiful smile of blessing which shone on his divine face whenever I took leave of him after doing my *sashtanga namaskar*. Below I give reminiscences of what took place in three of my visits at the ashram though they may seem to be of a trivial nature to many.

In one of my visits, I took a bunch of grapes as my offering, placed it on the stool in front of the Maharshi and took my seat along with other visitors in the hall. In a few minutes a monkey came and took away the whole bunch. In that holy and still presence of the sage, none would dare drive away the monkey which would disturb the tranquillity and peace of the atmosphere. Maharshi remarked, "How is it you are all looking at this? [the monkey, etc.]" And after a pause said, "Let it go."

In another visit, about which I had not intimated to the ashram in advance, and Maharshi would not have known about my coming, he remembered me so well as to call me by name which was a surprise to me, and asked if I knew Mahrathi language, to which I replied that Mahrathi was my mother tongue. He then informed me that a book in Mahrathi was being published by Gunaji which may perhaps interest me.

On a later visit, which was more important for me, when visitors had just left the hall for the morning meal at 10-30 or 11 a.m., and before Maharshi started to go, I went near his couch and explained my particular difficulty, which occurred at certain times, the same as St. Paul gave expression to before Christ, viz., "The good that I would, I do not; the evil that I would not, that I do," which I quoted from memory and asked how to act in such situations. Maharshi listened closely to this and said, "Do it all in a spirit of surrender." Later studies of Maharshi's teachings as recorded by devotees, e. g., in *Maharshi's Gospel* and other books have taught me the importance of surrender. I only pray for his grace to live more and more the life of the spirit which he has taught us so admirably and in a unique manner for nearly fifty years.

### III

#### *N. Ponniah*

AFTER PLEASANT EXPERIENCES it is a great joy to look back and relive those most enjoyable moments by refreshing one's memory.

The first time I came to hear of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was in 1938 when one of his devoted disciples, Sri Ramana Padananda, visited Malaya to disseminate his Gospel. Years passed on; and it was only in 1948, that through Divine Grace the opportunity offered itself. I reached Tiruvannamalai by train at dawn on 11th August and proceeded straight to the Ashram. When I alighted at the gate I was received most cordially by a cheerful young man, Sri Venkataraman (later he became

the President of the Ashram), and was accommodated in the guest house. Devoid of all signs of so called civilized standards, this thatched cottage entertained me with inexpressible homeliness in the company of resident *sadhus* and devoted visitors. Away from the din and bustle of city life, the Ashram is ideally situated in the midst of natural surroundings. There was utter absence of caste, creed or colour or regimentation of any kind. Prince or peasant, ascetic or householder all moved with mutual respect and reverence. As background to this model of ancient hermitages, stands in all its grandeur the Holy Hill of Arunachala which has the age-old tradition of drawing into its fold great seers and sages.

With all heightened reverential emotions I entered the hall. Bhagavan was reclining on the sofa, absorbed in the Self, silent and serene, casting his radiant unconcerned look hither and thither. He wore only a *koupina*. The hundreds of disciples and devotees, including some Westerners, sat on the floor; ladies on one side and men on the other, all receiving *darshan*. I placed on a stool the fruits I carried with me and did my prostration. One of the personal attendants of Bhagavan then returned to me one fruit as *prasad* and I took my place amongst the gathering. The sweet smell of incense and the gentle fragrant breeze from the hillside sanctified the serene atmosphere. My nerves got soothened and emotions calmed down. Pin-drop silence prevailed. Nothing seemed more enjoyable in this blessed world than to sit in silence in that hut in the holy presence of Maharshi. All terrestrial fetters passed into oblivion. *Darshan* was not the monopoly of human beings alone. At certain hours the squirrels from a large tree by the side came down to claim their fair share. The beautiful peacocks followed. They found peaceful penetration into the Hall. Bhagavan glanced at them most graciously. "Oh ! you are hungry!" he said. Some grains and water were given. Each of them did full justice and went away happily like a child after a mother's feeding!

Nights here were extremely calm and peaceful. Next day a Barrister from Bombay broke the silence by raising some conundrum, and a discussion followed at high intellectual level. When an impasse was reached, Maharshi told the Barrister of what avail is this theoretical disquisition. "Sit in silence and introspect. Enquire 'Who am I' and you will find the answer." In the afternoon, the visitor said he was clear on one point, but cannot reconcile with the others. Bhagavan replied, "That is good; continue the analysis; answers to all questions will be found." Half an hour after the Barrister had left, Bhagavan smiled and said, "He thought this is the Bombay Court." Everybody enjoyed the joke.

Vedic chantings concluded the day's programme. The assembly broke off. Only Bhagavan and the two attendants remained in the hall. *Darshan* of a Sage is a singular experience by itself, which words can hardly describe. I can only say that I felt an unusual vibrating sensation, a sort of electric charge, which had transported me for a moment. Surely, his magnetic influence had dispensed with much of my 'heaviness'. Needless to say, Maharshi bestowed on me his gracious blessings. What is even more unforgettable are his melodious and inspiring expressions in Tamil, which often, attuned to this Holy Hermitage, reverberate in my ears.

With Maharshi's attainment of *Mahasamadhi* on 14th April, 1950, the star that had shone like a Beacon Light in the spiritual firmament for two score and ten years had disappeared. Bhagavan Ramana is acclaimed to be the outstanding luminary of our times, nay an embodiment of Lord Arunachala. And if evidence is wanting, this strange phenomenon, witnessed by thousands, of a brilliant star appearing in the sky, coinciding with his passing away, speaks for itself.

In October, 1953 whilst on a pilgrimage in the Mother Land, I had the good fortune of paying my humble homage

again to this sanctuary, Tiruvannamalai. In the Ashram the sofa, *kamandalu*, walking stick and other things that were privileged to serve Maharshi together with a statue of his were kept in view at the Hall of Mathrubhutheswar Temple. When I entered the Old Darshan Hall the absence of our incomparable Bhagavan and remembrances of the rich experiences in his Gracious Presence caused a sense of frustration. I was, however, lucky to be in time for an *Abhisheka* and *arati* at the *Mahasamadhi*, which lasted for two hours, attended by some 200 devotees, including a few Europeans. The large photograph of Bhagavan in his most natural posture, facing the audience, the inspirational chantings and the peace and tranquillity that prevailed, brought back to many of us the memory of the Divine Incarnate.

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi is no more in his physical garb. But undoubtedly his Holy Spirit is in the universe manifesting unseen. We need only to tune up our hearts to him to receive his inspiration and spiritual guidance! Let us study his unique and perennial philosophy and practise as much as we can under our circumstances so that we may leave this world better than we found it.

Humble Prostrations at Maharshi's Lotus Feet. Om Ramanaya Namah!

## IV

### *Swami Sivananda, Rishikesh*

AS A MATTER of my immediate spiritual experience, Sri Ramana is the living, talking, seeing, guiding transcendental

Reality, bent on transfiguring with its Light the higher levels of our purified consciousness. Sri Ramana is here and now with us; he is more easily accessible to us now than he was when environed in the limitations of a bodily mansion; he is more palpable to our inner faith and thought and spirit now than when the glimpses of his Godhead were given us through the half-closed eyes of the clay-tenement he indwelt at Arunachala. Offer Sri Ramana the conditions of the devotion of your heart, the earnest longing of your soul, the mountain-moving faith in him, a certain receptivity of the Light and Grace of his all-pervading Presence. He is standing as a Reality, more real than your physical experiences, than your mental preoccupations, awaiting to be touched, felt and known by you. The Powers and the Presence of the liberated Consciousness of Sri Ramana are here with us, to be sensed and experienced and utilised by our aspiring natures, by our purified hearts and minds. I know of a few *sadhakas* who have been directly contacting Sri Ramana not only in the hours of intense meditation, but in their normal life whenever they direct a single thought towards him. We would be in perpetual attunement with Sri Ramana if only we can transcend the heavy limitations of an egoistic mode of consciousness.

The central message of Sri Ramana was that we should subject ourselves to psychological self-observation, liberate ourselves from the ego-idea; grow conscious of the pure spiritual 'I-awareness' and live in it as he lived in it all through the life of his physical embodiment and is living in it now. By the magic-working offices of prayer, by the power of the sincerity of our longing for his Experience, let us elevate our consciousness from the brilliant impurities of the mind, from the insistent vehemence of the vital nature, from every form of egoistic existence; this done, I assure you, we would experience Sri Ramana's living Presence here and now. It is the imperfection



of our surrender unto the Maharshi, of our faith in him, of our effort to realise him here and now, that is obscuring our vision, the perception, and experience of his Divine Grace, Presence and Light. Therefore we need to take to a little more of intense inner spiritual *sadhana* in order that Sri Ramana may be a matter of our immediate experience: it is then that the Light and Love of all-pervading Ramana possess our entire being and gives us a knowledge as to how dynamically active he is in the higher consciousness of spiritual humanity. I offer my heartfelt prayers to Sri Ramana.

## V

### *Dr. M. Anantanarayana Rao*

EVERYTHING COMES IN its fullness of time. When an individual is ready for a spiritual uplift, the Guru, under whose care he is destined to be, draws him, as his devotee, to his lotus feet. The individual is often 'tested' by the Guru, or the Guru behaves with the devotee in such a way as to train him to stultify his ego or to efface it completely. It is a gradual development of or the drawing out the innate tendencies in the devotee towards perfection. The significance of Guru's words or actions may not be understood by the devotee during the training, but a little thought or contemplation reveals the meaning to him. The words of the Guru may be soft or harsh, but they are for one's good.

I write to say briefly how Bhagavan Sri Ramana drew me to him and helped me to be what I am today. It was in July 1929, while I was travelling in a train, a fellow traveller gave

me a small copy of Sri Bhagavan's photograph and told me where he resides. The photograph was given to me just as I was detraining at my destination and I failed to ask him who he was, and I have not met him since. Soon after that incident I had to go to England on study leave, and after my return I was busy with my official duties. Under the circumstances I clean forgot about the incident of the photograph. In May 1932, I had to go to Tiruvannamalai on official duty and suddenly the incident of the photograph of Sri Bhagavan came to my mind. My wife, Dr. and Mrs. K. Shiva Rao accompanied me to pay homage to Sri Bhagavan. We met Sri Bhagavan in the hall at about noon, and his smile and his sparkling eyes had an irresistible influence on me. It was then the idea of settling down near the Ashram came to my mind. I could do so only after my retirement or by taking long leave preparatory to retirement. The latter course came to be chosen. It happened that a plot of ground near the Ashram was found for me in 1939 by a friend. Early in June 1941, I met Sri Bhagavan and told him my intention of building a house. He looked, or rather 'stared' at me, for some minutes and then said that I can have a house there for me to stay. Did Sri Bhagavan see the future by looking at me so? Its significance was known some years later as shown below. The very day Sri Bhagavan gave his consent, the preliminaries for the construction began. A devotee of Sri Bhagavan who was a building contractor came forward to build the house and completed it in February 1942.

Along with it I grew a garden of fruit trees. In April 1942, the house was occupied and I obtained a long leave preparatory to retirement. All that happened without any trouble. In May 1943, the yield of the garden started with Singapore cherry. Some of these cherries were taken to Sri Bhagavan and given to him. He looked at them, ate them, and said they were sweet and delicious. Those words emboldened me to take more fruits

the next morning. And as soon as I approached Sri Bhagavan, he said, "Why bring them here (meaning to him), distribute them to all present." The hall was full of devotees and his words sounded rather harsh and I felt hurt. The fruits were distributed and a few that remained were given to Sri Bhagavan. I then sat in the hall as the words of Sri Bhagavan began to resound in my mind. Suddenly it dawned on me that giving fruits straight to Sri Bhagavan was due to the action of the subtle ego, prompting me to appear important. The more I cogitated the more I felt that I should be humble. So, the next day onwards any offering of fruits from the garden was kept on the footstool in front of the couch, though I knew that Sri Bhagavan would not take any from that. Later I was given to understand that the fruits were distributed at lunch. After about a year I felt an urge to take fruits to Sri Bhagavan at 2-30 p. m., it being tea time. Sri Bhagavan accepted some portion of every kind of fruit from the garden and the rest was distributed. Sri Bhagavan did not object this time. This went on for another year. Every time I distributed the fruits, nothing remained for me as *prasad*. During the mango season in 1945, I felt an urge to take a Banganapalli mango that had ripened on the tree and it was taken to the hall. A piece was cut and given to Sri Bhagavan and the rest was distributed to all. As usual nothing remained for me as *prasad*.

When I came back to the hall, Sri Bhagavan called and asked me, "Did you get a piece for yourself?" In reply I smiled and sat on the floor some distance away. He then said, "I know that you do not keep anything for yourself. So, I have kept a piece for you from my share. Come here and take it." I went up to him, took the piece of fruit and ate it. That *prasad* was really sweet and valuable. To get this concession it took nearly three years! I often asked myself if that was one of the methods to round off our angularities. It was a test perhaps from his

point of view, and a real schooling from my point of view. Later my earnest desire to do personal service to him was also granted. To make the narrative short, I was allowed to do service by removing a thorn from his foot, dressing a small cut or a patch of eczema, etc. It was in 1948 that I could do the same duties as the other attendants did. Owing to chronic rheumatism, Sri Bhagavan's limbs were massaged, and strange to say he distributed his limbs, as if they were not his, to each one of his attendants and the left hand of his came to my care. I did not understand the significance of it till a year later. None of us then suspected that the left arm would be the cause of trouble. It was during the time of massage that he graciously spoke to us freely, sometime cracking jokes. These jokes too had deep meaning. Often, in simple language, he answered our questions. That was real schooling indeed and we still cherish those words in our hearts.

In December 1948 while I was massaging I felt a small nodule, which was painful when pressed, above the point of the elbow. Sri Bhagavan told me that he had a fall in the lavatory and that part was hurt badly a month or so earlier. This nodule was the beginning of the end, as you all know. From May 1949 to the 14th April 1950, the privilege of making dressings, sterilizing them and helping the doctor while dressing fell to my lot. It was during this period it became clear to me why he drew me to him. Similarly, he drew many other devotees and kept them in the sunshine of his grace. There was a purpose in whatever he said or did, and that purpose is to put us on the path to perfection.

About July 1949, the lesion on the arm, which looked to be healing nicely flared up; it was then that I begged him to make a resolve to heal himself. He smiled and sat silent till I repeated my request. He then answered: "There is no mind here (meaning himself), so question of a resolve does not arise."

He further said that the body itself is a disease. His answer made all of us present feel very sad. His answer made me understand that his was a mindless or egoless state. To him the body with its ills did not exist, and we who have 'The-body-am-I' idea feel so much when it suffers. Giving some pain while dressing a large wound is inevitable, but Sri Bhagavan did not show any pain and even assisted with his right hand in adjusting the dressing or the bandage, as if it were an arm belonging to another. This he did even on the morning of the 14th April!

In the course of conversation, about June 1949, he had described to us that tears flow from the outer canthus of the eyes of a man when he is very happy and from the inner canthus when he is sad. It is a correct observation. On the evening of the 14th April (the Nirvana Day), I was in that room among others, fanning Sri Bhagavan from the head end of the cot. At his request he was assisted to sit up with his legs stretched in front. He had kept his eyes closed, and his breathing was gradually becoming shallow. At 8:20 p.m. the devotees outside began singing the 'Arunachala Shiva' hymn. He immediately opened his eyes, looked at the direction from where the voices came and then closed the eyes. Tears came gushing from the outer canthus of the eyes. I then remembered what Sri Bhagavan had said about tears, and felt that it was the visible sign of the Supreme Bliss of rejoining the ONE without a second, by discarding the body which had done its duty of leading or directing mankind towards the all pervading Self. The body was discarded very peacefully, and in so doing he left his imprint so indelibly in the hearts of his devotees.

Glory to Guru Bhagavan Sri Ramana who paid individual attention to every devotee in moulding him and making him what he is today.

## VI

*Swami Iswarananda*

IT WAS IN 1934 that I had the privilege of meeting the great sage of Tiruvannamalai. It was a long cherished desire of mine to have a look at Sri Ramana Maharshi and study a *jivanmukta* – for such was the descriptive term with which he was referred to by the general public.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when I entered the large hall in which the Maharshi was. The hall was full of devotees. I made my prostrations and stood up and found the Maharshi completely unconcerned. I was even afraid whether I had disturbed the intense silence that filled the whole atmosphere along with the aroma of burning incense. I silently moved away to one side of the hall and sat quiet, watching the Maharshi. Now and then visitors entered the hall, some with fruits, etc., made their prostrations, and silently went out or sat with others. The attendants took away the offerings. The Maharshi did not ask the devotees any questions as to who they were, what they were or about their welfare. Nor did the attendants introduce them to him. The devotees too silently found for themselves a place in the hall where they would sit and quietly watch the Maharshi or be meditating with closed eyes. An attendant once brought to him some newspapers which he went on reading. Another brought some proofs for correction and he sat up and returned them corrected. He again relapsed into a state of all-significant look, in a reclining posture. All these went on silently till about 12 o'clock when the bell rang for lunch.

After we had all returned to the hall and the Maharshi got seated on his cot, some attendant introduced me to him as

coming from the Ramakrishna Ashram, Mysore. The Maharshi asked me if I had any news of Swami Siddheswarananda who had gone to Paris to start a centre of the Ramakrishna Mission there. It so happened that I had a letter of his in my pocket which I handed over to him.

The Maharshi went through the letter and expressed his surprise at the fact that few Frenchmen living so near England knew English.

The Maharshi enjoyed the humorous episode mentioned in the letter which arose on account of this language difficulty. Swami Siddheswaranandaji's hosts did not know English. At meals when his hosts brought him wine, he said no. They asked him what he would take. He said milk. They brought him water and then soda. He again said that it was not what he wanted. They were puzzled. Then the Swami resorted to a gesture of imitation of milking the cow. The hosts immediately understood and the difficulty was got over. The Maharshi enjoyed this immensely and recited the incident in Tamil and Telugu to the audience in the hall with great glee.

After some time I asked permission to put a few questions about *samadhi*, God realization, etc. In those days, the Maharshi used to give only short replies and that too, long after the question was put to him, so I was told. But in my case he appeared to have made an exception and explained at length. The Maharshi repeated his replies in Tamil and Telugu and sometimes in Malayalam for the benefit of the others in the hall. The hall was, again as usual, filled with silence. The Maharshi again relapsed into his wonted silence and sublime look.

It was time for me to depart. I got up and prostrated and told the Maharshi that I would now take leave. He seemed to say 'yes' by his look and I came away with the satisfaction of having had the privilege of contacting one who was reputed to be a perfected Soul.

The silence which the Maharshi was steeped in pervaded me and still haunts my soul even after twenty years.

## VII

*Dr. J. M. P. Mahadevan*

HE ALONE CAN be said to have known Sri Ramana, that has had the Ramana experience. And, he that has had that experience will not know him, remaining outside of him. To know Ramana is to be Ramana. To be Ramana is to have plenary experience of non-duality. In the absence of that experience, we can only seek to know him by 'description'. This itself is not without its value. Through knowledge by description we may succeed in gaining knowledge by identity. It is a *sadhana* of supreme potency, therefore, to be constantly aware of one's acquaintance with Sri Ramana.

To meet a sage and be acquainted with him is not an ordinary occurrence. It must be the result of a good stock of merit. I consider myself extremely fortunate, therefore to have had the privilege of meeting the Master, when I was barely eighteen — a privilege which I owe entirely to Sri Swami Rajeswaranandaji Maharaj. As I recall those three days I spent basking in the sunshine of Sri Ramana's Glorious Presence, I have no word to express the benefit I derived from that experience. To sit before him was itself a deep spiritual education. To look at him was to have one's mind stilled. To fall within the sphere of his beatific vision was to be inwardly elevated.

The most remarkable feature of the Master that struck even a casual visitor was his beaming face. There was no need,



in his case, to frame the head in a halo. Such an enchantingly bright face with a soothing look and never-failing smile, one can never forget having seen it even once. The brightness remained undiminished till the very last day, even when the Master's body bore the cross of the last illness. A few days before the *Mahasamadhi* when I went into the room where he lay and touched his feet with my head and quickly saw the condition in which his body was, I was on the point of shedding tears. But immediately I saw his face and he made kind enquiries in his usual inimitable way, all sorrow left without a trace, and there was Eternity looking on and speaking.

Even when I first saw the Master, his head had begun to nod. The shaking head seemed to me to be saying '*neti, neti*' (not this, not this). And, all on a sudden the nodding would stop, the vision of the Master would become fixed, and the spirit of silence would envelop everyone present. In the stillness of the Heart, one would realize that the 'Self is peaceful quiet' (*santo yam atma*). Many of those who came with long lists of questions used to depart in silence after sitting for a while in the Master's presence. When some did put questions to him, they received the replies they deserved. It was evident that many could not even frame their questions properly. In such cases, Sri Ramana himself would help in the framing of questions. When he chose to answer questions or instruct through words, it was a sight for the gods to see. Each sentence was like a text from the *Upanishad*, so full of meaning that it required calm silent pondering over in order to be understood. Sri Ramana's answers never remained on the surface. He would straight go to the root of a question and exhibit to the wondering questioner the implications of his own question which he could not even have dreamt of. Not unoften would the Master make a questioner resolve his own doubts. But each time, the supreme Lord would gently guide the seeker to the stage of inner silence where all doubts get dissolved and all questions ceased.

There was no occasion when I experienced the manifestation of supernormal powers sometimes attributed to the Master. He seemed to me to be perfectly *normal*. It is we that were *abnormal* by contrast. We have our tensions and mental tangles. As for the Master there was no ruffle — not even the least agitation. The storms of the world never reached him. Sitting or reclining on the coach in the Ashram hall, he appeared to be the still point of a turning world. There was not the least suggestion of his appearing to be other than normal. His mode of referring to his person as ‘I’ and not as ‘this’ was itself significant. He did not want to appear distinct from the rest of us with regard to empirical usage. Yet, there was no doubt about the fact that there was not the least *adhyasa* present in him. His last illness quite clearly demonstrated this. What complete and utter detachment from the body he manifested in order to teach the world that the body is not the Self!

Having been a student of the *Gita* from childhood I saw in the Bhagavan a vivid and living commentary on that great scripture. When I was asked to address a meeting held in the local high School during one of my early visits to Tiruvannamalai, this is what I said: “If anyone wants to understand the inner meaning of the *Gita*, he must come to your town and meet the Maharshi”. In 1948-49, when I was in the United States lecturing on Vedanta, many friends asked me if there was anyone living in India answering to the truth of the Vedanta. My reply invariably used to be ‘Ramana’. On my return to India when I went to the Ashram, the Master expressed a wish that I should give an account of my American visit to the devotees gathered at the evening worship. I repeated to the gathering what exactly I had told American friends; and it was a pleasant experience to find a few Americans there.

The critics of *Advaita* usually say that the Advaitin is an austere intellectual in whom the wells of feeling have all dried

up. Those who have seen the Master will know how unfounded such a criticism is. Sri Ramana was ever brimming with the milk of divine kindness. Even members of the subhuman species had their share of the unbounded love of the Master. He was a consummate artist in life. Anything that he touched became orderly and pleasant. Sweet and firm was his person even as, the sacred Arunachala is. Why should I say 'was'? Even now he is and ever *will be* the light that never fades, the sweetness that never surfeits, to those who desire wisdom and eternity.

## VIII

### *M. S. Madhava Rao*

MY CLAIM TO writing about the Maharshi is that of one who saw him, not daring to say 'I know him'. Twice had I and my wife the beatific privilege of the Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's *darshan* at an interval of a decade between each. Of the deep and abiding impressions made upon me then, I am writing now again a decade after the last one.

The first occasion was in company with Maurice Frydman from Bangalore. Suddenly one morning early in 1934, he said that he was going to Tiruvannamalai that night and would we go with him? Many a time before he had gone there, but then he did not ask nor did it strike us, to go with him. This time this question and our wish beat in unison. However, too late for us to do anything about it, we discovered that we had not the money for travelling expenses. Just then the post brought a letter from relations in Mangalore asking us to meet that day a

person with whom some of our articles had been sent. We called on her, received the parcel and on opening it found among other things a cover with a letter and some currency notes in it. The letter stated that while clearing the cupboard, that had been left in confusion in our hurry a few months before the notes were found. Counting them, the sum was found just sufficient for our journey to Tiruvannamalai and back.

So we went there. At the Ashram we were introduced to the Maharshi by Maurice. He welcomed us with a gracious smile and enquired about our place. When we answered Mangalore, the Maharshi said that M. S. Kamath (of the *Sunday Times*) was a frequent visitor to the Ashram and he then told the other people in the Hall a few interesting tidbits about the languages, customs and so on of that part of the country. When he learnt that for some years we had lived and worked in the Theosophical Society, Adyar, He smiled again and said that we would then easily make ourselves at home in the Ashram when we came. And we did, very happily too. The Maharshi's serene and busy life greatly impressed us. In the evening came a visitor, a big and prosperous looking Punjabi Sikh gentleman dressed completely in European clothes. Noting his discomfort to do the full *pranam* of Indian etiquette, the Maharshi immediately set him at rest saying it was unnecessary and got him a chair to sit. The gentleman said plaintively that he was pining for peace of mind. The Maharshi asked who it was that was pining. The visitor was puzzled; in humble and anxious tones he pleaded that he was too ignorant and busy for such deep introspection, but would be grateful for some *japam* or *puja* prescribed in the Maharshi's own words and blessings, which he could manage to perform within the short time he could spare. He was told that devoting the same time for the enquiry as he could spare for the *japam* or *puja* would amply repay, and with practice it would operate during his usual busiest work. Failing in his repeated

and varied entreaties, the visitor sadly asked whether, after having come all the way with high hopes, the Maharshi was sending him away empty handed. He was assured with compassion that he should not think so. The next morning the Maharshi cited verses from *Yoga Vasishtha* got printed by Frydman for the benefit of the visitor. The visitor, then revived in spirits, rushed back to catch the train. That evening Frydman and we took permission of Bhagavan to return to Bangalore.

## IX

### *Dr. S. S. Sastry*

I HAVE HEARD about Bhagavan Sri Ramana in 1922 as one of those Upanishadic *rishis* now living in our midst. From that time I had a great desire to see him. My brother passed away. And a thought struck me that I might go to Tiruvannamalai to see the sage and gain peace of mind. Accordingly I reached Tiruvannamalai on a hot summer day in the month of May, 1927, and after a bath and meals repaired to the Ashram. Sri Ramana was seated on a cot in a thatched shed and in front of him some devotees were seated. I prostrated before the sage and handed over a packet of sweets. He distributed it to every one present including a dog.

From 1927 onwards, I visited Sri Ramana Ashram now and then to have Bhagavan's *darshan*. I had nothing to ask being an ignorant person. I was content to have his *darshan* for hours together and that used to give me indescribable joy and peace. I could also listen to his replies to the questions put by earnest devotees.

My last visit was in January 1950, i.e., a few months before *Mahanirvana*. This time I wanted to take personal leave of him, and having prostrated before him, I said in Telugu, “I am getting back to my place after a stay of five days in the Ashram, as I have no more leave.” Sri Ramana graciously smiled and replied in Telugu, “*sari, manchidi.*” (Well, well, it is alright.) Just as I got out of his presence and was getting down the steps of Sri Matrubhuteswara Temple, I began to sob, uncontrollably, feeling that I was leaving a Divine Personage and I was feeling sorry as to when, or if, I would be able to see him again.

It is my firm belief that Sri Ramanā's Grace is always there in abundance for his devotees, nay for all. My hope is that I should deserve and become a full recipient of the same. *Sanatana Dharma* holds out the hope that one can obtain the full grace by working out one's way through many more births, if not in this birth.

A thousand *pranams* to the sacred feet of Sri Ramana who was none other than God in flesh and blood when He appeared before us in human form.

# SILENT AND SOLID GRACE

*K. R. K. Murthy*

ONE superficial observer of Sri Bhagavan once told me that Sri Bhagavan simply sits quiet without doing anything useful to anybody and even without talking or explaining. My personal experiences, which are very real to me and some of which are narrated below convinced me that Sri Bhagavan was always lending his helping hand actively and silently in his own characteristic way whether people understood him aright or not. Sri Bhagavan used to help the devotees so secretly that no one knew anything about it except the recipient. Sometimes even the recipient of help is kept in the dark. How can others be aware of this?

On one occasion I saw the handwriting of Sri Bhagavan in Telugu. It was just like print, if not better. I had a keen desire to preserve as a memento some letters written by Sri Bhagavan. I was feeling it very delicate to ask Bhagavan, especially when there were so many in the hall. Just then someone in the hall remarked loudly that I wrote in Telugu script that morning the songs selected by Sri Bhagavan from the writings of the saint Thayumanavar. Sri Bhagavan wanted to see the same. I was somewhat taken a back and also was ashamed to put before Bhagavan what I wrote in a hurry. Further, I was sure that there would be some mistakes which should be corrected at leisure,

Bhagavan took the book and patiently corrected the first stanza. I was overjoyed when Sri Bhagavan wrote so many letters in my book. Sri Bhagavan satisfied my burning desire, even

before it was expressed by me and that too before everybody, without appearing as though he was showing a special favour to me or without wounding the feelings of others in the least.

In the Holy presence of and due to the Grace of Sri Bhagavan every devotee including myself used to get many wonderful, inexplicable and elevating spiritual experiences.

If we compare the devotees to students, we can say that Sri Bhagavan was handling several classes, from the infant to the highest, simultaneously and silently without causing disturbance to any one, and every student was kept ever busy. Can this feat be done by anyone? People can memorise some texts and quote them freely and exhibit their learning. But can they attend to the needs of the individual members in the audience and do what is necessary according to their spiritual growth? Can they revolutionize the devotees by making their inner power to flow through the devotees and produce changes undreamt of? Sri Bhagavan's activity and help was mostly in the spiritual plane and in the most effective internal way. Such were the ways of Sri Bhagavan. He knew what was happening everywhere, without anybody telling him, and he is incessantly helping all the beings. But who can gauge what all he is doing?

Sri Bhagavan never used to lecture to any audience voluntarily. When questions were asked, Sri Bhagavan used to reply in his own characteristic way. No one knows when the divine voice emerges, stops or starts again. If one is not fortunate enough to get an answer, he will have to simply keep quiet as no one in the Holy Presence is bold enough to demand an answer. Sometimes the questions are answered by monosyllables and sometimes by signs. The explanations are always very brief and to the point. The few words seemingly ordinary are of so much significance to the questioner, so full of inner meaning, that they serve as a turning point in the spiritual life of the person concerned. The golden words will



be ringing in the ears and are always treasured in the memory. Not only that. The person cannot help broadcasting the same at the earliest opportunity.

Many ears will be eagerly waiting to catch the unforgettable words of Sri Bhagavan directly (first hand) and, if either due to the distance from Sri Bhagavan's sofa or insensitivity of the ear or some other outside disturbance, they failed to catch a word or two they feel it is an irreparable loss.

Once one devotee of Bhagavan was abused, ill-treated and prohibited from entering the Ashram. Though Sri Bhagavan was aware of this, he never uttered a word or passed any remark favouring the devotee or the other side. His silence might have been misinterpreted as a favour shown to one side. But what happened? The devotee never used to come to Bhagavan as usual, but Sri Bhagavan himself used to pass by the abode of the devotee and give *darshan* in a different place. Who can prevent Bhagavan? Sri Bhagavan is interested in all his children even though some of them might behave in a naughty manner at times. Sri Bhagavan never used to condemn people openly and wound their feelings even though he is All-Powerful.

On one important occasion arrangements were made for feeding the poor in the Ashram. As the meal time was approaching, people were rushing into the place set apart for dining. Then someone in authority cried aloud that *sadhus* should keep out. Accordingly, some poor *sadhus* were sent out to some other place. After all the seating arrangements were completed they wanted to begin serving. But the chief guest, i.e. Sri Bhagavan was not to be found anywhere there. People began to search for Bhagavan in all places and proceeded in all directions. One party noticed that Sri Bhagavan was sitting under a shady tree far away from Ashram. They requested him to go over to the Ashram for meals. Sri Bhagavan replied, "You never wanted *sadhus* to remain there. As I am also a *sadhu* I left

the place as desired by you.” He identified himself with the lowest and never wanted any special privileges for himself. He used to rectify the wrong doers, not by showing anger or dissatisfaction, but by self-denial or self-punishment.

If someone in the Ashram behaved in a very unjust manner, Sri Bhagavan used to know it (even though no one expressed it to him) and inflict some self-punishment and deny himself some dishes or courses, etc., without expressing anything to anybody. Everyone used to come together to find out why Sri Bhagavan has given up a certain thing. As no one was bold enough to face Bhagavan and ask the real cause, they used to examine their own conduct and behaviour and discover the causes that might have caused displeasure to Bhagavan. They used to approach Bhagavan, prostrate, beg his pardon, and promise to be more careful in the future. This is Sri Bhagavan’s way of rectification of wrongdoers.

Once devotees were singing songs in praise of Ramana with great devotion. While they were singing the following song in Tamil: “*Ramana Sadguru Ramana Sadguru Ramana Sadguru Rayane*,” Sri Bhagavan also joined and began to sing with them. The devotees were taken aback when they found Ramana himself was praying to Ramana. They were so surprised that they could not but question, ‘Why Sri Ramana was singing that song?’ Sri Ramana replied that Ramana Sadguru refers to the unlimited, All Pervasive Paramatma, who illuminates the hearts of all beings and not to the limited body. Bhagavan thus focused the attention of the devotees on Sri Ramana, the Real, the Imperishable and the Eternal.

Though Bhagavan was demonstrating from his boyhood that he was different from the body, by utter disregard and supreme indifference to the same, people forgot again and again and sought to identify Sri Ramana with the physical frame. Sri Ramana was reminding again

and again by example and precept and was always behaving as a Universal Spirit.

Sri Bhagavan explained on many occasions that sincere enquiry about the real 'I' leads one away from the body consciousness and towards the one Self, which is the source of everything.

When the tumour that developed on the left arm of Bhagavan was operated upon, the devotees could observe that Sri Bhagavan was living a life apart from the physical body.

He never recognised the pain or gave expression to it. On the other hand, he was always cheerful and moving as if nothing worthy of note happened. When devotees questioned how he could ignore the tremendous pain, he invited their attention to a verse in *Yoga Vasishtha*, the meaning of which is as follows: "When a person realises that he is not the body, he will not be conscious of the pain even though his body is cut to pieces. He is ever happy and sweet as the sugar candy which does not lose its sweetness even though it is cut into bits or powdered, etc."

Once Sri Bhagavan expressed that the world is not different from him and that when people were eating, he himself was eating through those mouths, (though his mouth was idle). This shows clearly that Sri Bhagavan was ever identifying himself with the All Pervading Atman in all and not with his physical body.

May this Oneness be experienced by us all through his Grace!

# SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

## I

*N. N. Rajan*

**B**HAGAVAN Sri Ramana Maharshi had rarely any necessity to speak. Devotees and admirers used to approach his Holy presence in subdued silence and perhaps at times to draw a glance from the Sage's effulgent eyes. A cool and significant smile from him used to light up his face, but he would rarely speak.

When he spoke occasionally, his words, measured and few, would convey a depth of extreme significance with a rare insight into the seeker's mind. He never used to say anything that had not a spiritual import of a profound nature. The thoughtful aspirant would grasp the deeper meaning.

An ardent devotee who used to visit the Ashram daily intimated to Sri Bhagavan his intended pilgrimage to North India and described his proposed route through famous pilgrim centres. Sri Bhagavan in his usual style nodded his approval. "Let him go," remarked the Sage, "and acquire *punya* (merit) and all of us shall share with him" (turning to those present in the hall). After a little pause he added, "For how are we to go to those sacred places and when?" True. How, indeed, can the Universal Spirit that is everywhere and at all times, go on a pilgrimage? And how can the true pilgrim miss it wherever he may go.

The devotee was extremely happy for he felt he was no longer a lonely pilgrim. Throughout the extensive tours, he felt the sacred Presence of Sri Bhagavan and was guided by him at every step, by his benign Grace. From all quarters he had unexpectedly warm welcomes from the known and the unknown in a mysterious manner.

At the conclusion of his tour, once again he was in the Ashram and again Sri Bhagavan remarked, "Seeing him return from the pilgrimage, now we also share the merit earned by him," and heartily laughed. True it is; did not Sri Bhagavan remain with the devotee and see him safe to his home? And when were they apart from the eternal Self, which is but One and Universal.

How pregnant with meaning are the chosen words of Sri Bhagavan, so lightly spoken like an innocent child?

"The moon can allay *heat* alone for men; likewise the celestial wish-fulfilling tree can relieve want alone, so too the sacred river Ganga can remove only sin; but, by the sight of Sages all the three — heat and the rest — are extinguished, (so) there is nothing in all the Three worlds, comparable to the sight of Sages." (*Forty Verses, Supplement.*)

## II

### *Kundamal A. Mahatani*

I HAD THE good fortune to hear of Bhagavan for the first time in 1942, through a Sindhi friend of mine, who lent me Paul Brunton's book, *A Search in Secret India*. I read it eagerly and was extremely impressed when I learnt for the first time that such a great Sage as Bhagavan did exist in our land.

I ordered at once all the books so far published by the Ashram on Bhagavan's teachings and went through them with great interest.

I found his teachings very profound, yet direct, simple and easy to grasp. A great longing arose in me to have his *darshan*, but owing to my domestic circumstances I could not go to the Ashram till early 1944. But in the meantime I kept myself in constant touch with Bhagavan by correspondence. Whatever I could not understand and whatever doubt I had while reading his books, I used to get it solved through letters.

With the grace of Bhagavan I was at last able to go and see him in January 1944. I enjoyed his presence for eleven months at a stretch. After that I used to go to the Ashram every winter and stay there four to five months at a time, till he left his body in April 1950. During my visits I got many knotty questions solved, which I noted down in my diary.

I was present at the time of his last moments amidst us.

The final *upadesa* (teaching) and the best, which I could get from him, was his so-called illness.

From the point of view of all onlookers, he appeared to be suffering, but it was not so from his own point of view. When many devotees were lamenting his ailment, he used to laugh at them and say, "They have not yet realised that I am not the body and that I am not going anywhere." Some devotees thought that Bhagavan had taken up the sins of others upon himself and was suffering for their sake to wash off their sins. This idea does not appeal to me. The question is, was he suffering at all? Did he ever complain or groan? Not at all! All the physicians were at a loss to know how he looked so cheerful, in spite of such a terrible painful tumour and four operations. It was as if he was defying all the laws of physiology. He was taking treatment just to please others, though he said that he

did not need any. All devotees requested him to cure himself by willpower. He said that he has no will, the body is a burden and it must fall one day. It appeared that his mission was over.

In my humble opinion, he was just demonstrating what a *jivanmukta* is. Many have heard and read a great deal about the state of a *jivanmukta*, but he actually demonstrated that state of being above body-consciousness. Was it a small *upadesa* or a small miracle? It was the same case with Sri Ramakrishna and Christ.

To me Bhagavan is more than all other gods or prophets so far incarnated on earth, such as Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mohamed, Nanak and others. I have only read and heard about them, and cannot have proper conception of them. Even the numerous pictures of them are only imaginary, and naturally, they are all different from one another, therefore it is impossible to have an exact conception of any of them. On the other hand I have seen Bhagavan and therefore I have a very clear conception of an ideal to meditate upon.

Even now I feel his presence just as before, when I see his large photo on the couch in the old Hall. It is as if he is sitting there just as usual, with a smiling face and a compassionate look, with this difference only, that now he does not talk but is in *mouna* (silence).

Blessed and fortunate are those who had the opportunity to see Bhagavan in the body, sit at his feet and hear the sweet flow of wisdom from his lips.

May Bhagavan's blessings be on every one.

## III

*Prof. D. Surumurti*

SOUTH INDIA HAS the proud privilege of possessing, the worldwide celebrity, Maharshi Ramana's Ashram at Tiruvannamalai.

Sri Ramana's uniqueness lay in his own realisation, he was one of the few Indian saints and sages that answered the call of renunciation at a tender age, in fact, in his teens, unlike the majority of our saints who lived the life of the world and achieved detachment at a later stage.

He is a pure *Jnani*. Other saints have been great *bhaktas*, great teachers, great men of action and have influenced humanity in their own characteristic ways. But Sri Ramana remained a calm lake of spiritual power, radiating all round him benign peace and calmness. No manifestations of miracles or yogic *siddhis*, no sudden conversions, no dramatic occurrences ever marked his presence. The serenity and equilibrium were his most remarkable features.

Of course, the main feature in the Ashram was *darshan* of the Maharshi. On the day of our visit, we found Sri Ramana walking a few steps to the verandah with great effort. His body looked extremely weak, pale, and limp. He could scarcely stand as he moved forward. He had grown very thin and weak. But the moment he ascended the *chowki* and settled down for the one-hour public *darshan*, a marvellous change came over him. It was as though he was summoning the spirit to dwell visibly in his body.

Gone was the look of pain and the expression of weakness. His face shone radiant with peace. It was a marvel of conquest of the body. The stream of visitors, in addition to the seated devotees, advanced to his presence, to a distance of six feet,



placed their offerings of fruit and flower and incense, prostrated and withdrew in orderly fashion. This process went on intermittently for the full hour.

This was the outer routine. But if one looked deeper, other things could be seen and felt. As the many devotees advanced to the presence of Maharshi and bowed down in utter faith and fervent dedication, vibrations of power could be felt. At every bow a wave of devotion would flow towards the sage and there would come back a powerful flood of benediction from him to the devotee. And as one sat gazing in reverence the whole atmosphere would take on a radiance, having its centre in the Maharshi, enveloping the gathered *bhaktas* for an area of several yards.

If one attuned oneself to this vibrant wave of power, one would be physically overcome by the purifying flood. It was as though standing on a high peak, facing a valley, turning east in the early morning hour, one suddenly became engulfed with the glorious sunrise from deep down in the valley. It was as though one standing at the brink of the waters of an ocean, was suddenly lashed by an oncoming super-wave and drenched in the waters.

A veritable miracle was being performed. An aged body, bent down by terrific penances, exhausted, enfeebled by a mortal illness, the dreaded incurable cancer, subjecting the victim to excruciating pain, health enfeebled by daily loss of blood as the dressing on the abscess was renewed, subsisting on liquid food and yet the immortal spirit of the emancipated sage triumphed over the weakness of the body, shining resplendent, shedding benign grace on the assembled devotees. Few among mankind have had the great privilege of participating in such a spiritual feast.

The doctors had come to the end of their resources. Allopathy, Ayurveda, Homeopathy and other systems of treatment had done all they could and failed. We have heard in the case of

some saints that they could cure themselves by willpower. But it is certain that such a great self-realised sage as Sri Ramana would not have thought it worthwhile to use spiritual power for this purpose. We are strongly reminded of the parallel instance of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa who gave up his body after it had suffered from cancer of the throat for several months. He also, in the midst of intense bodily suffering, remained serene to the end. The fact is that the wielders of spiritual power are governed by certain laws, though unknown to us, which pertain to that sphere.

An instructive incident is narrated of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. In the early days of his contact with the saint of Dakshineswar, Narendra was having great domestic troubles – poverty, unemployment, a large family of dependants, etc. Some one told him that he should seek the help of Sri Ramakrishna to find some solace. Sri Ramakrishna asked Narendra to pray in the Divine Mother's presence. Accordingly Narendra visited the shrine of the Goddess and returned after a while. Sri Ramakrishna asked him if he sought the Divine Mother's help for succour to his family. Narendra replied that as he prayed in the Mother's presence he forgot everything about the world and so had not sought succour. In the presence of the Divine, all else is transcended.

I sat in the evening session of *darshan*. After a few minutes, the question formed itself in my mind. What will happen to the hundreds that will be deprived of spiritual nourishment? As I was mentally addressing this question to Sri Ramana, a radiance was felt by me. His physical form on the *chowki* gradually became shrunken, smaller and smaller and vanished into the radiance. The radiance grew deeper and more powerful. I felt I had the answer to my query. Even though the body may disappear the concentration of spiritual power which was focused round it will continue to shed its influence. And as long as one can put oneself into attunement with that form and with that radiance, one can draw spiritual sustenance.

# WHAT IS LIFE?

*Dr. M. Anantnarayana Rao*

ON a certain day in October 1948, along with a couple of devotees, I was with Bhagavan Sri Ramana. I was dressing a patch of eczema on one of his legs when one of the devotees in the course of conversation said that life is a dream.

I replied to him that if one looked at life as a succession of events between birth and death the past events appear as if they happened in a dream.

Sri Bhagavan who was listening to our conversation looked at me and asked, “You have studied biology, could you say what life is?” I replied, “Biologists understand life as something which can be recognised by its response to stimuli. What exactly it is, is not definitely known. Will Sri Bhagavan kindly enlighten us what it is?”

When Sri Bhagavan heard this he suddenly became still and serene, a posture which is difficult to describe yet so very familiar to his devotees. After some time I told him, “Bhagavan, I feel that your silence is an answer to my question. I interpret that silence to mean that ‘life’ can be experienced but cannot be described by words. It is something beyond the conditioned, mind of ours. Is that so?”

Sri Bhagavan replied, “Yes, Life is *Sat* or Existence.”

He explained it further by saying that a ball of iron has shape or form and when it is heated it gets the property or quality of fire as well. If you beat that hot iron ball with a hammer on an anvil its form changes, but the quality of fire in

it remains unchanged. Similarly, *jiva* with attributes (*upadhis*, such as mind and body) is yourself. But when *jiva* is bereft of its attributes, what remains is Siva or Self. Your very core is Siva which is Existence itself.”

From what Sri Bhagavan said it became clear to me that Life as we understand it is conditioned by our senses and mind. Our conversation ended there.

While writing the above episode the word ‘Light’ came to my mind. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna while he was speaking to Dr. Sarkar said: “The nearer the devotee comes to his Deity, the fewer attributes he sees. At last when he comes to the presence of the Deity he sees only light without attributes.”

Like “life” what exactly ‘light’ is we do not know. The physicists say that light is a combination of different wave lengths, and the speed of a ray of light is the top limit in this universe we see. All this information is obtained by the mind aided by the senses. The interesting part of it is the speed of light. If one can travel by the speed of light, then to him time and space contract to zero, that is to say that time and space do not exist for him and it is all now and here for him. The top limit of the speed limits our senses to that limit, and anything going faster than that speed is beyond what the senses can comprehend. So, one travelling faster than light must be invisible to us. This can be extended to what our senses comprehend as sound. If we travel faster than sound in a plane and cross the sound-barrier we shall be travelling through silence.

Silence too has, to a limited extent, given us indications that when we cross the barrier of the speed of sound waves or light waves, our senses concerned with them become inoperative or they cannot comprehend what is beyond the barriers. Great men like Buddha, Christ, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana and many others have voluntarily crossed the barrier of the senses

and mind with the aid of wisdom and have given us indications of their experience. To describe that experience is difficult, and Sri Bhagavan usually sat still and silent when one asked him about it and Sri Ramakrishna said it was not possible to describe the same. To describe that experience he has to come back to the realm of the mind and senses, which means giving attributes to the Attributeless. In order to overcome that difficulty Sri Ramakrishna evidently said: “Light without attributes is God” and Sri Ramana said, “*Jiva* without attributes or *upadhis* is Siva.” Real life then is Siva or Pure Consciousness.

# WITH THE SAGE OF THE HOLY HILL

*Dilip Kumar Roy*

## I

*This is an extract from Kumbha, pp. 170-176, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, and reprinted with their permission.*

**I** FIRST heard of Sri Ramana Maharshi while I was a member of the Yoga Ashram of Sri Aurobindo. I asked Sri Aurobindo about the Maharshi and he wrote back that he was a Yogi of remarkable strength and attainments and that his *tapasya* had won glory for India. On another occasion he characterised him as a 'Hercules among the Yogis'. So I longed to pay a visit to Ramanasramam, situated at the foot of the hallowed Arunachala Hill.

When I arrived at the small house where the Maharshi lived, I felt a deep malaise. How could I hope to get peace and inspiration from him if I had failed to get it at the feet of my own Guru, who was surely no less great? Yet I felt sincerely that I had done well in coming to seek inspiration from the great Yogi who was venerated by spiritual aspirants of every category. At the same time, I wondered whether this was the proper frame of mind in which to seek peace from a mighty Illuminate!

I entered the room of the great sage in the afternoon. It was just a bare hall in which I found him reclining on a couch. A handful of devotees were sitting on the floor. Some were meditating, while others were gazing wistfully at the sage, who sat stone still, staring in front at nothing at all, as was his wont. He never spoke unless somebody first spoke to him or asked a question. For fifty years he had been living on this Hill and had felt no inclination to leave it. In the earlier years he had lived in a cave on the Hill for many years in silence. In the Ashram, which had subsequently been built around him by a few of his devotees, he had now been living a singular life, blessing all, but belonging to none, interested in everything but attached to nothing, answering questions but hardly ever asking any.

He gave the impression of Siva, the great God of compassion, who was there to give but not to ask anything of anybody, living a blissful, free and open life, with no walls of the ego to cabin the summit vision. I had, indeed, read what Paul Brunton had written about him and had heard a lot about his lovable ways from a dear friend of mine, Duraiswami, who had known him for years. Some other devotees had told me that he had been living ever since his abandonment of worldly life in a state of *sahaja samadhi* (superconscious in the ordinary wakeful consciousness). What I saw with my own eyes impressed me deeply, though I find it far from easy to portray what I saw, or rather experienced. Here was a man who lived like a god, supremely indifferent to all that we worldlings clamour for without cease. Dressed in a bare *koupin* (loin-cloth) he yet sat ensconced in a grandeur of plenary peace and egoless bliss which we could but speculate upon, yet never fathom. Kings had come to him with all sorts of rich offerings, but in vain; he had blessed them, but never accepted any gifts. He said one day to a disciple with an ironic smile as he pointed at a huge *pandal* which his devotees were building to honour him at the Golden Jubilee

celebrations (1946): “Just fancy, they insist on erecting this for me when all I need is the shade of a tree to sit under.”

Modern man may criticise him for his lack of initiative and argue that humanity has little use for one who lives thus aloof and isolated. But was he isolated — he who radiated peace which hundreds of visitors experienced by just sitting near him in silence? Did not the lineaments of his serene face, his beautiful smile, his tranquil glance, convey to all a message of liberation? Did he not blossom like a flower stemming from the earth, yet alien to all that was earthly? Did not his frail frame embody a strength that was not human, his life attest to an invisible anchorage which made him utterly secure and free from the last vestige of fear? Yes, as he told me later, the Maharshi put a premium on two things: inaccessibility to fear and to flattery, however subtle. Once a snake passed over his body while he lay in his dark cave at night. His friend and attendant (a doctor who related this to me) jumped up as it passed over his chest. “Why, what is the matter?” the Maharshi asked him. “A snake!” he answered. “I know” acquiesced the sage. “It passed over my body previously.” “It did?” asked the doctor. “And how did you feel?” “Cool” came the rejoinder.

About flattery he told me this story: “A man may go very far,” he said, “but not till he has travelled beyond the reach of all flattery can he be said to have arrived. Listen. There was once a rich man who wanted God. He gave up his family, home, comforts, everything, and repaired to a forest where he practised untold austerities for years till he arrived at the Golden Gate. But alas, the portals did not open to his repeated knocking — he did not know why!

“One day an old friend of his came upon him in the forest while he was meditating. When he opened his eyes, the friend fell at his feet in an ecstasy of adoration. ‘Oh blessed one! How great you are, how heroic your austerities and



sacrifice! Accept my homage.’ The holy man had, indeed, practised all the austerities and made all the sacrifices attributed to him. Nevertheless he was pleased when the other paid him homage. And that was why the Golden Gate had not opened to his knocking.”

I heard of many other traits of his supremely lovable personality, amongst which must be counted his sense of humour and love of laughter. He coveted nothing, but loved to joke freely with those who came to him. One day, while I was sitting near him and some visitors were putting questions to him, a Muslim friend of mine asked: “Tell me, Bhagavan, why is it that God does not answer my prayer even when I petition Him for nothing earthly? I only pray to Him to make me humble and pure and selfless so that I may serve Him as I ought but He simply does not listen. Why doesn’t He?”

“Probably because He is afraid that if He did, you wouldn’t pray any more,” answered the sage readily, with a merry twinkle in his eye! And we all laughed in chorus.

Many a time he was asked, even challenged, to prove what he had seen. “Ah!” he would reply placidly. “I will answer that question if you answer mine: who is it that is asking this question?”

“Who? Surely, I – so and so.” “I know. But who are you?”

“Me? I, I, I.” And the Maharshi would laugh.

“So you see, you do not even know such a thing as your own identity, yet you presume to challenge others and their experiences. I would suggest you find out first who is the challenger and then the truth you challenge will be made manifest to you.”

True to our great tradition, the Maharshi did not relish answering merely intellectual questions or the queries of the curious who were content with more wordy answers to words. Again and again, he used to stress that information was not knowledge, and that all true knowledge stemmed from

Self-knowledge. So sometimes, when he was asked about the worlds beyond, of the life hereafter, he would simply evade the question. “Why put the cart before the horse?” he was wont to say. “Why this itch to know about the other worlds? Do you know even the crucial and basic things about this one? If not, why not wait till you do before you start delving into the next? Why do you want to know what happens after death? Do you know what is happening before your eyes? Why go to an astrologer to be told what you will be twenty years hence? Do you know – truly know – what you are today this moment?” And so on.

Once the matters came to a head. A disciple of his was puzzling a good many members of the Ashram, for he was living in perfect bliss in a tiny room, sitting all day on a bare mat, hardly taking the trouble even to eat unless somebody brought him food. Speculation was rife; some thought that he had gone mad; others that he had gone far, while others again said with bated breath that he was living in that superconscious state which the Gita describes as *Brahmee sthithi* (situated in the Absolute). In the end a regular deputation waited upon the Maharshi who heard them with his usual patience. Then he gave the leader of the deputation a quizzical smile. “You want to know his inner state, do you?” he asked pointedly.

The man fidgeted beneath his scrutiny. “Well, yes. I . . .”

“Wait,” the Maharshi interjected. “First tell me this: do you know your own state?”

The other was unnerved: “No, no,” he faltered.

“Right!” The Maharshi rejoined, in a pleased tone. “First find out your own state and then you will know his.” The whole Ashram enjoyed it, except the leader of course.

This outstanding Yogi and his holy life have exercised a deep influence upon hundreds of spiritual seekers all over the world, although he had done hardly anything of a spectacular kind to enlist the attention of the multitude.

## II

RAMANA WAS SUDDENLY drawn to Arunachala Hill in 1896, at the age of sixteen. With just three rupees in his pocket, he left his home and parents and everything a man holds dear. He did not even know the way, but somehow arrived there with literally just what he wore, trusting entirely to the mercy of his heart's Lord, Arunachala Siva. He arrived at the temple and went straight to the sanctum of the Lord and, with tears coursing down his cheeks, said: "I have come at your call, Lord. Accept me and do with me as you will ."

Thereafter he lived ever immersed in the bliss of *samadhi*. My dear friend Duraiswami, who knew him for years as one of his Ashram's intimates, told me this: "Once he was expressing his admiration for the sage's power of concentrating day and night on his *sadhana*, when the other cut in smiling. '*Sadhana?* Who did *sadhana*? What did I know of *sadhana*? I simply came and sat down in the temple or elsewhere in Arunachala and then lost all count of time.'" To me he said the same thing in a slightly different way with his characteristic irony: "People call him by different names, but he came to me with no name or introduction so I know not how to define him. What happened was that my desires and ego left me – how and why I cannot tell – and that I lived thenceforward in the vastness of timeless peace." "Sometimes", he added with a smile, "I stayed with closed eyes and then, when I opened them, people said that I had come out of my blessed meditation. But I never knew the difference between 'non-meditation' and meditation, blessed or otherwise. I simply lived a tranquil witness to whatever happened around me, but was never called upon to interfere. I could never feel any urge to do anything except to *be*, just *be*. I see that all is done by him and him alone, though we, poor puppets of *maya*, feel ourselves important as the doers, authors

and reformers everything! It is the ineradicable ego, the ‘I-ness’ in each of us, which is responsible for the perpetuation of this *maya* with all its attendant sufferings and disenchantments.”

“What then is the remedy?” I asked.

“Just *be*,” he answered. “Delve down into That which only is, for when you achieve this you find ‘That am I’; there is and can be nothing else than That. When you see this, all the trappings of *maya* and make-believe fall off, even as the worn-out slough of the snake. So all that you have to do is to get to this I, the real I behind your seeming I, for then you are rid forever of the illusive ‘I-ness’ and all is attained, since you stay thenceforward at one with That which is you; that’s all.”

“We have to do nothing then?”

“Why? You have done the greatest thing, the only thing that is worth doing, and when you have done this, you may rest assured, all that has to be done will be done through you. The thing is,” he added, “not to worry about doing; just be, and you will have done all that is expected of you.”

“That is all very well,” I demurred, “but who is to show us how to do this – or rather *be*, as you put it? Is not a guide, Guru, necessary? Or are you against *Guruvad* (the Guru principle)?”

“Why should I be against *Guruvad*?” he smiled. “Some people evidently need a Guru; let them follow him. I am against nothing except the ego, the ‘I-ness’ which is the root of all evil. Rend this and you land pat in the lap of the one Reality, That, the one solvent of all questions.”

“But why then don’t you come out to preach this great message?” I asked, “for most people, you will agree, do not even know there is this ‘I-ness’ to be got rid of.”

He gave me again that quizzical smile tinged with his characteristic irony. Then he turned grave and asked: “Have you heard of the saying of Vivekananda that if one

but thinks a noble, selfless thought, even in a cave, it sets up vibrations throughout the world and does what has to be done, can be done?”

I nodded, “But forgive me if I presume to ask whether it is being done in a tangible way.”

He gave me a quizzical smile.

“Listen. A spiritual seeker used to attend religiously the lectures of a great pulpit orator and feel thrilled by all that he heard from day to day. But after some time he discovered, to his chagrin, that after all that he had heard, he was just where he had been at the start, not an impulse had changed. Then he happened to meet a silent man, a Yogi who said practically nothing; nevertheless, he felt attracted by something in him that he could not define and so went on being near him. After a time he discovered, to his great joy and surprise, that things which had worried him before affected him less and less, till he came to feel a deep peace and a sense of liberation he could not account for. And this grew with the passage of time until at last he became a different man altogether. Now tell me, which of the two would you name as the doer of something ‘tangible’?”

And this was true. After just being near him for a little while my gloom of months melted away like mist before sunrise. Nor could I myself “account for” why and how it happened. I only knew – and vividly – that it had happened. I shall never forget that night when, after having meditated at his feet, I felt a sudden release from what had been stifling me for weeks. It was such a delectable experience that I did not feel like going to bed. I pulled out a deck-chair and merely reclined on it under the stars, utterly relaxed. Everything around me seemed to drip peace and harmony; the breeze, the murmuring leaves, the hooting of an owl, a dog barking, the insects screeching... everything deepened my vivid sense of carefree plenitude. And I wrote a poem in the fullness of my heart of which I will give here a few lines:

You came in a pauper's garb and stayed to teach  
 That world what only a beggar could impart  
 And offered a kingdom we could never reach  
 By all our science, philosophy and art.  
 Some day a light shall dawn and then we'll know  
 What you came to give – a King, incognito!

He left his mortal body in April, 1950, (after having suffered excruciating physical pain for two long years). One of his arms had become cancerous. The medical men did their best but nothing availed. He died, but with the selfsame radiant smile on his lips. Once the painful wound had to be prodded thoroughly. Declining an anaesthetic he stretched out his arm. His face remained serene – not one groan issued from his lips. The doctor was amazed.

Such was he. No wonder they called him *Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi*.

The modern man often enough denounces the mystic as a selfish seeker of personal salvation. There may, indeed, be some *sadhus* who belong to this category, but the major mystics have never been indifferent to the suffering of others. Sri Ramana Maharshi proved this once again by the great life he lived after his attainment. He was always available, always ready to help with his words – more with his silent spiritual presence. He was the soul of divine compassion, always giving, never asking anything for himself. No man who is selfish can attract such a band of devoted seekers around him. This is not the place to talk about his remarkable devotees but I will end this tribute with a letter from one of his disciples, an Englishman, Major A. W. Chadwick. I was fascinated by his personality and wrote him a letter which I need not quote as it will be readily inferred from his reply, which is dated October 11, 1946.

Dear Dilip,

It was kind of you to write ... I feel diffident in answering your question as I fear I have made or may make myself appear of some spiritual attainment, a thing to which I have no pretension. I am just a humble seeker, with the same failings and the same difficulties as everybody else. That all paths are extremely difficult there can be no doubt, but how can it be otherwise? The ego which has taken such tremendous pains to establish itself as a seemingly independent and self sufficient entity will fight to the last ditch before it will admit defeat and relinquish its claims. But my motto has been persistence and I think that by that, victory is assured. The Guru of a friend of mine, who passed away some years ago and was undoubtedly a *jnani*, used to tell him that if he desired Self-realization sufficiently he could not even die till he had attained his goal. And in that is our hope.

You ask me how long I had to persevere in solitude before I attained peace... Surely peace is a thing which grows and is not for the majority attained in a flash once and for all. (I do not speak of Self-realization) The moment I came into the presence of my Guru, eleven years ago, I found peace. My staying here was never premeditated; it was just something which had to be in spite of myself. It was my true home. However the pendulum swings, in time the beats become shorter and shorter until it comes to rest in the Self. To expect anything else is to expect the impossible.

It seems to me that the great thing is to follow one Guru and one path unwaveringly and the goal is assured. For after all, the goal and the path are the same; the Chinese call both the Way – Tao. But we become disheartened and impatient. These seem to be the greatest obstacles to attainment. If we can only face up to these and go on in spite of everything and everybody then there is absolutely

no doubt as to the result. But few of us can! May the Supreme Guru give us the necessary strength!

I seem to have been very prolix and to have preached. I ask your forgiveness.

Very cordially yours,

A. W. Chadwick

Glory to the Guru who can inspire such love and devotion in men of this calibre.



# PEACE THAT PASSETH ALL UNDERSTANDING

## I

*Swami Prasannananda Guru*

*Following was the conversation which took place on 2nd January 1942, when some visitors from northern India well-versed in Hindu Sastras, visited Sri Ramanasramam.*

**V**ISITOR: If the ultimate Reality is one and absolute, why does the world appear as an object, seen and as different from the subject who sees it? Who is it that sees the object as distinct from himself, the subject?

Maharshi: Who is it that is putting this question?

V: One who seeks the Truth.

M: Who is he?

V: He who desires to know the Truth.

M: Instead of having a mere desire to know the truth, if he has the *anubhava* (experience) such questions as these would not arise.

V: True, after Realization they cannot arise. But until he has the experience, he has not only the desire for it, but also some doubts regarding the nature of ultimate Reality. Hence arises the question, why the world should appear as an object different from the subject who sees it. I do admit that the question has significance

only until the desire for Realization is fulfilled. But till then, the question remains, and it has to be answered.

M: That there is no answer to your question is the only answer, because the question does not really arise. In order to know the truth, you who seek to know it should exist as such, i.e., as yourself, the primal being. It is therefore yourself that you should know in the first instance. It is of you that knowledge or ignorance is predicated. You said you do not know the Truth and desire to know it. Instead of engaging your mind with such thoughts as “I know,” “I am ignorant,” etc., you should direct it towards the enquiry as to what the ‘I’ itself is. Through such enquiry you will find, as a matter of experience and not merely as something to think and argue about, that what remains alone and absolute is the Self. So that your question, viz., why the world should appear as an object seen by a subject, cannot and does not at all arise. A question that does not arise cannot have an answer.

V: How then should I know the ‘I’?

M. By investigation into this question itself, and thereby will you get the experience or *atmanubhuti*. The ardent desire to know the Truth has a beneficial purpose to serve until one has such experience.

V: Mental activity during meditation does not seem to converge at a point, as it should, on the object of meditation and it does not stay there but gets diverted into numerous thought channels. Why is it so? How can the mind be made to overcome this tendency towards diffused thinking and attain its Primal State of freedom from thought?

M: It is the mind’s attachment to objects constituting the non-self that makes the mind wander about during meditation. Therefore, the mind should be withdrawn from the non-self, and an effort should be made to fix it in Self-enquiry. All extraneous thought is effectively eliminated when you attune

the entire mind to the one question, “Who is it that is making the enquiry?”

V: In spite of having come to the definite conclusion as a result of one’s investigation that ‘I’ has no essential relation with the non-self, i. e., with the body, senses and the objects perceived by the senses, the mind persists in going after these very same things which constitute the non-self. What is it due to and how can it be remedied?

M: It is due to lack of *abhyasa* and *vairagya*. When Self-enquiry has become steady through practice, and the spirit of renunciation firm through conviction, your mind will be free from the tendency of thinking about the non-self.

V: How can I gain steadiness in practice?

M: Only through more practice.

The cynosure of all eyes in the hall is Bhagavan, whose silence is much more potent. Those who sit in the hall within his presence have a splendid opportunity for the practice of *dhyana*. A genuine devotee cannot but experience what is called the peace that passeth all understanding, which is Bliss Divine. What is more valuable than the realization of such Bliss?

Is not every man really in quest of such happiness, consciously or unconsciously? Alas, many a one out of ignorance, would not adopt the proper course with the result that he must be whirling in the wheel of births and deaths. Every aspirant has to qualify himself to receive that love and grace of the *Sadguru* in order to expedite one’s own spiritual development. In this dark-age of *Kali Yuga*, during which *dharma* is said to be standing on only one of its four legs, how deep and abiding should be our sense of gratitude to Sri Bhagavan who leads us along the true path of eternity, saving us from the pitfalls of *maya*?

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the eternal and universal Self which is all pervading and all sustaining is the only Reality, whereas to those who are steeped in *avidya*, it is something

hidden, something inaccessible. They remain oblivious to the self-evident Reality and labour under the illusion of its shadows. Each individual identifies himself with the fragmentary ego, the little 'I', which functions with a sense of separateness, confounding the knowledge of the external world derived through the senses in the wakeful state with the Reality. Such knowledge is entirely absent in the state of dreamless sleep. That which is real is unchanging in all the three states of consciousness, and our quest is not for something new but for what is always present, which however is not recognized on account of the veil of *maya* covering it. It is that first *mahavakya*, *prajnanam Brahman*, Pure consciousness or knowledge is *Brahman*.

“Self-enquiry is certainly not an empty formula; it is more than the repetition of any *mantra*. If the enquiry ‘Who am I?’ were a mere mental questioning, it would not be of much value. The very purpose of Self-enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its source. It is not, therefore, a case of ‘I’ searching for another ‘I’. Self-enquiry is the one infallible means, the only direct one, to realize the unconditional absolute Being that you really are.”

## II

*K. R. K. Murthy*

IT GIVES GREAT pleasure to any devotee to think of the few precious moments he had the privilege of spending in the Holy presence of Sri Ramana Bhagavan. Recapitulation of the experiences at the feet of Bhagavan and the brief and nascent utterances of Sri Bhagavan, never fail to elevate one to higher planes.

Sri Bhagavan's hall was always full of silent devotees. Practically every one used to be quite silent but not inactive. Every mouth used to take rest. The influence of the external world on the ear, eye, mind and other senses used to grow less and less. Every one was left to himself to think out calmly about his past, present and future states. Some with eyes open and some with eyes closed used to build castles in the air. Some used to repent for their omissions and commissions. Some used to think their highest thoughts and reach the peaks which they never dreamt of before. Some used to roam about in worlds other than ours, sitting still as statues, and some others used to get inexplicable and mystic experiences. In some, the emotions aroused used to reach enormous and excessive proportions within a few moments as can easily be seen from the rapidity of their inhalations and exhalations. Unable to withstand the huge and unexpected flood of emotions, they used to lose their balance and weep bitterly. Handkerchiefs or other clothes that used to reach their eyes and cheeks to dry the tears, used to return wet.

One day a prince entered the holy hall with a few friends, to have the *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan and took a seat beside us, as there was no distinction between the prince and peasant before Bhagavan. One of his friends wanted to ask a question, but was hesitating to do so as the organ of speech generally fails to cooperate in the awe-inspiring presence of Bhagavan. But to his surprise and amazement the same question was put to Bhagavan by someone immediately. Bhagavan too gave a very convincing reply and the joy of the visitor knew no bounds. The prince sat quietly for a time and who knows what happened, he began to pour forth streams of tears till he left the hall.

Sri Bhagavan was going through an English daily as usual. At one place he read aloud a sensational report regarding a new invention and smiled. After a pause he

gently remarked: “One may acquire any number of powers. Without realising the Truth (*Yathartha*) one cannot acquire peace of mind (*mano shanti*).”

Someone questioned “What *is Yathartha*?”

Quick came the reply from Bhagavan, “That which exists always.” Again there was a pause. Sri Bhagavan noticed that some earnest devotees were anxious to grasp the full significance of his statement. So he graciously explained further as follows:-

“Peace is our Nature (*Swabhava*). Just like a person who keeps a number of things in a room and complains that there is no space in the room, we say there is no peace. Is not the space obtained automatically when the things are removed?”

As Sri Bhagavan was uttering these words the Ashram bell interrupted the talk, perhaps unconsciously, inviting all for food.

# GRAPEFRUIT

*S. S. Cohen*

*Reading the charming reminiscences of my friend, Professor G. V. Subbaramayya, about the “miraculous” arrival at Sri Ramanasramam of two baskets of country oranges, just at the time when the Sarvadhikari’s letter asking for some from another source was going to be posted, (See Subbaramayya’s My Reminiscences) reminds me of a very similar incident which occurred in my presence some time in 1936.*

IT was about 8 p.m. Sri Bhagavan had returned from the short stroll which usually followed his night meal and had reclined on his couch, when the lady devotees who worked in the kitchen came in to prostrate before going to the town for the night. They first made a brief report of the day’s work and the morrow’s cooking programme, then turned to the subject of the fruit offerings and somehow mentioned the Tamil name of a certain citrus fruit. Major Chadwick and myself, the only two non-Tamil knowing persons then present, wondered what that fruit could be. Major C. suggested a name, and I another, but Sri Bhagavan suddenly came out with a third – ‘grapefruit’ – which puzzled me all the more, as in my mind I connected the word grape with grapes, the well-known fruit. Then Sri Bhagavan remarked that the season for the grapefruits would commence in two or three months time. The subject was closed when the other devotees started talking on spiritual matters.

It was then my custom to make the eight-mile circuit of the hill (*giri pradakshina*) every alternate day on foot, starting at about 8 a.m. and be back at about 11 o'clock, which was lunchtime. The day which followed the above conversation was a *giri pradakshina* day for me. While walking and thinking of Bhagavan and of the previous night's talk, a thought suddenly struck me that I should not be surprised if some devotee would bring the particular fruit as offering one of those days. I finished the circuit, had my lunch and hardly settled down for rest, when from my room I saw Sri Bhagavan approaching for his usual after-lunch walk by my hut, which was in Palakothu garden, adjoining the Ashram, and looking enquiringly in my direction. I felt he had something to tell me, and so I hesitatingly came out on the veranda, when, to my great astonishment, the Master turned to the attendant behind him, took a large sweet lime from him and stretched it out towards me, saying: "This is grapefruit," and added, "A visitor came in the morning with only three fruits – one for Chadwick, one for me (that is, for Bhagavan and for distribution among the devotees as *prasadam*) and this is for you." I was deeply touched by his compassionate remembrance of me, but more than touched, I was very surprised at the number of coincidences which occurred so soon after the talk – coincidence of time, coincidence of number, just the three of us who had discussed the subject, and coincidence of the almost prophetic anticipation I had made in my mind of it during *pradakshina*, probably at the very moment when the offering was made, not to speak of the "miracle" of the off-season of that fruit.

Taking gratefully the fruit from Bhagavan's hand, I related to him the premonition I had had of the offering in the morning. He was not at all surprised but answered in a matter-of-fact tone: "These things happen," and strolled off in his characteristic leisurely slow strides.

Had I enquired of Sri Bhagavan whether that was a miracle or not, I might have probably got the same answer as did Prof.



Subbaramayya, namely, that it was “the *Chintamani of Prajna*”, that is, the Pure *Chit*, the mind free from *vasanas*, which was responsible for it. But having never been a miracle-monger, I did not care to know. I was satisfied with his company and the *upadesa*, a veritable spiritual feast which constantly flowed from his mouth.

Yet these incidents bear the marks of the natural beneficence which spontaneously emanated from his spiritual greatness, without an iota of conscious effort or volition on his part, which at once distinguishes him from the little *Ishwaras*, those whose “high stage in evolution” earned for them clairvoyance, clairaudience and the power to perform all sorts of psychic manifestations at will. In those days “miraculous” incidents used to happen frequently at the Ashram, so frequently that no one used to take any notice of them. But now, as we retrospect and dwell on Sri Bhagavan’s hallowed memory for inspiration and worship, every incident, even the smallest, conveys to us the charm and fragrance of his personality.

It gave me a great pleasure, indeed, to read the remark of my other friend Sri K. A. Mahatani (cf. his article elsewhere), that to him Sri Bhagavan was more than all the other gods or prophets who had so far incarnated on earth, for that was the feeling of every devotee who profoundly contacted the Master. The *tyaga* (renunciation) which the Vedantic scriptures so much emphasise, and to which Yajnavalkya in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* referred as the sole gateway to Immortality was so complete in him that it made him shine (with due respect to all other teachers) as a giant among teachers and *rishis*, whose word and act, the ideal and actual in him, were literally identical. One day, I remember, there was a talk in the *darshan* hall about the potencies of the *avatara*-hood, the special incarnation of God, when Sri Bhagavan remarked, without a vestige of self-glorification, that an *avatara* was only a partial manifestation of *Iswara*, the Creator, whereas the *jnani*, the Self-realised man was *Brahman* Itself.

# GOSPEL OF SRI RAMANA

*Swami Pragnananda*

THE cardinal principles of Bhagavan's gospel centres around the enquiry of the real Self and for every question, problem that confront man in his struggle for existence in this mundane plane, a ready answer and solution could be found by knowing the real 'I'. The simple way in which Bhagavan was able to solve the riddles of human life was so miraculous in its effect that in his very presence many doubts which otherwise lingered in the minds of the questioner were cleared automatically. To quote a concrete instance, once when a devotee went to Tiruvannamalai to have *darshan* of Bhagavan, he had many doubts in his mind about God and things pertaining thereto. The first question the devotee put before Bhagavan was: "Some people say that God is with form and others say that He is without form. May I know your considered view over this issue?" Immediately Bhagavan asked the questioner, "Please tell me first whether you have got any form or not." The devotee replied, "Certainly I have got a form. See my body – it is five feet eight inches tall and 38 inches in chest measurement." Then Bhagavan said: "So your 'I' refers to your body, is it so?"

The devotee: Yes, what doubt is there?

Bhagavan: In that case when you are dead why does not your body, the real 'I' of your conception, tell the carriers of the coffin to leave you on earth for some more years to enjoy the material pleasures of the world?

Devotee: How can the dead body speak?

Bhagavan: You told me that your 'I' is the body and if that were to be correct it must speak.

Devotee: Bhagavan, I made a mistake. I do not know the real 'I' in me.

Bhagavan: When you do not know about yourself why do you try to know about God? First try to know yourself then you will be able to know everything about God.

The devotee prostrated before Bhagavan, begged for his grace and returned more enlightened. Thus Bhagavan was able to throw light on every aspirant on matters pertaining to God and Self to the entire satisfaction of the seeker.

The teachings of Bhagavan fall within two categories, i.e., Self-surrender and Self-enquiry. The former comes under the *bhakti* cult where the aspirant believes in the existence of a Supreme power which is the repository of anything and everything in this world and every being must subordinate itself to this Supreme Power. In other words the devotee believes in a higher power other than himself and owes allegiance to that power in the name of God. This leads the aspirant to Self-enquiry by asking questions, is this body the 'I'? Do these sense organs form the 'I'? Is the mind the 'I' or is this intellect the 'I' and for every query, you get a reply 'No, it is not'. This process is called the '*neti, neti*' process and ultimately the questioner merges himself in his Self by transcending limitations of the body, the senses, the mind and intellect.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana has made it quite clear that people who have had no literary education could also attain the highest knowledge through both the ways enumerated above, but people of an emotional nature will benefit themselves more by *bhakti* and people of a reflective mood will have better appeal to *jnana*. In the case of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, in spite of his not having seen even the portals

of a school, he was able to attain the highest knowledge through *bhakti*. And in the case of Sri Ramana we have an example of a Self-realised soul through *jnana*, though Ramana had only very little school education. Sankara and Ramana come under the latter category of sages and hence it was possible for them to attain the highest knowledge while yet very young.

# LIBERATION DURING LAST MOMENTS

*Viswanatha Swami*

ON the topics of death and rebirth, of bondage and liberation, Bhagavan's teaching was to prompt the enquiry, "Who dies? Who is born? Who is to be reborn? Who is bound? Who is to be liberated?" This method leading to intensive self-enquiry, he explicitly taught or silently communicated to seekers who were capable of grasping the pure non-dual truth and they learnt soon enough that the questioner was the nonexistent ego and that the real self had no questions to ask and nothing to do with birth or death, bondage or liberation. But Bhagavan was also ready, on occasion, to adapt his teaching to the understanding of the seeker, to admit "the lower, contingent point of view" of those who were not yet ready for pure awareness. Like Sri Krishna who asserts in Chapter 11 of the *Gita* that no one is born and no one dies, and speaks in Chapter IV of "the numerous incarnations" of himself and Arjuna, Bhagavan too varied and adjusted his teaching to the mood and capacity of the listener. The general Hindu belief is that liberation from the cycle of birth and death is obtained by divine grace when one is ripe by virtue of one's devotion and surrender to God. Three such instances are described in this article, which is written from a relative standpoint.

Palani Swami was one of the earliest devotees of Bhagavan Ramana, noted for his non-attachment to anything worldly.

When Bhagavan was living in Gurumurtham (a *samadhi*-shrine situated near Keelnathur, a suburb of Tiruvannamalai on the east) immersed in *samadhi* day and night, Palani Swami heard of him and went and attached himself to Bhagavan as an attendant. He served Bhagavan till the end of his stay at Virupaksha Cave on Arunachala, for more than seventeen years.

When Bhagavan went up to Skandashram, a newly built abode for him, higher up, Palani Swami chose to continue at the Virupaksha Cave itself for solitude. Then Bhagavan used to visit him there off and on and found him growing weaker. When he fell ill and was unable to move out, Bhagavan began to visit him daily and help him in whatever way he could.

One day he saw a peacock flying up from Virupaksha Cave to Skandashram in great excitement and it struck him that Palani Swami could be in a critical condition. At once Bhagavan went down to the Cave and found his intuition correct. Palani Swami was in the throes of death gasping for breath. Bhagavan sat near him with his right hand on his chest. Palani Swami's breath became soft and Bhagavan took his hand off when he felt a quivering within Palani Swami's chest. This, Bhagavan has said, is the sign of life becoming extinct in the body. But when Bhagavan removed his hand, that very moment, Palani Swami's eyes opened. "I thought he would subside at the heart, but he escaped!" Bhagavan remarked, adding, "That is said to be the sign of one going to higher states of spiritual experience, though not immediate merger at the Heart."

The following passage from *Sri Ramana Gita* may be of interest here.

"There is no difference between the experience of one liberated here and that of one, who according to the scriptures, goes to *Brahmaloka* and gets liberated there.

"Identical with the experience of the above two is that of the *Mahatma* whose *pranas* merge into pure Being even here (at the time of death).

“Abidance in the Self is the same for all, the destruction of bondage is the same for all and there is but one kind of *mukti*. Difference between *muktas* appears only to the minds of others.

“The *Mahatma* who abides in the Self and gets release while yet alive, his life forces too get absorbed in the Self even here.”

(Ch. XIV-5, 6, 7, 8.)

Next we take up the case of Bhagavan’s mother, Alagammal, on the last day of her life on earth. She was living in the immediate presence of Bhagavan at Virupaksha Cave and Skandashram for many years, evolving spiritually. On the last day of her life – May 19, 1922 – noticing signs of approaching death, Bhagavan sat near her with his right hand on her chest and the left on her head from eight in the morning till eight at night. What happened then has been described by Bhagavan himself: “It was a struggle between mother and myself. Her accumulated tendencies of the past (*vasanas*) rose up again and again and then and there got destroyed. Thus the process was over and peace reigned supreme. I felt the last quiver of the heart but did not take off my hand until it completely stopped. This time I was careful thanks to my experience with Palani Swami and saw that mother’s *prana* (life) got completely merged at the Heart. (It will be interesting to note here that many years before, when Alagammal was seriously ill at Virupaksha Cave, Bhagavan had composed four verses in Tamil, in one of which he prays to Arunachala, the Hill of Fire, to burn up his mother with the fire of *jnana*, so that there may be no need of cremating the body after death. Bhagavan being Arunachala himself, did what he had put in the form of a prayer years ago).

Here one is reminded of the following famous *slokas* of the *Bhagavad Gita*: “One who gives up his body remembering me alone even at his last moments gets merged in my Being. There is no doubt about it. When one leaves one’s body at the end, thinking of whatsoever, by dint of that last thought one attains that. This, Oh Partha! is the state of *Brahman*. Reaching

this, one is no more deluded. Remaining in this state even during one's last moments, one gets liberated as *Brahman*." (Ch. VIII-5, 6 and Ch. II-72.)

Bhagavan had not taken any food that day till then and so he took his meal peacefully after he had finished attending on his mother. The whole of that night there was devotional singing and Bhagavan himself participated in the chanting the whole *Tiruvachakam* (the collection of hymns in praise of Siva, composed in Tamil by Saint Manickavachakar.)

The body of Alagammal was brought down from the Hill to a place south of it the next morning and interred there. The body was not cremated as usual, not only because Alagammal was a *sannyasini* for many years, wearing *kashaya* (ochre cloth), but also because she was liberated by the remarkable grace of Bhagavan. A *Linga* was installed on her *samadhi* by Bhagavan himself. Ganapati Muni, who was present on the occasion, has sung six verses in Sanskrit about the liberation of Alagammal. Here is the translation of two of them:

The Light Supreme indicated by the texts of  
Vedanta,

The Light pervading all the worlds  
That Light shone clear to mother  
Alagammal by the grace of her son  
And She herself shone as that Light.  
May Maharshi's holy mother shine forth,  
May her shrine of grace shine forth  
May the *linga* installed shine for ever  
And may the fresh spring flow for ever.

(The reference here is to a crystal-clear spring of water which gushed forth on digging at a spot pointed by Bhagavan near his mother's *samadhi*.)

True to the words of the inspired poet there stands now a beautiful temple constructed over the Mother's *samadhi* with a



granite *Sri Chakra Meru* installed at the sanctum sanctorum, along with Bhagavan's shrine of grace adjoining it with its perennial spring of grace.

Next we come to the Cow Lakshmi. As a calf, she was presented to Sri Ramanasramam with her mother by a villager as directed in a dream. As a mark of acceptance Bhagavan fondled the calf, but due to lack of facilities at the Ashram for taking care of them, they were entrusted to a devotee living in Tiruvannamalai. He took care of them and brought the milk to the Ashram everyday. On the day of cow worship (*gopuja*) on the second day of the month of *Thai*, the devotee brought Lakshmi the calf and her mother to the Ashram. Lakshmi was fondled by Bhagavan and she was particularly attracted to him. Henceforth, when Lakshmi was not tethered to her post at home, she used to run to the Ashram by herself and go straight to Bhagavan and Bhagavan used to fondle her and give her fruits and eatables.

After some years, when proper arrangements were made at the Ashram to maintain cows, she was brought back to the Ashram. Even at the Ashram whenever Lakshmi was not tethered to her post at the cow shed (*goshala*) she used to run directly to Bhagavan's hall and present herself to him. Whatever work Bhagavan had on hand, he would put it all aside to receive and fondle Lakshmi, looking deep into her eyes. Such was the attraction Lakshmi felt for Bhagavan and such was the response she received from him. As years rolled by Lakshmi gave birth to calves often on Bhagavan's birthday itself.

Ultimately, Lakshmi grew old and fell ill. Bhagavan used to visit her daily in the cow shed. Then one day it seemed that she would pass away soon. Bhagavan sat near her, touching and looking at her with compassion. Soon after, she passed away. Arrangements were made to have Lakshmi's body interred within the Ashram premises. She was given the customary sacred bath and after due rites, was buried near the northern compound of

the Ashram, a few yards from Bhagavan's hall. Bhagavan was sitting nearby on a chair watching all the proceedings. Fruits and puffed rice were distributed to all those present on the occasion.

That evening Bhagavan enquired about the date and constellation of that day. Devotees wondered why he enquired about them – it was so unusual. Next morning Bhagavan showed them a verse he had composed in Tamil stating the year, month, date, day and constellation on which the Cow Lakshmi got liberated. Devaraja Mudaliar asked Bhagavan if he meant *mukti* itself (final liberation from the cycle of birth and death) or whether he had used the term in a formal way. Bhagavan assured him that he had used the word deliberately in its real sense. It therefore became clear that Bhagavan had brought about her liberation. There is now a stone image of Lakshmi over her *samadhi* with the Tamil verse written by Bhagavan (on her liberation) inscribed on a stone-slab in the background.

Nearby there are the *samadhis* of a dog (Jackie), a deer (Valli) and a crow which had received Bhagavan's attention during their last moments. These are but a few acts of Bhagavan's grace known to us. The very proximity of a *jnani* is described as *Brahmaloka* (the region of *Brahman*) and fortunate indeed are those who have had the opportunity of being near such a one during their lifetime or last moments.

Though the ultimate truth is that there is neither bondage nor release, but only Pure Awareness, the One Self of all, the relative truth also has to be accepted and taken seriously, since it is from there that we begin and from that alone all *sadhanas* proceed. Bhagavan, it should be remembered, has dealt with all the steps, *nishkamya karma*, devotion, *japa* and *dhyana* in his *Upadesa Sara*. Later he comes to Self-enquiry, the result of which is the realization that there is no separate individuality as such and therefore neither bondage nor release.

# THE GREAT EVENT

*R. Narayana Iyer*

*The following was written just a few months after the Mahanirvana of Sri Bhagavan by an ardent devotee of the Master.*

“**B**EFORE some stars appear, light appears. After they vanish from vision light alone remains. That is the state of a *jnani* – his birth and death.” These were the words of Sri Bhagavan in a talk about *jnanis*. The exact import of the words is as puzzling as the strange phenomenon that passed vividly before our eyes on the 14th April, 1950. It was about a quarter to nine at night. I was sitting in the open space in front of my house facing east. The sky was clear, the air still. A grave and subdued solemnity pervaded the atmosphere as though reflecting the anxiety of so many sincere devotees of the Maharshi who had come to Tiruvannamalai on account of his illness.

Suddenly a bright and luminous body arose from the southern horizon, slowly went up and descended in the north somewhere on Arunachala Hill. It was not a meteor as it was bigger than what Venus appears to our vision and its movement was slow. It was so lustrous that at its zenith the light shed by its trail stretched as far as the horizon like an arc. The sight dazed me. Instinctively, as it were, I jumped to my feet and ran as fast as I could to the Ashram, a hundred yards off. There was a crowd of people moving about and quite a hustle and bustle. It didn't strike me to enquire of anyone what it was about. Access

to the Maharshi was naturally then selective and restricted to a few. I cared not for the Ashram rules and regulations, but like a tethered calf let loose and running to its mother, I took a short cut, jumped into the garden, scaled the parapet and rushed into the room where the Maharshi, Bhagavan, my Ramana, Guru, Father, God in flesh and blood was lying.

Lo! My heart thumped, breath choked. He was no longer in the flesh and blood. He had just breathed his last. As the star descended on the Hill, he had left the body. It was held in *padmasana* position by the attendants. I touched the body. There was no warmth. In a frenzy, I clasped the hand, the mere touch of which used to give the thrill of eternity. Coldness of death froze my nerves. All was over like a dream. Sobs, hymns and chantings filled the air, and my head reeled with dizzy thoughts. We will no longer see our dear Bhagavan in that beautiful form of molten gold, which charmed and enchanted us for decades! We will no longer see those compassionate eyes that gleamed like twin stars, peered into our innermost depths and dispelled the shadows that blurred our vision and understanding! No more that kind and godly look of grace that solaced our wearied souls and inspired our depressed hearts in speechless silence with peace unbounded, or that bewitching and enchanting radiant smile that fascinated us and drew us to him, to heights of bliss, far, far above this world. No more could we hear that sweet and ringing voice, the talks of sparkling wit and humour, or those words of profound wisdom from the depths of deep realization which intellect could not fathom! Tears gushed forth from my eyes as from a fountain. 'Roll! Roll! you beads of Love, from the fountain of Love to the Ocean of Love! It is not fruit and flowers, nor sweets and savoury dishes that can be offered at Thy feet any more. The only oblation that would reach Thee are tears of love from that perennial spring that is the core of

our Being, of which you are the Source in your disembodied fullness. The divine *leela* (play) is over.’

So his *leela* was really over on that momentous fourteenth day of April, 1950. No one was kept in doubt or suspense or taken by surprise. It was a prolonged ailment and abundant opportunity was afforded to one and all from far and near to come and see him. It was one of the worst maladies that could afflict the human frame and the way he bore it was an object lesson to all. Not once did his face reveal agony or suffering, but he carried on the normal routine with his majestic smile of supreme bliss in his face and the mirthful repartees and sallies of wit. It was also plain that he used no mysterious yogic or superhuman powers to alleviate or conquer pain as the following remark he made about the disease would show: “Appah! Who could conceive that such a disease as this could be in this world? When a hiccough comes the whole body splits like the flashes of lightning in a cloud!” This remark was made by him in such a cool and composed way as though it was not his body that was suffering.

# A DIALOGUE

*A. W. Chadwick (Sadhu Arunachala)*

SOMEONE came to see me the other day and in the course of conversation said: "X says that a Maharshi could never make a legal will."

First, it would be well to explain that X is a very prominent Indian, a lawyer who has held most responsible positions and whose pronouncements are still snapped up by the papers and respected by all.

*Friend:* X says that a Maharshi could never make a will.

*Self:* Oh, is X a Maharshi?

*F:* No, of course not, but his opinion is to be respected.

*S:* But if he is not a Maharshi how can he possibly tell how a Maharshi would behave under the circumstances? I thought such were supposed to be perfectly free, but you would bind them in chains.

*F:* No, not that, but he just would not do it, X says.

*S:* Does he refute it from the legal aspect? I know he is a great lawyer, but in this case, I am afraid, he is deceiving himself.

*F:* No, not that I know of, from the moral aspect I should say.

*S:* Oh, then X sets himself up to judge the morals of Maharshi. Personally, from what I have heard of X, I should prefer not to follow him in this. Strange how he can presume to judge Maharshi!

*F:* Not exactly judge, but he is deeply read in the scriptures and so may be considered an authority.

S: Deeply read in the scriptures, is he? Then what about Janaka?

F: Janaka? I don't understand. He did not make a will.

S: How do you know? In any case he ruled a kingdom. So Maharshis may rule kingdoms, may they?

F: (reluctantly) Yes.

S: Well, what about Lord Krishna?

F: Krishna? Anyway I am certain he never made a will.

S: Probably not, but he sported with the naked *gopis*. You therefore allow that Maharshis may sport with *gopis*, do you?

F: Don't laugh at me. These things are beyond our comprehension.

S: That is anyway an admission. You do allow that some things are beyond our comprehension, but I doubt if X would. But wait, what of Rama?

F: I don't understand. (By now my friend was beginning to get a bit suspicious).

S: Well, Rama had a wife, went to war, shot someone in the back.

F: No, no, I will not allow you to speak of Lord Rama like that. He is sacred for me. Anything he did was perfect and must have some secret meaning.

S: Couldn't you admit as much for Maharshi?

F: (Mumbles).

S: Now I have so far only started and yet you have not been able to explain the action of one of your heroes. Why do you presume to explain Sri Ramana Maharshi away so easily? Is making a will so terrible?

F: But he was a *sannyasin* and as such can own nothing. So how could he make a will?

S: He was never a *sannyasin*. He was never anything. He was just indifferent to possessions.

F: If he was indifferent, then why did he own anything?

S: Was Janaka attached?

F: Of course not!

S: Yet he owned a whole kingdom and Maharshi only a few acres of land.

F: But Janaka was so indifferent, he never made a will.

S: Again I ask, how do you know? He was undoubtedly succeeded by his legal heirs. But you are so entirely prejudiced.

F: (indignantly) Prejudiced? I? Why do you say that?

S: Obviously. You allow without question all sorts of apparently doubtful actions, which would appear to show attachment and even irregularities on the part of your scriptural heroes, but the agreement of Maharshi to the terms of a will to save complications in the future you say is impossible.

F: But Maharshi never owned anything.

S: Yes, he did. He owned the Ashram. He admitted so before the Commission.

F: Tell me about it.

S: Some years ago there was a case against the Ashram, a former member claimed the whole place as his own property. Maharshi gave evidence on Commission, in the course of which he said that he belonged to *atyasrama* (transcending all prescribed *asrama*) and as such, according to the *puranas* he could own and transmit property.

F: Hey! Stop! According to the *puranas*?

S: Perhaps your learned X, who knows all that the scriptures say, has not mentioned the fact to you that according to the *puranas* Maharshi could own property. This ought to shake the arguments of most people, but they won't listen when it is inconvenient. But to proceed, he admitted that properties had been given to him and he had accepted them; that he had given a power of attorney to his brother to control therein; that to speak of Sri Ramanasramam and himself was



synonymous; that he had never taken any order of *sannyasa* and so there was absolutely no reason why he should not own property. For the convenience of those who wished to visit him it had been useful to have the Ashram. He added that he knew the property was associated with worldly life, but he did not hate worldly life.

*F:* But Maharshi was always so detached.

*S:* Yes, but he did not confuse ownership with attachment; there need be no connection. He did not claim things for himself, yet no one but a crank could pretend that various things had not been given to him. Were they not there in evidence? Who else do you suggest owned the Ashram?

*F:* The consensus of disciples.

*S:* Rubbish. Nothing was ever given to a consensus of the disciples. You know very well that all the things were gifts humbly placed by disciples at the feet of their guru.

*F:* But why the will? Surely he did not mind what happened to it at all. You yourself say that he did not claim things for himself.

*S:* The will was his grace, extraordinary as this may seem to you at first sight, and upsetting as it may appear to all those opponents of the Ashram who have made such a lot of propaganda about it.

*F:* His grace? Explain.

*S:* In his infinite consideration for us and others who should remain after him, he agreed to a document which should protect the Ashram and allow it to continue as a holy place. Evidence of the necessity for this has been ample since his passing, when all sorts of people have been making extravagant claims and trying to get the Ashram into their own hands and control it as they want it. Read the document carefully and you will see how provisions have been made for everything – we have been told how to carry on the Ashram.

*F:* They say he did not want it, but they made him agree.

*S:* That only shows the gross ignorance of these people, whoever they are. Nobody at any time could make Maharshi do anything. He was firmer than the Hill itself and absolutely immovable. Ask any of those who moved with him, they will just laugh at you. Make him do anything!

*F:* But is it legal?

*S:* Absolutely. I can't go into that now. It would take too long. I am certain that its legality can never be shaken in spite of X and all his legal knowledge. In fact even the opponents of the Ashram in the recent case have not queried its legality.

*F:* In spite of all you have said, I do not feel sure.

*S:* Don't worry, look at it from this point: He never did anything for himself or his own comfort, but he was always all consideration for others. The necessity for some document to help others after was explained to him and he saw this necessity and agreed. I repeat, it was an act of grace. Time itself is proving how wise he was.

# BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA

*Mrs. Eleanor P. Noye*

“IN silence thou said, ‘Stay silent’, and thyself stood silent.”  
 “As the sky is in no way affected by the formation and dispersion of clouds, so the real Self is in no way affected by the birth and death of the body.” – *Hymns to Sri Arunachala*.

It is now three years since Bhagavan Sri Ramana renounced his physical body, but according to the Vedic school, his loving spirit is ever with us, guiding us on the path of truth, ever waiting to make us one with him, unceasing in his love for all creatures. As the well-known Dr. C. G. Jung of Zurich said, “What we find in the life and teachings of Sri Ramana is the purest of India with its breadth of world liberated and liberating humanity, it is a chant of millenniums.”

Years ago when Sri Bhagavan lived on the hill a disciple asked him who he was, when Bhagavan replied:

“Within the sacred Lotus-heart of everyone,  
 From mighty Vishnu up in Heaven serene, to low  
 Down mortal man, the Self, as Pure Awareness, shines  
 Supreme, who is Arunachala Ramana Himself.  
 And when thy mind in love for Him doth pine and melt,  
 And reach the inmost heart, wherein He dwells as thine  
 Own Self, the Lord, belov’d, lo, then, thine inner eye  
 Would open, and as pure Awareness, Him reveal.”

Words cannot express the infinite love and tenderness we experienced during those last days beside him. He seemed to clasp us to his bosom as a mother clasps her child. As we beheld

his utter submission, one could not help but think of Lord Jesus before the crucifixion. Sri Bhagavan treated his body as something apart from him. As the body grew weaker his face became more radiant, his eyes shone like two stars. He was ever abiding in the Self, or the Sun of Pure Consciousness. He made this remark a few days before he passed away. "They say I am dying, but I shall be more alive than before." Now he is all-pervading.

Sri Bhagavan never asked anything for himself but was always looking after the comforts of the devotees, and he did this to the day he passed away. He insisted upon giving *darshan* twice daily and thousands walked past the room where he lay.

A brilliant meteor moved slowly across the sky and disappeared over Arunachala, just as Sri Bhagavan was released from his physical form at 8-47 p.m. on the 14th of April 1950 (Tamil month of Chitrai, Krishna Trayodasi), but it was not the end. He has no beginning or end. As the devotees chanted "ARUNACHALA SIVA" (a hymn he composed while walking around the Hill), the curtain was drawn on one of the greatest souls that ever trod this earth. Sri Bhagavan is indeed a blessing to all mankind.

But what tribute can a candle pay to the sun? "What we best conceive, we fail to speak." "The Blessed shall hear no vain words, but only the word 'PEACE'." (*Koran*).

# I Am! I Am! I Am!

*P. S. Jivanna Rao*

THE above title to this note is the concluding line of the gem of two short poems by Grant Duff (Douglas Ainslie) author and poet, appearing in the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* of Ramanasramam (1949, page 88) under the title, "With Sri Ramana of Arunachala." The thrice repeated ecstatic 'I am' inspires greatly. So also Grant Duff's other contributions on Maharshi, although few, are instructive and valuable, viz., the prefaces to the three small books: *Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala*, *Truth Revealed* and *Sri Ramana Gita*. His article in the souvenir entitled, "My Visit to Maharshi, the Greatest Event in My Life," also contains within it another gem of poetry.

Grant Duff's first visit to Maharshi was on 19-1-35. His personal characteristics and Maharshi's impression of him are recorded in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*. By reason of his high intellectual attainments and associations, as revealed in his above mentioned contributions, combined with a poet's sensitiveness to Truth and Inner Reality, Grant Duff was well qualified not only to understand intellectually and estimate Maharshi's teaching at its highest worth, but also experience inwardly the joy without alloy, 'I am! I am! I am!', to which he has given expression in the poem. It may be said that providence brought him to Maharshi's presence all the way from England at a high sacrifice of time, money and personal comforts, in his old age. And his earnestness and longing for internal peace brought him the rich and rare reward of

Maharshi's grace towards Self-realisation. We may very well profit by the spiritual experience of this distinguished and devoted western savant.

About 'I am' itself, Maharshi has spoken beautifully as follows on one occasion: "Wakefulness passes off, I am, the dream state passes off, I am, the sleep state passes off, I am. They repeat themselves and yet I am. They are like pictures moving on the screen in a cinema show. They do not affect the screen. Similarly also, I remain unaffected although these states pass off" (*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, recorded on 22-8-1936).

Also later (on 18-6-1946): "I is the name of God. It is the first and greatest of all mantras. Even OM is second to it" (Day by day with Bhagavan by A. Devaraja Mudaliar, p. 57 ). More references to "I," "I-I," "I AM," "I AM is the God," "I AM is the whole truth," "Be still and know that I AM," etc., are to be found in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* and in other Ramana literature.

Finally it seems to me that 'I AM', 'I AM' is only the '*Aham-Aham*' or 'I-I', the inner experience of the absolute *Brahman* taught to us in the following important verse of Maharshi in *Ramana Gita* (II.2), composed by Maharshi himself, which contains the quintessence of his teaching and may well be called *Ramanopanishad* in a single verse. It is most fittingly engraved on black marble high on the northern wall of the temple hall at Ramanasramam for future generations to know.

"In the centre of the Heart cavern, the Absolute *Brahman* alone shines as 'I-I' in the form of the Self. Enter the Heart by the mind seeking the Self, or plunging in, or by stopping the movement of breath and inhere thou in the Self." (Translation by G. V. Subbaramayya.)

## WITH SRI RAMANA OF ARUNACHALA

I've wandered far. Yes I have been  
From land to land to land:  
Sages I've seen, great King and Queen,  
The lowly, wise and grand  
But only there – at the Asramam  
By Arunachalam,  
Have I known that joy without alloy,  
I am! I am! I am!

– Grant Duff (Douglas Ainslie)

# MEANS AND ENDS

*A. W. Chadwick (Sadhu Arunachala)*

**B**HAGAVAN Sri Ramana was essentially an individualist and, if he had ever had one, such schemes as Communism, would never have found any place in his philosophy, where man is treated in the mass and the individual is entirely sacrificed.

If one had discussed Bolshevism with Bhagavan he would doubtless have been quick to point out the virtues that are to be found among its vices. Nothing phenomenal is perfect, it must always have its opposite, and so it was useless to spend the time picking holes when it was inevitable that holes could be found everywhere. Rather let us search out the good and follow that.

Once when Bhagavan was informed of the death of a noted criminal and others were recounting his various offences against society, Bhagavan quietly remarked: "But he was scrupulously clean, he bathed at least three times a day."

I have never been to Russia and so have no firsthand experience of the state of things ruling there, but most reports of serious investigators agree, the Bolsheviks are professedly followers of the philosophy of Marx, which was one of violence and ruthless war. Any means were allowable so long as the ends could be achieved. How false this is does not yet seem to have struck them. How is it possible for anything to produce its opposite?

How can hate produce love, violence non-injury or war peace? And this is where the present mad race for armaments is so absurdly fallacious, while each nation is so swift to justify its



own part in it, attributing it to fear of its neighbour. So fear breeds fear and the endless cycle turns slowly on its axis.

But Bhagavan was insistent on 'means' and taught that we should leave the ends to look after themselves. "How can you help the world until you have helped yourself?" he would ask. "Don't worry about what other people are doing or saying, you have quite enough to do in worrying about yourself. You want to reform the world, do you? First reform yourself and then it will be time enough to think about the world." It was always the same. Perfect yourself and the world will automatically be found to be perfect. And did not Ramakrishna Paramahansa teach exactly the same in his day?

Thus it was the means that he always stressed and never the ends. If asked about Self-realization, what it was like, or what would be our state in the future, he would always reply: "Why worry about something in the future? It is the here and now which are important. You are Self-realized always, but only ignorant of the fact." The 'Now', the present moment, is the important thing, not some mythical future, because space and time are only modes of the individuality; for Self they do not exist, only 'Now' exists.

The modern philosopher, Dewey, whom I have just been reading, would seem almost to identify means with ends, but in his dislike of dualism he has discarded the spiritual altogether. I think his is really a mechanistic universe, but what gives the machine its motive power he has forgotten to mention, or perhaps, rather, has found it more convenient to ignore. Russell, with his neo-utilitarian philosophy which denies its ancestry, would doubtless agree with him. Cannot we see Bhagavan smiling at their gropings, for though he would doubtless have endorsed their enhancement of means as preferable to ends, he would hardly have supported them in the interpretation they have given to them. It is strange how all these philosophers fall

into the same trap. They imagine that possession brings happiness. Increase the number of gadgets to the maximum, give over-abundant food and luxury and life will be bliss.

They are frantically looking without for what can only be found within. This seems to be the fault of most of the moderns. They imagine that things and situations in themselves give happiness; they constantly try to repeat experiences which once caught them in a mood of receptivity and, constantly failing to find what they so ardently desire, become disillusioned in consequence.

We hear on every side from the reformers: "It's all right for you, but who is going to help the poor suffering world?"

But it would be useless to point out to them that with all their help they have made a pretty good mess of it up to now, that perhaps a few less helpers might after all be better. That to try and help others before you have succeeded in helping yourself is, to say the least, futile; that this senseless search for ends is a waste of time, that means and ends are really one. For has it not been said: "The search itself is the goal?" Which summed up, is just "Be." Don't spend your time looking to the future, but realize here and now that you are always the same, the Atman.

Actually there are no ends, for there has never been a beginning.

# PORTRAIT OF THE GURU

*Atmananda Giri*

WE never had a dull time when we were in Bhagavan Ramana's presence. There was much mirth and laughter. Bhagavan used to talk as much as would be necessary and he would be gay or grave as the occasion demanded. Some people write that Bhagavan never spoke and such writings may surprise those who stayed in the Ashram for a while. When anyone put a question, he would answer. He narrated the lives of saints and his own reminiscences whenever he was requested to. Often he would dramatize according to his feelings. The word 'dramatize' may not be correct, but what I mean is that his feeling and expression would go together. I have seen him behave childlike, and at other times be grave and poised like a king.

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. Some people took it and examined it and it was sent to the office. Suri Nagamma came and Bhagavan asked her whether she had seen it. Then it was sent for. Bhagavan was saying: "Let her see, let her see!" At that time his mood and expression were like those of a child exhibiting his toys to another child.

Another day Prof. Subbaramayya told Bhagavan that Mauna Swami of Kuttalam used to say that longevity depended on food and asked whether that was so. Immediately Bhagavan asked whether the Swami who said that was still alive. His answer lay in this counter-question, since the Swami was no more.

Mr. Mudaliar began to narrate that the same swami stayed for some time with Echammal. The swami had some extraordinary powers. One day he told Echammal: "You see, I have some powers. I can get whatever I like. But your swami has none." Echammal told him: "You have desires, my swami has none." Bhagavan did not like the trend of the conversation, with its implicit belittling that swami, so he narrated another incident. The swami in his *purva asrama* (previous station in life) was known as Sivayya. One day when they were going up the Hill, Bhagavan saw Mr. Sivayya carrying a pot of water on his head. Bhagavan asked him why he was carrying it. He told him: "Bhagavan may feel thirsty and water may be needed." Narrating the incident Bhagavan's eyes brimmed with tears.

From this I learnt that we should not speak ill of anyone. We must bear in mind the good qualities of others.

## RAMANA LIVES

*Major A. W. Chadwick (Sadhu Arunachala)*

UNDOUBTEDLY the same peace is to be found at Tiruvannamalai as in the old days when Bhagavan's physical body was still with us. Some people declare that they find it is stronger now than formerly. They had been distracted by his form, and now that this distraction is no longer there they enjoy undisturbed the bliss of his amazing aura. Did he not himself say during those last sad days, "You say I am going to die. Die! I shall be more alive than ever." And so it is.

But there are still a number who declare that he is dead, that there is no use coming to the Ashram and sitting beside an empty tomb. "No doubt there are psychic vibrations," they admit reluctantly, "but those you can find in any holy place. No, it is no use remaining there, the initial impetus having been given you, you must go off in search of a 'living guru'." Living guru, indeed! Is he not now and ever most living?

But let us examine their argument. It is something like this. Bhagavan having left his body has become absorbed in the Infinite (you don't mean to pretend that he is still bound to a corpse, do you?), so except for certain sentimental attachments there is no use remaining in the Ashram or even visiting it. If you do go you may feel certain vibrations, the backwash, so to speak, of the past, but these are useless for *sadhana*, or useful only as a preliminary step which will lead you on to a 'living guru'. But for anybody with any pretence to advancement, it is useless. There's an end of it.

But like so many plausible arguments it is entirely false, for even by these people Bhagavan was admitted to be a *jivanmukta*, one who is already and finally released from ego. And how often did he not say: “You think I am the body, this corpse that I have to bear about. That is where you are wrong. I am universal.” You see, “universal”, even before he apparently left the body.

The whole mistake is initial, in the interpretation they put on the word *jivanmukta*; or in what they think a *jnani* really is and how he functions. When it is found that a *jivanmukta* is already absorbed in the Infinite and that for him the apparent change he undergoes is no change at all, there should be no more misapprehension. There is no further step for a *jnani* to take; he lost all sense of doership or association with a particular body when he finally knew himself to be a *jnani*. The physical death is only just a happening in the myriad strange happenings in *maya*. He was in no way limited to a body while it was functioning. It was there, one might almost say, for us. We needed something that we could see, somebody who could speak to us. Now we must get along without the comfort of the physical presence, but it does not mean that Bhagavan has gone anywhere, indeed, as he said himself: “Where could I go? I am always here.”

While he was in the body, his body acted as a visible centre for concentration, something tangible, as a point to focus on, which drew the disciples to it. Yet he never was the body even then, he was – and knew he was – the eternal *Atman* alone. So now what is more appropriate than that the place in which he lived so long and which is so permeated with his presence should serve as this centre for concentration? But to pretend for one moment that Bhagavan Ramana has been dispersed, just blown away in thin air, is madness. How could anybody who knew him talk like this?

“But no, we don’t exactly say that. He has become absorbed in the Infinite, become in fact, the Infinite,” they would reply, “Now he is everywhere, not just at a point in Madras”. But as I said above, this is no argument. He was always the Infinite and denied his being in the body. The situation is exactly the same, except that now we no longer have his embodied form before us. But there is still his Ashram and the *samadhi* where that sacred body is enshrined.

Theoretically, I suppose, there never was any need to seek him in Tiruvannamalai, even when he was functioning through a body, except for the well-known rule that a Guru is necessary. Yet we felt the need, and flocking there knew the benefit. Today we can still do the same.

But in the old days he spoke, gave verbal instructions. Now that can happen no more. But to how few did he actually ever speak? How many thousands just came and sat before him silently and went away without a word? How many came with their minds bursting with questions and in his presence found all the questions self-answered? All this is still possible.

Still, too, can we sit in front of the *samadhi* and receive the most potent vibrations, get answers to our unasked questions, comfort and encouragement when needed.

To what, after all, did all his spoken instructions amount? “There is only one *Self*. You are that.”

Amplifying slightly it becomes: there is nothing to do, nothing to seek. There is only a false identification with limitation to discard and that is done by concentration on the Eternal Witness, the One behind all phenomena. Know who you are and there is no more to know. You cannot be the eternally-changing body, you witness that; you cannot be the senses that observe and contact, you use them; you cannot be the mind which reasons, that is only a tool; you cannot even be the named individual, because that has its changes of childhood,

youth and old age, it is born and it dies, it ceases in deep sleep, it takes entirely new forms and names in various births, you are a witness of that too. But we know, each one of us, that there is a permanent 'I' behind all these functions and changes. We would only concentrate on that instead of on the apparent world, we should have no more worries or problems.

Any further additions to these teachings were purely given as a sop to the ever-inquisitive mind which wants to know, to probe into the future, but is never satisfied, for as soon as one doubt is cleared there is another waiting to pop up and take its place. Moreover, how is it ever possible to clear doubts intellectually? For the moment we may be satisfied, then we forget the arguments, or remember another on our side of the question which we forgot to pose. Bhagavan, knowing this, spoke little. "Silence is best!" he would say. And here once more we are led back to the Ashram where the same silence can be found, the same presence, the same inspiration, and the same all-absorbing peace.



# RAMANASHRAM TODAY

*Arthur Osborne*

THERE are so many spiritual centres in India that not only the foreign tourist but even the Indian devotee may well be excused for wondering which one to visit. However, it is not simply a question of duplication; each one has its own specific character, so that while one meets the need of one person, another provides a haven to someone else.

First of all comes the question of the aim of a spiritual centre, because this decides the sort of people who are likely to be attracted to it. The Maharshi was clearly and solely concerned with guiding people towards Liberation or Self-realisation, that is to *moksha*. But is this not the case with every Ashram and holy place? Not at all. There are places where people go to pray for a son or a job, to win a lawsuit or pass an examination, to obtain release from sickness or misfortune.

I do not say that no such prayers are ever answered at Ramanashram, but I do say that the Maharshi did not approve of such motives in those who came to him. Rather, he tried to awaken in them the realisation that they were not the suffering body but the eternally blissful Self and thereby to give them serenity even in misfortune.

There are also places where people go in the hope of developing powers, obtaining visions of the deity, reading people's thoughts, curing sickness, and so forth. To all such aspirants the Maharshi was even more discouraging. Not only do such powers not lead to Liberation, but they can actually be an impediment

to it, since men become just as attached to them, or to the desire for them, as to worldly wealth and power.

All this implies that Ramanashram is not a place visited by large crowds in search of transient gains. Rather, it is for the serious aspirant who has understood that Liberation is the supreme goal and who seeks the grace and support of the Master to guide him on his way.

Even if the goal is agreed upon, there are various paths or disciplines for approaching it. The Maharshi taught the path of Self-enquiry – Who am I? This is not investigating the mind, conscious or subconscious, but seeking the Self underlying the mind. Therefore he said: “There can be no answer to the question; whatever answer the mind gives must be wrong.” The answer comes as an awakening of pure consciousness, a current of awareness in the heart.

This is pure *jnana*, but the Maharshi also taught a path of *bhakti*. He often said: “There are two ways: ask yourself ‘Who am I?’ or submit.” A philosopher could easily prove that these two paths are mutually exclusive. If you seek to realise your identity with the One Universal Self, which is the Absolute, you logically cannot worship a Personal God or Guru at the same time. Logically not, but in real life you can, because you have different moods and are helped by different kinds of approach. Therefore, in spite of logic, the Maharshi said that the two paths are not incompatible; and his devotees have found it so.

It will be seen that both these paths are direct inner disciplines, independent of ritual; so here we have another characteristic of Ramanashram. There is a minimum of ritual and organisation there. People go and sit silent in meditation before the Maharshi’s shrine or in the hall where he sat for so many years with his devotees. They walk on the sacred mountain, Arunachala, or sit in their rooms. They visit or talk. They arrange

to take their meals at the Ashram or prepare their own food, as they choose. There is scarcely any outer discipline. The Vedas are chanted in front of the shrine, morning and evening, as they used to be in the Maharshi's presence in his lifetime, but even for this attendance is not compulsory. And those who do attend sit together, shoulder to shoulder, *brahmin* and non-*brahmin*, Hindu and foreigner, which would not please those who make a fetish of orthodoxy. This, however, does not imply laxity; the discipline comes from within.

Pure *jnana marga* and pure *bhakti marga* though it is, the Maharshi's path contains a strong element of *karma marga* also, since he expects his devotees to follow it in the life of the world. Time and again someone would come to him and ask his authorisation to renounce the world, and he would not give it.

"Why do you think you are a householder? The similar thought that you are a *sannyasin* will haunt you even if you go forth as one. Whether you continue in the household or renounce it and go to live in the forest, your mind haunts you. The ego is the source of thought. It creates the body and the world and makes you think of being a householder. If you renounce, it will only substitute the thought of renunciation for that of the family and the environment of the forest for that of the household. But the mental obstacles are always there for you. They even increase greatly in the new surroundings. Change of environment is no help. The one obstacle is the mind, and this must be overcome whether in the home or in the forest. If you can do it in the forest, why not in the home? So why change the environment?"

How does this affect Ramanashram? In the first place, it means that there are few *sadhus* or *sannyasins* to be found there. Also, not many of the Maharshi's devotees live there permanently. Most of them pursue their professional life in the world, practising his *sadhana* invisibly, without form or ritual,

and only coming to Tiruvannamalai from time to time, to recharge the batteries, so to speak. Thinking of them, a doctor, an engineer, a professor, a bank manager, an editor, a cinema proprietor and many others come to mind. When it becomes appropriate for one of them to retire from active life in the world and settle down at Tiruvannamalai, circumstances become propitious. It just happens so. Visitors tend, therefore, to be such as have pledged their life to silent, invisible *sadhana* while performing their obligations in the world, and who seek the grace of the Maharshi, the power of his support, to aid them in doing so.

Another result of the formless, essential nature of the Maharshi's path is the large proportion of foreigners both among the visitors and the resident devotees. There is no need to be a Hindu to follow it. Anyone, whatever religion he professes, whether he professes any formal religion or not, can practise Self-enquiry or can worship and submit. Therefore the Maharshi never expected any of his devotees to change from one religion to another. Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Parsis came to him, as well as Hindus. Some continued to practise the forms of their religions, others not; it was up to them.

Mr. Evans-Wentz, the well-known writer on Tibetan Buddhism, visited the Maharshi and asked whether he recommended any special methods for Europeans, and he replied: "It depends on the mental equipment of the individual. There are no hard and fast rules." Each aspirant was guided and helped according to his aptitude, not on any basis of race, caste, sex or religion.

While the present article was being written, it so happened that the Ashram received a letter from an American woman who never saw the Maharshi, and indeed has never been to India, containing the following message:

“Great blessing and benediction was unexpectedly mine. At 7 a.m., just before waking, a vivid vision of Maharshi, potent and powerful, was vouchsafed briefly to me, in colour. Yes, I know visions are not our aim and goal. However, the depth of surrender, ecstasy, awe, wave after wave, deeper and deeper – wave after wave of Bliss ineffable – was overwhelming, wonderful and encouraging: almost all vestige of mind was gone. The veil into Self was delicate, tenuous-thin. Of course, thankful, humble and grateful, my dedication deepens greatly after this. The import and impact of it is with me still.”

Of course.

Is it any wonder that people turn to him from all parts of the world? Even from behind the Iron Curtain letters come.

Normally, it has been possible for any spiritual aspirant in any religion to find guidance within the framework of his own tradition. Today it is no longer easy, if at all possible, to find a guide in any religion who has himself attained the heights and can guide others thereto. Nor is it easy, even though one had such a guide, to follow any strictly orthodox path in the conditions of the modern world. However, the divine grace always provides an answer to man's needs, and in this age has appeared on earth the supreme guide, bringing a path to be followed invisibly by anyone who gives his heart to it.

The Maharshi often reminded those who came to him that they were not the body. Now there are those who presume that he was the body and, no longer seeing his body at Tiruvannamalai, take it that he is not there. But not those who have felt in their hearts the power and subtlety of his guidance, the vibrant, all-pervading peace of Arunachala, the sacred mountain at whose foot his Ashram is located. He used to say: “The purpose of the outer Guru is only to awaken the inner Guru in the heart.” And shortly before leaving the body he told a group of devotees: “When the Guru has awakened

the inner Guru in the heart of his devotees, he is free to leave the body.”

Yes, it may be said, that is all very well for those who were already his devotees when he shed the body, but what about those others who approach him now and feel the need for an outer Guru?

It may be that in some cases he influences them indirectly through those older disciples in whom the inner Guru has been awakened. Certain it is that in many cases he influences them directly and powerfully, as with the American lady from whose letter I have quoted (though not necessarily with any dream or vision).

A visitor asked once whether the contact with the Guru would continue after the dissolution of his physical body and he replied: “The Guru is not the physical form, so contact will remain even after his physical form vanishes.”

If it be asked how he can guide individuals or perform any function after having become One with the Absolute, the answer is: in the first place, he has not become One with the Absolute but simply realised his preexisting and eternal Oneness. In the second place, he had already realised this Oneness while wearing the body and was universal then, as he is now. He himself told us that death makes no difference to the *jnani*. The only way of understanding how the *jnani*, who is universal, can perform an individual function is to become one. Therefore, when people asked him such questions he would usually reply: “Never mind about the *jnani*; first find out who you are.” And when you have done that fully you are the *jnani*.

But surely this continued guidance after leaving the body is unusual! Yes, it is unusual; but who is to bind Divine Providence with regulations? The circumstances also are unusual. I have remarked how the formless path the Maharshi prescribed compensates for the modern difficulty in finding adequate

guidance within the forms of any religion; similarly, the invisible Guru may compensate for the modern difficulty in finding a fully potent living Guru on earth. Such explanations are for those who like to speculate; for those who are content to strive on the path, guidance is there.

This invisible guidance also has an effect on the Ashram. It means that many or most of those who come, both from India and abroad, are new people who never saw the Maharshi in his lifetime but have been drawn to him in various ways since then.

The conclusion, then, is that if you are a ritualist or strict formalist, if you crave material boons, if you seek visions or powers, there are other places better suited to you than Ramanashram. But if you have understood the ultimate spiritual goal of liberation and seek grace and guidance on the path, you will find it at Ramanashram.

# SEEKERS AND “SEEKERS”

*S. S. Cohen*

OF all places in the world an ashram is the one place where, for various reasons, many illusions flourish without one being aware of them; so that he who is not careful or mentally well-balanced runs the risk of moving counter to the purpose for which he has taken all the trouble to meet a great *Rishi* and benefit by his holy presence. The most common illusion which has come to my notice during my long residence in Sri Ramanashram, at Tiruvannamalai, is that of the person, who professedly comes to learn, soon begins to teach, being firmly convinced that he has more fundamentally grasped the Master's teaching, and has made quicker progress than his neighbour, a much older disciple. What is worse, he does not shrink from loudly drumming his easy victory and disparaging the other devotees on every occasion that offers.

The 'Seekers' do not seem to have learned the meaning of humility, which is the foremost virtue of a *sadhaka*. For the mind turned bright by its own purity cannot but rightly assess the difficulties of the task ahead and the relentless fight to be put up in the ups and downs of the long and arduous road. A pure seeker allows no outward appearance to cloud his judgement, but gratefully seeks the help of senior and more experienced *sadhakas*. For what depths of suffering these may not have touched, and what crucifixion they may not have endured to spiritual heights of which they cannot speak, nor the newcomer has an inkling. Sane outlook, the strongest



weapon in the battle of ordinary life, is much more so in the life of the spirit, wherein no landmarks nor measuring rods enlighten the yogi for his direction, the distance he travelled and the progress he made, and where any slip may lead to dismal failure and regret.

It is not for nothing that the blessed ancients laid down the *ashtangas* as the eight stages or expedients to Perfection. The very first *anga*, *yama*, consists of the ten virtues to be acquired, of which fortitude, which combines humility with patience, is one of the foremost, before the next *anga*, *niyama*, the stage of practice, is entered. So, entering an ashram with the sincere determination of realising God, involves a process of self-denudation of everything that smacks of the ego, which does not end in a month or two, a year or two, but which may take a lifetime, and absorbs all one's faculties and concentrated energy. Those who are not prepared to make the spiritual path their sole life occupation and become *sadhakas*, and *sadhakas* only, should not dream of being able to snatch Self-Realisation from the Guru in matter of hours or weeks and quickly return to their old haunts and pet habits and avocations. They who fancy themselves being singled out by God Almighty for the gift of a touch-and-go ripeness, which enables them to leap with one jump over the path, simply delude themselves.

It is but natural that, coming as they do from the blazing world of competitive business and the ego-ridden, modern social life, they should get much peace, and even a glimpse of the Reality, in the presence of the Master, and the holiness which emanates from him. But they should not mistake that will-o'-the-wisp experience as the final Realisation and start looking down upon the "dull-witted, blank-faced old disciples". They do well to study the Master's teaching and the standard Advaitic literature on the subject of Self-realisation and *mukti* to know what it fundamentally means. Besides, true seekers

always minimise their attainments and virtues, and ever-and-anon check them with those of the Guru to gauge the efforts they have yet to make. I know a great devotee of Sri Bhagavan who ended by attaining the highest state by no other means than filling his mind and heart of the Master's Divine qualities. For years he daily sat inside and outside the darshan Hall in rapt contemplation of the Master till he reached the mental purity which is the permanent state of the Liberated man. In 1938, I had the inestimable privilege of spending three days with him in his small ashram in Kumbakonam, in the South, to which he had since retired and heard from his own lips his fervent adoration of Sri Bhagavan and the details of his *sadhana*. Unfortunately, he is no more in the flesh to tell his tale, but a few years before the Master's illness he passed into *Mahanirvana*. When on his deathbed he was brought to Tiruvannamalai at his own request to have a last look of Sri Bhagavan, the Master was exceedingly kind to him. He went to his bed in Palakottu and filled him with the bliss of his Grace, which he richly deserved.

The Guru of the mighty magnitude of Sri Bhagavan is not here only to teach, but also to be a model of Perfection and a touchstone by whom the disciples test their virtues and progress. And that requires a long residence with him. All the yogic scriptures enjoin a protracted company of the Guru (Guru *sangha*) for these and many other advantages. The ingenuity which after a flying visit claims ability to dispense with this *sangha* and succeeds must be very unique and extraordinary, indeed. But when it becomes so common it gives rise to the suspicion of some fundamental, common inhibition, which impedes rather than quickens. Everywhere in the Scriptures enlightened guidance is given to him who is a genuine striver for release, and everywhere emphasis is laid on constant practice, on solitude and on surrender of all

activity, etc., which reveal the spiritual life to be one of incessant efforts and vigilance.

When after the great battle of Kurukshetra, the victorious Pandava Princes returned to Indraprastha, their capital, Arjuna confessed to Sri Krishna that the Supreme teaching which the Lord had given him on the battlefield had gone out of his “degenerate mind” and begged of him to repeat it now that his (Arjuna’s) mind was free to listen, attentively. The Lord was displeased with him, yet repeated the same teaching in the form of a parable with extensive advice on “the best line of conduct” of a wise man saying among others:

“He who wishes to apply himself to the final Emancipation should give up all action, restrain his senses, and abstain from earning and from parading his asceticism. . . He should not live by any occupation or perform any action which involves expectation of profit . . . He should resort to concealed piety and adopt the mode of life necessary for experience (of the *Brahman*) . . . Though undeluded he should act in the manner of these other so that deluded may have no special respect for him.” (*Anugita*) And Sri Shankara says in verse 367 of his *Vivekachudamani*: “The first steps of yoga are control of speech, non-receiving of gifts, no entertaining of hopes, freedom from activity, and always living in a retired place.”

This is the advice of mighty Beings, and genuine seekers should heed it, and meditate over all its implications and learn to be less loud about their achievements, and little more considerate towards those who, out of great devotion and detachment, had the patience and endurance to sit infinitely longer than they at the sacred Feet of the Master.

# THE MAHARSHI OF ARUNACHALA

*Sadhu Ekarasa (Dr. G. H. Mees)*

*Translated from the Dutch in "Mens en Kosmos"  
Vierde Jaargang, No. 2, March 1948.*

WHEN Kon-Fu-Tse met Wen-Poh-Hsuch Tse, a sage from the South, he first did not speak a word. Then his companion, Tse-Lu, said, "Master, for a long time you have wished to see Wen-Poh-Hsuch-Tse. Why is it that you don't speak, now that you see him?" Kon-Fu-Tse answered, "One only needs to look at someone like him, and Tao is. There is no need for speaking." (From Chuang-Tse, Chap. XXI).

In the presence of the Maharshi, the same thing happened to me twelve years ago when I saw him for the first time and during the many years that I visited him again and again, especially during the three years that I stayed near him almost without interruption. It is for this same reason that I find it ever so difficult to speak or write about the Maharshi, as I am often asked to do. It is not so very difficult to write about the course of the Maharshi's life or about his teachings. Both of them differ very little from those of the earlier great sages that Hinduism has produced, although in some respects the Maharshi himself is unique. It is certainly much easier to invent the image of a great sage and write a story about his life and works than to give a description of a living sage. Such a creation is produced

by emotional, intellectual, moral and cultural forces, whereas the important element which makes a human being a sage does not lie within these aspects of the human soul, but deeper in the essence which forms the ground of the spiritual. As long as attention is fixed on emotional, intellectual, moral and cultural life, there is a permanent contradiction which expresses itself in a duality of life and works, of that which is introvert and that which is extrovert, of theory and practice, of speaking and doing. However, as soon as the essence has become the basis, which is only the case with a real sage, who is Holy (which means “wholly”), there can no longer be any question of a contradiction. The essence is the unity of these contradictions that rule the lives of ordinary mortal beings, and in it these contradictions simply disappear. For visitors who have enough insight to perceive something of this essence, this unity of contradictions in the sage is exactly that element that makes such a mighty impression on them. Anybody who is honest with himself is aware of a contradiction between his being and his actions, between his inside and the outside which he shows to the world by his actions. With a sage he experiences that being and doing, that spiritual aspirations and practical life can be one, and this cannot but make a mighty impression upon him. Others, who are less honest with themselves and consequently are not disturbed by these contradictions, are probably more struck by a novel in which the life of some historical saint is set out in detail, written from the emotional and moral points of view but lacking the essence.

However, what has been said above is nothing but words – for the essence is just that which is beyond words and can’t be put into words. It is exactly that factor which one cannot describe, which one can only feel for oneself. One must see a sage in order to experience him – if only his eyes are able to see!

For a sage who lives in the realization, “I and my Father are One,” St. Dionysius’s words hold good: “All that you may say about God is untrue, for God is beyond speech and therefore what you say about God relates to something else.” Therefore, if in India someone asks me to speak or to write about the Maharshi, I am inclined either to answer that the questioner ought to visit the Maharshi and see for himself, or to do what Sri Sankaracharya did when somebody asked him to describe the real ecstasy. Sri Sankara sat quietly down and communicated the ecstasy by merely getting absorbed in it without any further word.

In Europe, however, neither of these answers will do. Under the circumstances, it would be unfair to suggest to people to go to India to see the Maharshi. Those very few to whom it is given by destiny to see him will be led to him of themselves. As for the demonstration, it would in almost all cases produce no effect, since it would be understood as a mere pose, meaningless in itself, for in Europe people go to each other to talk. The speechless absorption in some spiritual or super-spiritual state is so little known that to do so in the company of other people would be entirely misunderstood. Even in church “talking” is going on nearly the whole service; the mind is kept busy without interruption with sentimental, moral and spiritual images. A sage, however, possesses the calm of the Seventh Day of Creation: “God blessed and hallowed the Seventh Day by having rest on that day, after creating all things to perfection.”

It is in this way that sages advise their disciples to do nothing – a state of mind reflecting the calm of the Seventh Day. Read, for instance, what was said by Lao-Tse 2,500 years ago and by Chuang two centuries later and you find it is just the same as what the Maharshi teaches now. This “doing nothing” does not at all mean that one should do nothing! On the contrary, divine inactivity is the opposite of laziness, one of the “seven deadly

sins” which kill a man’s spirit or keep him dead. Laziness is the sin of not striving upwards, of indifference to higher life, and it brings spiritual death with it.

The inactivity of the sages of China, the rest on the Seventh Day of Creation, is that which the Maharshi calls the “Natural State”. This Natural State has nothing to do with the state of relation to the natural world propagated by the “back-to-nature” supporters, but is rather the state of mind in which no Fall is possible. It is a state of perfect inner rest and equilibrium, in which there is no striving whatever, and which in normal life may include the greatest activity. This comes to light in the six verses chosen by the Maharshi from *Yoga Vasishtha*. They contain instructions given to Prince Rama by his Guru, Vasishtha, and are found in *Upasanthi Prakarana*, in “The Story of *Punnya*, and *Pavana*.”

“Having enquired into (the nature of) all the states, (waking, dreaming and deep sleep), and ever holding steadfastly at heart to that state supreme, which is absolute and which is free from illusion, play in the world, O Raghava, the Hero! You have realized That in the heart which is the Substratum of truth of all appearances. Therefore, without ever abandoning that (right-perspective), play in the world just as you like.” (*Forty Verses*, Supplement 26).

“As one with feigned enthusiasm and joy, with feigned excitement and hatred, as one taking feigned initiative and making a feigned effort, play in the world, O Raghava, the Hero!” (*Forty Verses*, Supplement 27).

It is one of the wise traditions of Hinduism to look upon life as a Divine play – *lila*. For the sage, in whom *maya*, the world of appearances, and God-Reality have become one, who experiences God-in-Action and God-in-Being as a Oneness of which he himself forms a natural part, *maya* becomes *lila*, or Divine play. To engage in this play consciously and to enjoy it

from the centre of peace, described above as inactivity and rest and the natural state, is recommended by the sages. As a matter of course one should know and follow the rules (the conditions mentioned by Vasishta) in order to be able to play and enjoy the play.

I am often asked, mainly by Westerners, what exactly does the Maharshi do?

One should in fact answer, “The daily occupation of the sage is to be himself.” Because he really succeeds in doing so, the Maharshi makes such a great impression on many of his visitors. Not only does he demonstrate the Natural State, but in doing so he is perfectly natural – a man without any pose, without a mark. The Maharshi effects drastic changes in the lives of many like me. That’s what he does, and he does so by doing nothing at all. In no way does he force anything on anyone, he doesn’t even offer me advice regarding any problem of life. The world bristles with advisors, but with all their advice they are unable to solve world problems or personal difficulties. Their method is to try to get improvement from outside, which is like looking for a needle in a haystack. The method of the sage, on the other hand, is to let improvements come from within, from the essence that is the supreme quality and to let the improvements manifest themselves outwardly quite spontaneously and naturally, without any interference.

Concerning the Maharshi’s daily life, until recently it was entirely public. Visitors surrounded him night and day and he was ever inclined to pay attention to them and to answer their questions, provided they were sincere and their questions lay in the sphere of the spirit. In fact he was never alone. At night people slept in his room on mats on the floor, as is the Indian custom. Now that he has become old, the administrative head of the Ashram community that has grown up around him has made some rules, so that Maharshi is to be left alone for some



hours after lunch and during the night. The Maharshi himself has never asked for such protective measures. He is one with all people in a very real way. Until a few years ago, the Maharshi got up at 3 a.m. to cut vegetables in the Ashram kitchen. Day now begins in Ramanasramam before dawn with the recitation of some part of the *Yajur Veda* by *brahmins*, whose hereditary occupation it is to do so. This recitation is done in the hall where the Maharshi spends the day on his couch. By this chant orthodox Hinduism honours the sage, who himself is beyond any sectarianism or religious differences. Before sunset the recitation is repeated together with other texts. People in great number – usually hundreds, and even thousands during the time of temple festivals in town – are always present at the recital. Every day the Maharshi reads the incoming and outgoing mail. Letters from Ramanasramam are written by a secretary and signed by the administrative head of the Ashram. The Maharshi never signs anything. More than fifty years ago he gave up his name and possessions. He answers questions when they arise; glances through Tamil and English newspapers; he corrects translations of writings and reads proof sheets. All the while many people sit cross-legged in the hall, men on one side, women on the other. Small children walk about. Visitors – among them are nearly always a few Europeans – sit quietly meditating or in their own way profiting by the presence of the Maharshi. Frequently visitors or inmates of the Ashram sing devotional songs and sometimes concerts are given, all as offerings to the Maharshi. Occasionally the Maharshi gets absorbed in contemplation. The usual expression “getting absorbed” is actually not correct, for there is no question of getting into and later returning from a special state. There is but one state for him, the natural state, and he appears to be in this state continuously. He is usually addressed as ‘Bhagavan’, which means “Divine Being.” He takes little notice of the crowd

that surrounds him. Peacocks, dogs, monkeys and other animals go to him; even an old cow visits him at regular intervals. There is always something in store for them, the offerings of fruit, nuts and cakes which are put at his feet and which are always distributed amongst those present. The Maharshi refuses to take anything special or more than what others get.

Sometimes “important” visitors arrive – learned men, Maharajas, men of name, well-known politicians, globetrotters, captains of industry and so on. The management will, perhaps, for the most “distinguished” amongst them, put some extra carpet on the floor or pay special attention to them. Not so the Maharshi; he treats all the same way. At best he may be somewhat friendlier to those who come from far away. Often “the great of this earth” feel like small schoolboys while standing before him. They get quite new experiences which radically alter their understanding of the sage. The late Maharaja of Mysore, the biggest State of South India, a very devout and orthodox Hindu, kneeled humbly before the Maharshi and stood motionless for a long time with tears in his eyes. He kneeled once more and departed without a word.

Once a visitor asked the Maharshi what he thought about the ignorance and sufferings of the modern world. The Maharshi answered, “The world is but an ocean of delight,” though he went through much suffering during his early years in Arunachala. He remained for some time in a dark cave with his body covered with vermin, and was almost always alone, exposed to the teasing of mischievous youngsters.

Moralists sometimes think of sages as escapists who avoid their social duties. It is not so. A sage is not one who has been put on the defensive by the difficulties of life, but one who has bidden farewell to the world, not because of its sorrow and crudity, but because it is not true life! Even the joys of worldly life are painful in comparison with the beatitude of real life.

The average man is inclined to pity the sage, whom he regards as having foregone the pleasures of life. The sage, however, pities his commiserating fellow human beings, because the latter does not know what real happiness is. The average man either thinks that a sage is one who has strayed from the path and is abnormal and unnatural, or else sees him as a fairly harmless lunatic. In either case, it is clear to him that there is something wrong with the sage's mind. A few people humbly admit that they have not as yet progressed as far as the sage, and that it will be a long time before they acquire the same wisdom. The sage, on his part, considers all his fellow human beings as potential sages; he is aware of no difference between others and himself. The mystic Hui Neng of the eighth century, A.D., made the remark that the only difference between a Buddha and the average man is that the one realizes what the other discards. The Maharshi has often said the same. When someone asked him, as Swami Vivekananda asked Ramakrishna, "Have you seen God?", the Maharshi replied, "Is there anybody who hasn't seen him?" To the sage, God is the only Reality. He is the Beginning and the End.

If we don't see him in the midst of all experiences, and consequently lose our natural state – symbolized in the Holy Bible as the garden with the Arbor Vitae (Tree of Life) wherein Adam walked with God by his side – it is our own fault. The prodigal son may at any time return to his Father.

# THE UNFINISHED GAME

*Ratanlal Joshi*

*This is a free translation of an article in Hindi which appeared in the June 1980 issue of Kadambini, Vol.20, No.8. The writer of the article, Sri Ratanlal Joshi is a noted Hindi scholar. In his quest to know the meaning of life he came in contact with thinkers, philosophers like Schweitzer, Einstein, Sartre, Aurobindo, The Mother, Camus and others. But in Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi he found, as he says, "The end of my quest, the fulfilment of my life."*

ON account of ill health I had been feeling weary and melancholy for quite some time and this had made me shun company and become disinterested in life itself. I tried my best to overcome this feeling. I started re-reading those books that had once interested me; brought about drastic changes in my daily routine; for some time, dropped all rules and became a profligate and a libertine. But the weariness did not abate, and the burden of life continued to grow heavier.

Worried, my family accepted my doctor's suggestion that a change of place and climate might do me good, and soon I was transported to Mahabaleshwar.

On reaching the holiday resort, I started a routine of morning and evening walks. Mahabaleshwar at that time looked splendid in its natural virgin forest beauty and its dozens of rivers flowing down the mountain to the plains.

One day, during one of my early morning walks, I found myself on a narrow footpath. I kept happily walking on until, feeling tired, I sat down on a rock and gave myself up to a reverie encouraged by the murmur of the river. I woke up from that reverie to find that I had slept through the day and it was evening. Puzzled, and feeling slightly disoriented, I tried to walk back the way I had come, but soon found myself hopelessly lost in the forest. Then suddenly, I saw at a distance a man sitting on a big rock. I went towards him intending to ask him the way but he rose and walked away. Confused as to what to do, I simply followed him.

A half an hour's walk brought us to a thatched hut with two dogs tied outside. When on seeing me, the dogs started barking, a well-built man who seemed European, came out of the hut. In his left hand was a lantern and in his right a book with the title, *Maha Yoga*.

The stranger seemed astonished to see me and stood still for a moment. As for my reaction, I was pleasantly surprised to find that many emotions assailed me, each simultaneously fading and fusing into another. With folded hands I walked forward and offered my respects to the gentleman. He smiled a very sweet, encouraging and reassuring smile and embraced me and took me into the hut. "I shall make a bed for you," he said. "You must rest."

He rolled out a mattress on one of the two cots in the room, arranged the pillow and sent the old man away with some instructions. I lay down thankfully. My host then lit the stove and heated some water. Soon the old man returned with two others, one of them holding a *kamandalu* (pot made of dried gourd) and the other, a fruit-laden mango branch. My European host boiled the milk, washed my hands and feet with the hot water and offered me the mangoes. The fruits, ripened on the tree itself, were small but delicious. After giving me a

large cup of hot milk, he advised me to go to sleep. I just went on doing whatever was told, like an automaton.

As I slowly sank into a deep and peaceful sleep, I noticed that my benefactor was wearing the *Saivite* symbol of the three thick horizontal lines drawn in ash on his forehead and that he himself was gradually going into meditation.

It was already bright morning when I awoke to the sounds of a low-pitched prayer. It was my friend, the European gentleman, still sitting at the head of my bed and watching over me with concern. I tried to sit up but was gently pushed down again and told in an anxious voice: "You have high fever. You were delirious last night. Please do not get up yet. Continuous prayers are being offered at the shrine of Bhagavan. He will soon make you alright." Settling me comfortably back in bed, he resumed his chanting. I listened carefully to the sounds and syllables. He was chanting *Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya*. As my eyelids again drooped heavily, I suddenly perceived Bhagavan Ramana's benevolent figure clearly in the bright rays of the sun entering the hut. Soon the hut seemed to be filled with effulgent images of Bhagavan. It was as if each time "*Om Namō*" was chanted the words created another image of Bhagavan. It was an unforgettable supernatural experience.

I looked at my host. Tears were pouring from his eyes. I looked at his tears and felt them washing my troubles, doubts and sins away. I felt clean, liberated. And without any volition on my part, the story of my life poured out of me. My host sat listening quietly. At the end of the narrative he said calmly: "Now you will be all right. Your treatment is in the able hands of an expert doctor. You took the correct decision when you made up your mind to come here."

Then, in his courteous and graceful manner, he told me his story. He was Arnold Sedderling, a Polish citizen. On May 21, 1935, he had left home when his doctor told him

that he was suffering from a malignant growth in the intestines and that he had only another eight months to live. Sedderling had discontinued all treatment and decided to die in peace and solitude.

“One of my greatest wishes was to meet Sri Ramana Maharshi before the end came and learn from him all about birth and death,” said Sedderling.

He had disembarked at Bombay and come to Mahabaleshwar. His health, in the meanwhile, had deteriorated further. One day, feeling extremely weak and tired he had come out of his hotel and entered the Mahabaleshwar temple. He had stood in a corner leaning against a pillar watching the Shiva Linga being bathed continuously by the waters of the sacred rivers.

“Suddenly,” said Sedderling, “I saw Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi himself standing in the place of the *Sivalinga*. Was it a hallucination? I wondered. Rubbing my eyes again and again, I looked intently at the spot. It was true, it was indeed Ramana Maharshi for whose *darshan* I had come all the way from Poland in my helpless physical condition. I also saw his extended hand of protection and heard him say to me: ‘Stay here. I shall come here for your sake.’”

That was his experience.

For another two days I stayed with Sedderling. Then as soon as my fever subsided, I returned to my hotel in Mahabaleshwar. In the next three weeks, I regained my old vigour and felt fit and happy. I went to see Sedderling once again but missed him as he had gone out to distribute medicines to the tribals, a service he had dedicated himself to. Coincidentally enough, that day was May 21 which was his 75th birthday as well as the day he had left home – the great ‘out-going-day’ in his life. With all his other activities, however, he had promised himself that he would visit Sri Ramanasramam

every year to have *darshan* of Bhagavan. “And I return every time,” he had said to me, “with a fresh understanding of life.”

Afterwards when I went in search of Sedderling in 1975, I could not find him. Six or seven months later he visited my house en route to Poland to get his books published. Two of his books were on Ramana Maharshi written in German. I do not know when he returned to India. Letters to his sister simply elicited the reply that Sedderling had returned to India to spend his days *incognito*.

My desire to see him again brought Sedderling to my home one day, but strangely, I was away at Ramanasramam that day. By the time I returned he had already gone back to the Ashram. We could not meet each other. Nevertheless, I have no doubt we will certainly meet again one day, somewhere, somehow because our association is part of a triangular integrality, the third side holding us together, being none other than he who had brought us together – Bhagavan Ramana.



# BHAGAVAN ON REINCARNATION

*Culled from Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi and  
The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own  
Words.*

**J**UST as rivers lose their individuality when they discharge their waters into the ocean, and yet the waters evaporate and return as rain on the hills and back again through the rivers to the ocean, so also individuals lose their individuality when they go to sleep but return again according to their previous innate tendencies. Similarly in death also, being is not lost.

See how a tree grows again when its branches are cut off. So long as the life source is not destroyed, it will grow. Similarly, latent potentialities withdraw into the heart at death but do not perish. That is how beings are reborn.

In truth, however, there is neither seed nor tree, there is only Being.

Question: How long is the interval between death and rebirth?

Bhagavan: It may be long or short, but a realized person undergoes no such change; he merges into the Infinite Being, as is said in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Some say that those who, after death, take the path of light are not reborn, whereas those who take the path of darkness are reborn after they have reaped their *karma* in their subtle bodies.

If a man's merits and demerits are equal he is reborn immediately on earth; if the merits outweigh the demerits his

subtle body goes first to heaven, while if the demerits outweigh the merits he goes first to hell. But in either case he is later reborn on earth. All this is described in the scriptures, but in fact there is neither birth nor death: one simply remains what one really is. That is the only truth.

Question: Is the Buddhist view that there is no continuous entity answering to the idea of the individual soul right or not? Is this consistent with the Hindu doctrine of a reincarnating ego? Is the soul a continuous entity which reincarnates again and again according to the Hindu doctrine or a mere conglomeration of mental tendencies according to the Buddhists?

Bhagavan: The real Self is continuous and unaffected. The reincarnating ego belongs to a lower plane, that of thought. It is transcended by Self-realization. Reincarnations are due to a spurious offshoot of Being and are therefore denied by the Buddhists. The human state is due to the mingling of the sentient with the insentient.

The birth of the I-thought is a person's birth and its death is his death. After the 'I-thought' has arisen the false identification with the body arises. But if you cease to identify yourself with the body and realize the true Self this confusion will vanish.

Devotee: Even if I cannot realize in my lifetime, let me at least not forget on my deathbed. Let me have a glimpse of Reality at the moment of death so that I may stand in good stead in the future.

Bhagavan: It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. VIII, that whatever is a person's last thought at death determines his next birth. But it is necessary to experience Reality now in this lifetime in order to experience it at death. Consider whether the present moment is any different from the last one of death and try to be in the desired state now.

Question: Is the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation right?

Bhagavan: No definite answer is possible. Even the present incarnation is denied, for instance in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Question: Isn't our personality beginningless?

Bhagavan: Find out first whether it exists at all and after you have solved that problem ask the question. Nammalwar says: "In ignorance I took the ego to be the Self, but with right knowledge the ego is not and only You remain as the Self." Both the non-dualists and the dualists agree on the necessity for Self-realization. Attain that first and then raise other questions. Non-dualism or dualism cannot be decided on theoretical grounds alone. If the Self is realized the question will not arise.

Whatever is born must die; whatever is acquired must be lost; but were you born? You are eternally existent. The Self can never be lost.

# EFFECT OF MAHARSHI'S PICTURE

## *A Polish devotee*

I MET him in a bookshop, opening a book at random – Sri Ramana Maharshi! For the first time in my life the buying of a book seemed a painfully protracted business. I could scarcely believe that one could buy this book like any other, that it was really for sale. To leave the bookshop quickly with this book in my hand – my own – not to be taken away, was unbelievable!

On my way home I opened the book several times to be sure that I was not dreaming, that the picture of him was as beautiful as when I saw it first. I looked at it sidelong, almost furtively, afraid to frighten away the beauty, to lose it irretrievably. Who was he?

Others have felt the same: I was not suffering from any hallucination. In her book, *The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi*, the Polish devotee Uma Devi writes: “Strange things happen to quite different people coming from different social circles. They need not have mystic leanings or be peculiarly sensitive. A look at Maharshi’s picture, however accidental and casual, creates in them an upheaval and a permanent inner change, shallow or deep according to the individual. Hence the innumerable requests for a copy of the picture which finds its way into many homes, offices and workshops. Wherever it goes it exerts its fascination, rationally inexplicable, nevertheless real.”

I look at the picture . . . he is so near and so beautiful. What is this light that shines through so many layers? How can one disbelieve the many stories about the Maharshi, the testimony of people who have seen him with their own eyes, who lived with him for days and months and years? People of various religions and races – Hindus, Muslims, Christians, some of them simple folk and some highly educated? Who can express in words the infinite silence, depth and power of his presence?

# EVER-PRESENT

*Duncan Greenless*

“It is expedient that I leave you,” (Christ)

“Herein is no cause for sorrow” (Buddha)

ONE of the Lord Buddha’s last recorded sayings was, “All compounds must dissolve; herein there is no cause for sorrow.” That precious and beloved body, so long treasured in our hearts as Sri Bhagavan, was, as a physical vehicle, a compound and had to separate in time into its component elements, disappearing from those eyes which so long delighted in it with reverent affection.

So too, Sri Krishna found it expedient that the *gopis* who were His devotees, be made to enrich their love for Him by withdrawing His outward form from their adoring eyes. Then He sent Uddhava to hint to them how they could now be always in His presence and find Him ever dancing in their hearts. When the eye of love has no longer to seek with yearning for the Beloved outside, the eye of the inner heart is turned within, and there realizes His living ecstatic presence.

And so it has been with us. The inevitable happened on that April evening in 1950, and the dear body which had been so long the centre, the focus of our hearts’ gaze ceased to delight our eyes. Can we say that he is dead? Bhagavan dead? The word could have no meaning. How can he who lives in all the universe ever taste of death? “You think I am going away? But where am I to go? I shall remain here with you!” That was his promise

while he was preparing us for the seeming separation. And those of us who loved him here in Tiruvannamalai hold firmly to the faith, which we feel confirmed by continual experience, that he has kept that promise and is still to be contacted here in the Ashram as of old.

Like Surdas, darkening the physical sight so that he might see clearly the light within, he has dimmed our outer sight to his radiance, only that the inner vision might be filled with his eternal light. He has veiled the outer form we loved so well, that its beauty might no longer draw our gaze away from the everlasting presence enthroned in our inmost Heart.

Painful was that veiling to our human hearts. Yet in these days of seeming deprivation, happy indeed are we if we be driven thereby inward, to see and love him there; shining as the Heart of all, the ineffably radiant Self, manifesting ever as the Self of our self, the very Being of our being, the ever-blessed Awareness of all Truth, the Stillness of omnipresent Bliss – *Satchidananda*.

Our hearts were kindled to deep affection while he taught us by word and example, while he silently showered the nectar dew of Grace upon us all. Today they turn to him within, by day and night, no less than of old; and they rejoice to find that Grace wells up unceasingly from the fountain of the One Self, who alone is all wisdom, love and power.

At his tender feet, that trod the mountain path so long for us, our grateful love and undying memory we lay. May he accept these poor gifts of our hearts, and pour his grace on all who wander in the darkness of the unknown tracts of primal ignorance. His Light shines, with the everlasting clarity of God's own Light.