

SRI RAMANA JYOTHI

JANUARY TO DECEMBER – 2009

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ENLIGHTENMENT OF SRI RAMANA

According to *Katha Upanishad*: ‘The *atman* is not attainable through recitation of the Vedas, nor by keen intellect, nor by often hearing of scriptures. He whom God chooses attains It. To him the *atman* reveals its form.’ And this is exactly what happened in case of Sri Ramana. The following is a summary of what he conveyed in Tamil to B.V. Narasimha Swami, his biographer.

“One day I sat alone in my uncle’s house [at Maduari]. I was in my usual good health. Suddenly an unmistakable fear of death seized me. I felt I was going to die. Why I should have felt so cannot now be explained by anything felt in my body. Nor could I explain it to myself then. I did not trouble myself to discover if the fear was well grounded. I felt ‘I was going to die’ and at once set about thinking what I should do. I did not care to consult a doctor or elders or even friends. I felt I have to solve the problem myself then and there.

“The shock of fear of death made me at once introspective or ‘introverted’. I said to myself mentally, i.e., without uttering the words – ‘Now, death has come. What does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies.’ I at once dramatized the scene of death. I extended my limbs and held them rigid. I imitated a corpse to lend an air of reality. I held my breath and kept my mouth closed, pressing the lips tightly together. ‘Well then’, I said to myself, ‘this body is dead. It will be carried to the burning ground and burnt to ashes. But with the death of this body, am “I” dead? Is the body “I”? This body is silent and inert. But I feel the full force of my personality, and even the sound “I” within myself. So “I” am a spirit, transcending the body. The material body dies but the spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. I am therefore the deathless spirit.’ All this was not a mere intellectual process, but flashed before me vividly as living truth, something which I perceived immediately, almost without any argument.

“The ‘I’ or my ‘self’ held the focus of my attention by a powerful fascination from that time onwards. Fear of death vanished at once and forever. Absorption in the

self has continued from that moment right up to this time. [The book was first published in 1931.] Other thoughts may come and go like the various notes of a musician, but the 'I' continues as the basic or fundamental *sruti* note, which accompanies and blends with all other notes. Whether the body was engaged in talking, reading or anything else, I was still centered on 'I'. Previous to this crisis I had no clear perception of myself and was not consciously attracted to it. The consequences of this new habit were soon noticed in my life.

“I lost what little interest I had in my outward relationship with friends. I went through my studies mechanically. In my dealings with relatives, friends etc., I developed humility, meekness and indifference. The old personality that resented and asserted itself had disappeared. I stopped going out with friends for sports etc. and preferred to be left to myself. Oftentimes I would sit alone by myself especially in posture suitable for meditation, close my eyes and lose myself in the all-absorbing concentration on myself, on the spirit, current or force (*avesam*) which constituted myself. All preferences and avoidance in the matter of food had gone.

“After the awakening into the new life, I would go almost every evening to the temple. I would go alone and stand before Siva or the sixty-three saints for long periods. I would feel waves of emotion overcoming me. The former hold on the body had been given up by my spirit, since it ceased to cherish the idea I-am-the-body (*dehatma buddhi*). I would stand before *Ishwara* and occasionally pray for the descent of His grace upon me so that my devotion might increase and become perpetual like that of the sixty-three saints. Mostly I would not pray at all, but let the deep within flow on and into the deep without.

“I had no books other than *Periapuranam*, my Bible lessons and bits of *Tayumanavar* or *TeVaram*. My notion of God was similar to that found in the *puranas*. I had not heard of Brahman, *samsara* etc. I had no idea then that there was an Essence of Impersonal Real underlying everything, and that myself and *Iswara* were both identical with it. At Tiruvannamalai, as I listened to *Ribhu Gita* and other works, I picked up these facts and discovered that these books were analyzing and naming what I had previously felt intuitively without analysis and name.”

According to *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, the Maharshi told B.S. Sharma, professor of philosophy, on October 4, 1946: “I have never done any *sadhana*. I did not even know what *sadhana* was. Only long afterwards I came to know what

sadhana was and how many different kinds of it there were. Only if there was a goal to attain, I should have made *sadhana* to attain that goal. There was nothing which I wanted to obtain. I am now sitting with my eyes open. I was then sitting with my eyes closed. That was all the difference. I was not doing any *sadhana* even then. As I sat with my eyes closed, people said I was in *samadhi*. As I was not talking, they said I was in *mauna*. The fact is, I did nothing. Some Higher Power took hold of me and I was entirely in Its hands.”

It would be seen that as compared to other saints and sages, including Buddha, Bhagavan got enlightenment as a gift from the Supreme, with no conscious effort on his part. **This sets him apart from all others.**

A HINT FOR THE SADHAKA: Whether or not the results of meditation are obtained is of no importance. The essential thing is to arrive at stability; it is the most precious thing that one can gain. In any case, one must trust with confidence in the Divinity and await His grace without impatience. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

BHAGAVAN’S GUIDANCE IN CONSTRUCTION OF SAMADHI OF A SAGE: When Seshadri Swami was seriously ill, Veerappa Chettiar, a hereditary trustee of Arunacheshwara temple, Tiruvannamalai, and a devotee of Sri Ramana, asked Bhagavan about proper construction of a *samadhi* for a saint. The latter took out Tirumular’s *Tirumandiram* and asked someone to copy out the portion relating to the construction of a *samadhi*, and gave it to Chettiar, who constructed the *samadhi* according to the instructions. Shortly afterwards, the Swami died (January, 1929). Chettiar and other requested Bhagavan to be present at the *samadhi* ceremonies. He readily agreed and was there till the very end. (The only other similar ceremonies Bhagavan attended are of his Mother and Cow of Lakshmi.) (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. II)

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI – THE POET

By Dr. S. Ram Mohan*

Sri Ramana Maharshi was a non-personality of immense dimensions. He was a great *rishi* in the glorious traditions of *jnanis* like Sukha Brahma Rishi. Like Buddha and Nachiketa, at a young age, he met death face to face and awakened to deathless state in a trice. He was a great preceptor who, in the tradition of great *acharyas*, initiated aspirants to spiritual awakening through *nayana deeksha* and *upadesa*. His very presence used to make the *sadhakas* undergo the spiritual

awakening. He was the icon of *nishkamyā karma*. He was the summit of *vairāgya* who possessed nothing in the world, and was always in bliss. Like Dakshinamurthi, his medium of instruction used to be mostly *mouna*. He also occasionally clarified the doubts through answering question of the aspirants.

There is another engaging aspect of Bhagavan. He is an outstanding poet in the great tradition of Sankara, Thayumanavar and Sadasiva Brahmendra, to name a few, from whom came great outpourings of poems, both on *advaitic* mysticism and devotion. His poetic creations are versatile and immense. He has given us the epitome of absolute philosophy in poems like *Ulladu Narpadu*. He has also given us great devotional poems as in *Arunachala Panchakam*. His great work *Aksharamanamalai*, at once gives the raptures of *advaitic* experience as well as bridal mysticism in the glorious *Saivaite* and *Vaishnavite* traditions. His devotional outpourings thrill us in affable spiritual emotions.

When he reached Arunachala in the 17th year, he was observing total silence. In fact, he was called as Mouna Swami. Fourteen years thereafter suddenly his great ineffable grace starting flowing through his magnificent poetry. He not only presented the absolute state in His chiseled poetry, he also came down to the level of ordinary man in the dual state to guide him in the path of *bhakti*.

During the year 1912, on Vinayaka Chaturthi day, somebody brought a terracotta image of Ganesa and left it in the cave. Easwara Swami, a devotee, suggested that all there should compose a song on Ganesa on that day. Bhagavan agreed. Thus the great ‘Pillayar Chuzhi’ emerged.

The poem, a satirical praise on Lord Ganesa, says because Lord Siva has begotten a son – Lord Ganesa – with great belly, he has to go as a beggar to beg for food for Ganesa’s sustenance. “You have thus been looking after his belly. Why don’t you look after the younger one (that is me) also like that?” Thus the very first poem of Bhagavan suggests that he is the second son of Lord Siva, namely, Lord Subrahmanya.

Bhagavan composed poems both on devotion and philosophy. He once stated, in responding to the query made by the devotee, that the divine vision stimulated his feelings, the words welling up in his heart spontaneously and compelling expression. In his words: “The opening words of the Arunachala Pathikam came to me one morning, and even though I tried to suppress them, saying, ‘what have I

to do with these words?’ they could not be suppressed till I composed a song bringing them in; and all the words flowed easily without any further effort.”

Unlike prose, poetry plays a great role in awakening the spiritual aspect in a person. Rhythm in mystical poetry suggests the hidden life-throb felt by a certain mode of consciousness. For, rhythm is not just a play of ordered sound; it is thrill of the heart translating itself into sound-vibration. Rhythm is the entry gate to understanding the Self, to steer the soul echoing the self-experience of the Divine.

Bhagavan’s poems can be broadly classified into devotional, philosophical and translatory works. The devotional hymns are: 1. *Arunachala Aksharamanamai*. 2. *Arunachala Navamanimalai*, 3. *Arunachala Pathikam*. 4. *Arunachala Ashtakam*, and 5. *Arunachala Pancharatnam*.

The philosophical poems in Tamil are: 1. *Upadesa Undiar*. 2. *Ulladhu Narpatu*, and 3. *Ekanma Panchakam*. There are also small poems like *Appalapattu* and *Anma Viddhai* etc. Then there are also great *anuvada*, “transcreational works” by him – the Prakarana granthas of Adi Sankara like *Atma Bodham*, *Guru Stuti*, *Hasta Malakiyam*, *Viveka Chudamani*, *Drig Drsya Varika*, *Dakshinamurthi Stotram*, etc.

He also brought out beautiful Tamil transcreations of two *agama* works, namely, *Devikaloltaran* and *Atma Sakshatkara Prakarsanam*, which embody great spiritual truths.

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AHAT AND ANAHATA NADA: According to the Hindu view of creation, it was sound that appeared first. It is called the *Nada Brahma* or the Sound Celestial. The sound was a monosyllable: *Om*. Since *Om* is related to the beginning of the universe, it is considered the most sacred syllable with which Vedic mantras commence. In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna says, “I am the syllable *Om* in all the *Veda* and sound in ether...” According to Vedic literature, music originated from *nada* or sound. There are two types of sound. The *ahat* or struck sound, which is audible, whereas the *anahata* or unstruck sound is inaudible. The latter is most significant for yogis who have reached the high level of consciousness. It is the internal sound they hear, after prolonged meditation and arduous yogic discipline. Ordinary

human beings are engaged with the *ahat nada* or the gross form, which emanates from the vocal chord and is sweet and soothing. It is also called *sangeetam* or music...Our musical tradition trace the origin of music to the *Sama Veda*, which a compendium of melodies, chants and rules required for the recitation of sacred hymns...Indira's musicians included the Kinnaras, who were the instrumentalists and Gandharvas, who were singers... In our mythology, many gods are identified with a particular musical instrument or some aspects of music. For example, Siva – Damru, Vishnu – Shanka, Saraswati – Veena, Ganesa – Mridang, Krishna – Flute, and Narda – Ektara. Siva is believed to be the originator of five principal ragas, namely, Bhairav, Shri, Vasant, Pancham and Megh. Parvati contributed the sixth, Natnarayana. (Source: spirituality.indiatimes.com)

The cure for all the illness of life is stored in the inner depth of life, the access to which becomes possible when we are alone. This peace is absurdly near, yet so distant. – *Rabindranath Tagore*

To be without some of the things you want is an indispensable part of happiness. – *Bertrand Russell*

It is through your ignorance alone that the universe exists. In reality you are One. There is no individual self or Supreme Self other than you. – *Ashtavakra Samhita*

The peace we can enjoy is in proportion to our ability to unconditionally accept the Biblical wisdom: 'Thy Will Be Done'. – *Vijay Vancheswa*

The highest destiny of the individual is to serve rather than to rule. – *Albert Einstein*

SIGNIFICANCE OF PRADAKSHINA: *Pradakshina* is an age-old devotional practice associated largely with temple-visits. Before the devotees enter the inner shrine that houses the deity, they go round the shrine as a token of their reverence and self-surrender. The purpose is to afford the devotees sometime to halt their flow of worldly thoughts, before they come face to face with the deity. Hindu marriages are often sanctified by *pradakshina* by the bridal couple around the fire. In all such *pradakshinas*, the devotees follow the clockwise direction, i.e., they **move** round keeping their right side towards the object of devotion. The number

circumambulations are left to the choice of the devotee: but generally an odd number is preferred. When the occasion is inauspicious, the *pradakshina* is done in the anticlockwise direction, e.g., around the funeral pyre while conducting last rites...The Maharshi has assigned a special place of importance to *pradakshina* round the Arunachala hill. He not only endorsed and encouraged this strongly, but set an example by undertaking it by himself at frequent intervals till 1926. He held that Arunachala is Siva's manifestation. He often referred to it unequivocally as his Guru. The very name of the hill arises from *Aruna* for 'red' with connotation for 'fire', 'light' and 'knowledge', and *achala* for 'hill'. It is thus the 'hill of *jnana*'. Sri Bhagavan says that one should go round either in *mouna* or *dhayna* or *japa* or *sankeertana* and thereby think of God all the time. One should walk slowly like a woman who is in the ninth month of pregnancy. He further says that it is difficult to describe the pleasure and the happiness one gets by this *pradakshina*. The body gets tired, the sense organs lose their strength and all the activities of the body become absorbed within. It is possible thus to forget oneself and get into a state of meditation. Tuesdays are generally believed to be auspicious for this *pradakshina*. Going barefoot is the norm. (Excerpts form N.A. Mohan Rao's article in the *Mountain Path*, Oct.-Dec., 2008.)

TWO ANECDOTS OF *SASTANGA NAMASKARS* TO SRI BHAGAVAN

1. On one occasion a man appeared in Sri Bhagavan's hall and started a cycle of hundred *sastanga namaskars* (prostrations) to Bhagavan, who looked at him for sometime and said, "Where is the need for all these gymnastics? It is better to show your devotion by keeping quiet."
2. Muruganar's relationship with Bhagavan was unique. He knew he was in the presence of the Reality clothed in human form. Often, the moment Muruganar entered the Hall, Bhagavan would commence talking to him. Muruganar would start replying even before prostrating to Bhagavan. While prostrating too he would continue talking. Often, he would even forget that he was lying prostrate on the ground and would just go on talking, lifting his head like a chameleon and continuing to reply to Bhagavan's queries. Others in the Hall would be amused at this strange sight. Muruganar stated this to me and added, "Viswanath (Swami) used to jokingly request me to quit such 'lizard-talk'; as my words were not

audible to anyone including Sri Bhagavan! What to do? I was not at all aware of such happenings. On such occasions my sole thought would be to reply to Bhagavan immediately and I would forget the environment, everything else, including my body!” Muruganar, the ‘shadow of Bhagavan’, had the highest devotion for Him and would never fail to express this by prostrating to Him a number of times, and when Bhagavan left the Hall standing up reverentially. (*Moments Remembered* by V.Ganesan)

SURI NAGAMMA’S BROTHER RECALLS HIS VISIT THE ASHRAM

D.S. Sastri was an official of the then Imperial Bank of India. It was at his behest that his sister Suri Nagamma wrote 273 letters to him during 1945-50, about happenings at the Ashram. These are a treasure trove to Sri Ramana devotees.

I had my first darshan in 1941, when I was on transfer from Cochin to Ahemdabad. As I was mentally worried, I thought of going to Tiruvannamalai and obtain some solace from the sage. Some years earlier, a friend of mine had asked me to accompany him to the Ashram, but I had refused as my experience of so-called holy men had been unfortunate.

Having nothing particular to do, I strayed into the bookstall. Bhagavan, while returning from the bathroom, stopped very near there to talk to someone. The attendant pointed him out to me; a thrill went through my whole body. What a difference from the swamis and holy men I had seen before! That lustrous body, those shining eyes, that beautiful smile, that gentle speech and halting gait – all took me by surprise.

Later, on entering the hall, the ego in me did not permit my prostrating before him. Instead, I just folded my hands by way of *namaskar* and sat down, watching critically all that was happening. The prevailing serene atmosphere was infectious. I sat motionless. I was lost in wonder and admiration at the peace and silence. The thought uppermost in my mind was: if people could be happy thus with a minimum of food and clothing, why not I? Why grieve about official worries and domestic calamities?

In the afternoon, when I sat before Bhagavan during *Vedaparayana* in the open space adjacent to the hall, and the chanting of the Vedic hymns began in those idyllic surroundings, I felt that I was in another world altogether. It was only when

the chanting was over and devotees began leaving that I realised I was in this mundane world.

After supper, when Bhagavan came back from a short walk, he sat on an easy chair in the open space between the hall and the well. One of the few devotees present, asked him about an incident in the *Yoga Vasishtha*. Instead of just explaining it, he began narrating the whole story at length. The pleasant way he spoke, the simple language he used and the dignified manner in which he related the story captured our hearts and kept us all spellbound. At the end of it, the devotees told me that I was particularly lucky because Bhagavan rarely spoke much or for such a long time. I felt extremely happy and gratified.

That night my wife and I fully agreed that we had reached our haven and found our real guru. Thus began our attachment to Bhagavan and the Ashram. . (Source: *Arunachala's Ramana*, Vol. IV)

BHAGAVAN COMES TO THE RESCUE OF A DEVOTEE

M.S. Nagarajan, a staunch devotee, belonged to Polur Taluk in Tiruvannamalai district. Even as a young boy, he used to accompany his parents to the Ashram.

His friend, who was a nephew of the great devotee Echammal spoke to him about the greatness of Bhagavan. In 1930, when 15 years old, he came to the Ashram and was allotted the work of *puja*, help in the kitchen and bookstall, etc. But what he valued most was the privilege of cutting vegetables and grinding pulses in the kitchen along with Bhagavan.

At the end of six months, Nagarajan went home but soon returned and stayed for four years. He records: In 1932, I was in charge of the daily *puja* at the Mother's shrine. A devotee called P.W.D. Ramaswami Iyer arranged a special food offering of *sarkarai pongal* (a kind of rice pudding) and *vadai* (a small round cake of black gram fried in oil). I had many things to do and there was no one to help. So I got up very early, took my bath, removed old flowers from the shrine, swept and cleaned the floor and lit two fires, one for *pongal* and the other for *vadai*. I then sat down to grind the black gram which I had soaked the previous night. I had not prepared *vadai* previously any time. I took some dough and tried to spread it out on a leaf to form a round *vadai*, but it would not come out properly. I tried again and again without success. I got annoyed and disgusted. The next moment I noticed

Bhagavan standing behind me and watching my effort to make *vadai*. He said quietly, “It doesn’t matter. You have added too much water while grinding the gram. Now make round balls of the dough and fry them. They will be *bondas*.”

When the *bondas* were served, Ramanswami Iyer said to me angrily, “Look here. Did I not ask you to prepare *vadai*?” I was afraid to say anything and so merely looked at Bhagavan. He immediately turned to Iyer and said, “What does it matter? If the cakes are flat they are *vadais*, if spherical, *bondas*. The stuff is the same and the taste is the same. Only name and forms are different. Eat *prasadam* and do not make a fuss.” Everyone was astonished at Bhagavan’s apt reply. Later in the day, when Ramaswami saw me he remarked how lucky I was to get support from Bhagavan himself.

One day, a letter came from his mother informing him that a job had been found for him. This letter came to the hands of Bhagavan along with the Ashram post. After reading it Bhagavan said, “Look here, a job has been found for you. Go and accept it immediately.” Tears came from the eyes of Nagarajan at the thought of parting from Bhagavan, who said again, “You can go on Wednesday and join duty on Thursday.” Most reluctantly he left the Ashram, and came later as often as he got leave. (Source: *Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. II)

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI VISITS THE ASHRAM

C. Rajagopalachari, former Governor-General of India, was a well-known Congress leader of India.

I first visited the Ashram in January 1936. Besides Indian devotees of Bhagavan, I found some foreign devotees also seated in the Hall. I was struck by the high spiritual atmosphere of the place surcharged with deep silence; Bhagavan radiating love and simplicity. I am a person belonging to the *Visishtadvaita* [qualified *Advaita*, expounded by Ramanuja] school of thought. Being impressed by 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 *moolasthanams* [sanctum sanctorum] of temple 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. (Source: *Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. III)

HUMOUR OF SRI RAMANA – TWO INCIDENTS: (i) A man was telling Bhagavan that he learnt one type of yoga under one master, some other type under a different master and so on. The dinner bell started ringing. “Now learn the yoga of eating under this master”, said Bhagavan, and took the man to have his dinner. (ii) A lady devotee prayed to Bhagavan, “My only desire is that you may always be with us.” Bhagavan exclaimed, “Look at her, she wants us all to turn into stones, so that we may sit here forever. (Source: *Arunchala’s Ramana*, Vol. IV)

THREE FOLD APPROACH OF SRI AUROBINDU’S INTEGRAL YOGA: (i) Have intense aspiration for the Divine, (ii) Reject all that comes in the way of achieving your objective, and (iii) Surrender totally to the Divine. The Integral Yoga perceives Godhead as the fundamental unity permeating every atom of diverse creation, or the centrality of the spirit underlying nature, growth, life, material and non-material phenomena. (Source: *spirituality.indiatimes.com*)

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EXPERIENCING SELF THROUGH SRI RAMANA’S GRACE

B.C. Sengupta, M.A., B.L., Principal, K.C. College, Hetampur, Bengal, came to the Maharshi in early 1940s.

My visit to Ramanasramam coincided with the Maharshi’s birthday. He was seated in a big enclosure outside the hall. A continuous stream of people passed before him for a couple of hours. I waited and waited and went closer, but could not attract his attention. My whole being was irresistibly getting drawn towards him. I was eager to put my case before him, but was not getting an opportunity to do so.

On the third day of my visit I entreated an inmate of the Ashram to help me put my case before the Maharshi. As advised by him, I wrote down what I intended to say on a piece of paper. He kindly took the paper and went to the hall, followed by me, and placed it before the Maharshi, speaking something to him in Tamil. The Maharshi read it and smiled. I was sitting there. As he looked at me I was

overwhelmed and a violent emotion convulsed my body, which set the Maharshi laughing. He laughed merrily for some time and then silently folded the paper and left it on the book-shelf, which stood nearby. He did not speak to me nor did he seem to pay any further attention to me. This made me very depressed. There was nothing more to be done. I must return home. After the night meal I sat in the hall and felt a pleasant coolness inundating me. Is this the spiritual fragrance spoken of by Paul Brunton in his book *A Search in Secret India*, as emanating from the Maharshi?

The next day, while sitting before the Maharshi, I experienced a sudden pull in the region of the heart. I was astonished and as I sought to observe it, it passed away. On the fifth day of my stay I thought that I have obtained what I deserved and that nothing more would be gained by a further stay at the Ashram. I wrote my intention to go home and placed it before the Maharshi. He read it and kept it aside. I felt it was yet another rebuff.

Next morning, I attended the usual prayers. Some discussion was going on in the hall. As they were talking mostly in Tamil, my attention was not attracted till I found some persons turning their heads and laughing at me. On enquiry, I learnt that they were discussing the subject matter of my note to the Maharshi. Though I was the laughing-stock, I was still glad to find that the Maharshi had taken notice of me. As I was in the back row, they asked me to come nearer to the Maharshi. The discussions over, I heard the Maharshi say, "He is concentrating on the reflection and complains that he cannot see the original." It struck me forcefully. What did he mean by the reflection and what was the original? I shut my eyes and tried to find the meaning. Immediately I felt a pull in the region of my heart. My mind was completely arrested – stilled, but I was wide awake. Suddenly, without any break in my consciousness, the 'I' flashed forth! It was self-awareness, pure and simple, steady, unbroken and intensely bright, but as much brighter than ordinary consciousness as is sunlight brighter than the dim light of a lamp. The world was not, neither the body nor the mind – no thought, no motion; time also ceased to exist. I alone existed and that I was consciousness itself – self-luminous, alone, without a second. Suddenly, without any break in my consciousness, I was brought back to my normal, ordinary consciousness.

A great miracle had been performed in broad daylight in the presence of so many people, without their knowing it. No argument of the greatest philosophers and scientists of the world will now make me doubt the possibility of experiencing the 'I' in its pure state or pure consciousness, without any subject-object relationship.

I, an insignificant creature, wallowing in the mud of mundane existence, and without any *sadhana*, being granted this supreme experience – an experience which is rarely obtained even by great yogis after austere spiritual practices strenuously performed for ages together. Such is the wonder of His Grace – immeasurable and unfathomable Grace! Truly it has been said – “Unmasked Thou give, this is Thy imperishable fame.”

As soon as I was brought to my normal consciousness, I opened my eyes and looked at the Maharshi, but he appeared to be quite unconcerned, as if nothing had happened. He was not even looking at me. How could he have performed this miracle? Who can comprehend? The experience so much amazed me that I even forgot to express my heart-felt gratitude to the Maharshi. I could not at that time even properly evaluate the supreme experience, which caused a very cheerful mood in me. I felt completely carefree.

I stayed at the Ashram for a few more days. The thoughts of home did no longer trouble me.

REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA’S ATTENDANT

Krishnaswami was a native of Srirangam, Tamil Nadu. He came to Sri Ramana in 1936 and was his attendant till the end.

There was a lame puppy which would wag its tail whenever Bhagavan went up the hill. He was fed with *iddlies*. One day after having *iddlies* the pup went and urinated in front of the *sarvadhikari*'s office. He got wild and ordered that no more *iddlies* be given to the pup. When Bhagavan asked me why the pup was not fed, I disclosed the reason. He got angry and told me, “Earlier many have come, ruled and gone, one day you too have to go.” And thus feeding of the pup got resumed. The same mongrel would come in front of Bhagavan with the mouth full of filth. Bhagavan used to wipe her mouth clean with his own towel and say, “Some great soul has come in this garb.” He never gave me the towel for washing.

Bhagavan used to say with a laugh, “A person performs *namaskaram* to the Swami and expects all his prayers fulfilled and boons granted. Who wants this *namaskaram*? Even before they prostrate physically, I prostrate to them mentally.”

One day he told me, “One could produce God through alchemy. But even if that God tells you something don’t believe it. If I come in front of you don’t believe it. The Seer is most important. You are. That is most important. Concentrate on the Seer, not on the seen. All that you see is false and the Seer alone is true. All knowledge you gather is useless, until you hold on to your Self. *You are the Truth*, not what is being told to you, not what you see.”

ARUNACHALA: It has many other names like – *Arunagiri*, *Sonagiri*, *Sudarsanagiri* and *Annamalai*. It is also referred to as the *Tejolingam* – the Lingam of fire – which is the formless emblem of Siva. The form of the hill is said to resemble *Sri Chakra*, the emblem of the Cosmos with its substratum. *Shaktas* regard this hill as *Sri Chakra* itself. Bhagavan took an active part in the installation of Sri Chakra in the temple dedicated to the Mother. Many saints and sages have sung and composed songs in praise of the hill. Adi Sankara also seems to have visited the hill. In one of his compositions he calls this hill as ‘Meru’ and says, like Bhagavan, that *siddha purushas* are found here. Saint Namasivaya lived here in one of the caves, which is still called by his name. His disciple has written the well-known *Annamalai Venba*, a hymn in praise of Arunachala. Another well-known saint, Virupaksha, also lived in the cave, which bears his name. The saint’s tomb is in the shape of OM – and some devotees have heard there the sound of OM in their silent meditation... When mention was made one day about the tank adjoining the Ashram being called Agastya Tirtham, the Maharshi was asked if that sage ever visited the hill. Bhagavan remarked: “Yes, of course, everyone must come here eventually,” meaning that everyone must eventually return to the source – Arunachala... A French devotee Sujata Sen [nee Suzanne Alexandra] once spent the night on the hill [in 1938] in protest against an order of the management not allowing women devotees to remain in the Ashram after dark. Sujata dwelled on her grievance one-pointedly. Next morning she told me that she was taken inside the hill and found a whole world in it, which she described. I did not pay much attention to this, dismissing it as a dream or imagination. Strangely enough, many years later, in 1970, another devotee S.N. Tandon, had a similar experience which he described in detail in the April 1970 issue of the *Mountain Path*... Bhagavan told Vishwanath Swami one day in the early twenties: “Innumerable are the visions I have had of this hill. I have seen beautiful groves of trees in some places inside it. Once I saw a large tank and a big congregation of *rishis* and yogis seated on a wide plain around it. Every face was familiar and so were the surroundings. A dais was there and I went up and sat on it with my right hand held up in *chin-mudra*. It seemed my usual place and my usual pose...” According to a Siva devotee,

Arunachala has many faces and many shapes. If we view it from different angles it presents different aspects, reminding us of the ever-changing flux of creation – the motionless dance of Arunachala Siva... Every true devotee of Siva believes that the Hill is Siva Himself; or a huge Siva Linga in the form of the Hill. That is why one walks round it barefooted reverently all the eight miles of the way... Siva Linga is simply an emblem of Siva, in its manifest form as the Hill and the Linga of fire without beginning and end, as mentioned in the well-known story of its first appearance. (Excerpts from the article by Lucia Osborne in the *Mountain Path*, Jan.- March, 1974)

MEDITATION – A TECHNIQUE: First decide to practice meditation for at least 30 minutes a day. Sit upright in a comfortable chair or assume a cross-legged posture on the floor. Hold your head erect, with attention on the right side of the chest where the spiritual energy is located. Next, inhale and exhale deeply once or twice to elicit physical relaxation. Remain still for a few minutes until you feel calmly poised. If you have a devotional temperament, invoke the presence and blessings of God or your favourite deity or object of worship. If you have a guru, reverentially acknowledge him. **Make a conscious effort to be aware of your natural breathing rhythm.** When inhalation occurs, mentally recite a chosen word or mantra. When you exhale feel happy and peaceful. Feel the sound of the mantra spontaneously emerging into your mind and awareness. Continue this procedure without any anxiety about the results of practice. When a state of mental calmness is experienced, disregard your breathing, listening only to the mantra. Eventually, allow even the mantra to fade away, and rest in state of mental peace and clarity of awareness for a while, until you feel inclined to conclude the session. (Source: *sprituality.indiatimes.com*)

RECOGNISE REALITY: Reality has been described as one without a second; changeless, immutable, ageless and deathless. However, we perceive the world of birth and deaths to be real. Are there two worlds, one real and the other, a reflection? At the midnight some drunkards started rowing a boat. The boat, however, was anchored. They rowed the whole night. In the morning, they realised that they had not moved even an inch. Similarly, in life, our boat is anchored in our ego, name, fame, home, family and above all to an unending desire... We should have a positive desire to concentrate fully on the Godhead, sublimating our mind and controlling our senses. We do remember the sacred when we are in distress. Once we experience the sacred, the secret of bliss will emerge within us and all the

joys experienced through the senses will get overtaken by intense spiritual joy.
(Source: *spirituality.indiatimes.com*)

THE ‘REAL’ WORLD: To the ignorant, who believes it to be real and revels in it, the world appears before him as God’s creation, but to the *Jnani* it is merely a deluding and binding concept that is wholly mental. It the world is real merely because it is perceived, then water seen in a mirage is also real because it too is perceived.
– *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

FACE TO FACE WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI – AN APPRECIATION

By Berzin M. Lahevala*

It gives me great joy to express my emotions on reading the above wonderful book. It is an exceptionally outstanding, extraordinary and unique treasure dedicated to our beloved Ramana, our Sole Refuge, our all in all.

The publication is a matchless masterpiece which is the Mt. Everest of all other books of reminiscences in Ramana literature. It has such an enduring timeless appeal that it can never be put aside after its first reading and its magnetic attraction will draw the reader to dip into it again and again.

The impact of the book is so concentrated, intense and powerful that it will straightaway penetrate deeply into the heart of every sensitive, receptive and perceptive reader and draw them spontaneously and automatically within the Spiritual Heart of Self and give a taste of Ramana-consciousness.

The book has the unique power to spontaneously propel the reader into the Blessed Presence, at the feet of Ramana, face to face with Him.

It is really an inspired labour of love on the part of the compiler. It has the unmistakable stamp of perfection in every aspect and detail – the life-like captivating photo on the cover, the extensive coverage, the meticulous selection and editing of the best reminiscences, and the informative biographical notes about the contributors.

This book is all inclusive; both *jnana* and *bhakti* are perfectly blended in its pages, just as Ramana is a perfect blend of *jnana* and *bhakti*.

The photos within the book make the contents even more interesting and inspiring.

Like the Mountain magnet – Arunachala, this book-magnet is going to attract many spiritually inclined souls into the Heart of Ramana. The beautiful, spell-binding cover photo is enough to make even the uninitiated soul fall in love at first sight with Ramana.

Highlighting of significant sentences by bold font is a very good idea and most helpful in reading. The sections at the end are unique and illuminating and make the book exhaustive and complete.

May this book go into many editions and reach more and more spiritually hungry souls. Salutations to all those dedicated devotees who have contributed in one way or the other to make possible the publication of this one-in-million book.

*A staunch Parsee devotee of Bhagavan lived in Mumbai, till his recent death at the age of 61. His write-up on six letters which comprise the word RAMANA, in May 2008, issue of this magazine, indicates his erudition and devotion to Sri Ramana. This book of 410+xviii pages with 18 beautiful photo plates is available from Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai.

Conquering one's own self is far more glorious than vanquishing an army of a thousand soldiers. So try to win the battle over yourself instead of subduing others. – *The Buddha*

Silence can be a mighty weapon to counter the vicissitudes of life. Nature has provided us a clue to this by giving us two ears and one mouth, hoping perhaps that we speak as much as we hear. – *Vijay Vancheswar*

In the faces of men and women, I see God. – *Wait Whitman*

The most difficult secret for a man to keep is the opinion he has of himself. – *Anonymous*

Religion is for those who are scared to go to hell. Spirituality is for those who have already been there. – *Bonnie Raitt*

ARATI – THE RITUAL LAMP: It has a deep philosophical and ritualistic significance. The flame in the *arati* represents the soul of the devotee, which is offered to the deity. To forget the self in the sacred invocation of heavenly power, to be one with it, is the quintessence of *arati* as of *bhakti*... Waving of the light before the deity is a ritual known as *arati*, which is done towards the close of the worship sequences. Either camphor (*karpura*) or a set of three, five or seven wicks dipped in ghee or oil is used. The light containers may be in the form of a serpent

(Naga deepa), chariot (*Ratha deepa*), elephant (*Gaja deepa*) and so on. The first round of waving must be from the head of the deity to the feet; the second from the face to the knees, and the third from the neck to the loins. (Condensed from *Tattavaloka*, Dec. 2008)

MARCH – 2009

BHAGAVAN COVEYS WISDOM THROUGH HUMOUR: The following is the dialogue between Bhagavan and an American devotee who came to take his leave for returning back to U.S.

D.: Bhagavan, tomorrow I have to leave, I am going back to America.

B. (gently): You are not going anywhere.

D. (in great confusion): But Bhagavan my passage is booked. The boat leaves Madras the day after tomorrow.

B. (gently but more emphatically): You are not going anywhere.

D. (waking up): Ah, that! Yes, yes, ! Ha Ha! (*Mountain Path*, July-August, 1974)

PAUL BRUNTON'S ALIENATION WITH SRI RAMANASRAMAM AND AFTER

Balarama Reddy in *My Reminiscences* (Sri Ramanasramam, 1996) records that Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* did much to make the world know that the Maharshi, the unique sage of this century, was living in Tiruvannamalai. He goes on to add, "Brunton was a professional writer and would often be seen taking notes on bits of paper. While in the old hall, listening to questions put to Bhagavan and also his replies, he would eagerly take notes. After the success of *A Search in Secret India*, he began writing many other books in which he would sometimes adopt the Maharshi's teachings without giving due acknowledgement.

"One day in 1939, Brunton was sitting next to me taking notes as usual, when Niranjanananda Swami boldly walked into the hall, stood next to Bhagavan and told Munagala Venkataramiah to tell Brunton in English that he was no longer permitted to take notes while sitting before Bhagavan. Brunton looked at

Venkataramiah and asked, “Is this also Bhagavan’s view?” Venkataramiah did not reply and Bhagavan who was quietly sitting there, didn’t say a word either. A few tense moments passed. Then Brunton got up and left the hall...It was very unusual to see the *sarvadhikari* appear so bold and authoritative before the Maharshi. He must have felt that this exploitation must stop and confident that Bhagavan was behind him.”

How Brunton felt about the incident is now available in the *Note Books of Paul Brunton*, published in 16 volumes by Paul Brunton Philosophic Foundation, New York in 1987. In vol. 8, Brunton records: “In twelve years that passed afterwards until his death, I never saw Ramana Maharshi again. At least a half dozen times I passed within a few miles of his ashram during the part of that period when I was wondering in India. A lump would come into my throat and a choking sensation would seize me as I thought how close we were in spirit and yet so harshly separated by the ill-will of certain men and by the dark shadows of my own karma. For inwardly I never broke away from him.”

How closely Brunton was linked with the Maharshi would be clear from the following, as recorded in the same volume. “There were times when Ramana Maharshi actually appeared before me, advised and discussed. Death had not ended our relationship or barred our connections. He still existed in my mind, life, as a veritable force, an entity bereft of the flesh but clearly present at such times. And then one evening which I shall never forget, about a year and a quarter after his physical passing, he said that he needed to part and that he would vanish from my field of awareness. He did. I never saw him again. If it was his spirit, as I believed, it was either no longer able to maintain communication with this world, which I did not believe, or had withdrawn because the **next step** in my own development imperatively called for this freedom, which subsequently proved to be the case.”

The editor of the 16-volume *Note Books*, his son, Kenneth Hurst,* adds: In the year of his death, that is, 1981, Brunton said more about this **next step**. He said that while the inner contact had never been broke, he [Brunton] had lacked the ability to recognize that at the time. He had to stop looking for the contact through any sort of imagery, and learn to recognize its presence as pure essence rather than personalized image.

Brunton's dedication to Bhagavan was total and irrevocable is clear from the following extracts from the articles published in the *Mountain Path*, as reproduced in the Ashram's publication *The Silent Power*. He writes:

(i) A Pure Channel for a Higher Power: Forty years have passed [written in 1971] since I walked into his abode and saw the Maharshi half-reclining, half-sitting on a couch. After such a long period most memories of the past become somewhat faded, if they do not lose their existence altogether. But I can truthfully declare that in this case nothing of the kind has happened. On the contrary, his face, expression, figure and surroundings are as vivid now as they were then. What is even more important to me is that – at least during my daily periods of meditation – the feeling of his radiant presence is as actual and as immediate today as it was on that first day.

So powerful an impression could not have been made, nor continued through the numerous vicissitudes of an incarnation which has taken me around the world, if the Maharshi has been an ordinary yogi. I have met dozens of yogis, in their Eastern and Western varieties, and many exceptional persons. Whatever status is assigned to the Maharshi by his followers, my own position is independent and unbiased. It is based upon our private talks in those early days when such things were still possible, before fame brought crowds; upon observations of, and conversation with those who were around him; upon his historical record; and finally upon my own personal experiences. Upon all the evidence one fact is incontrovertibly clear that he was a pure channel for a Higher Power. No physical phenomenon of an occult kind was ever witnessed then; nothing at all happened outwardly. But those who were not steeped too far in materialism to recognise what was happening within him and within themselves at the time, or those who were not congealed too stiffly in suspicion or criticism to be passive and sensitive intuitively, felt a distinct change in the mental atmosphere. It was uplifting and inspiring: for the time being it pushed them out of their little selves, even if only partially.

(ii) A Spiritual Torch: Since the day when I first found him, absorbed in the mysterious trance of *samadhi*, I have travelled in many lands but always my thoughts turned towards Tiruvannamalai as the Mohammedan turns his face during prayer towards Mecca. I knew that somewhere in the wilderness of this world there was a sacred place for me. At the Sage's feet, I picked up a spiritual torch and carried it to waiting souls in the lands of the West. They welcomed the light with eagerness. There should be no virtue to be accredited to me for that, for whatsoever

benefit has accrued to Western seekers comes from the torch which was lit by the Maharshi himself. I was only the unimportant ‘link boy’ the humble carrier.

The above is ample proof of the fact that Brunton remained Bhagavan’s devotee till the end of his life. His contribution to make Bhagavan known to the world continues to remain unmatched.

*Brunton’s original name was Raphael Hurst. It was changed when he published *A Search in Secret India*, and continued with it thereafter.

EFFORT IS ESSENTIAL: *Ishta devata* and Guru are aids – very powerful aids on the path. But an aid to be effective requires your effort also. Your sincere effort is absolutely essential. It is you who should see the sun. Can the spectacles and the sun see for you? You yourself have to see your true nature. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

HOW KUSA GRASS BECAME HOLY: Garuda brought a pot of *amrita* from *swarga* and kept it in a pot on a heap of *kusa(darbha)* grass. Meanwhile Indira stole it away. Since the nectar had been kept on the grass, *kusa* became holy. (*Tattavakoka*, Sep., 2008)

DHANWANTRI: The pioneer god of medicine, is considered to be an *ansa* of Lord Vishnu. He emerged from the *Kshira sagara* at the time of churning of the ocean, holding the pot of *amrita* in one hand and *Ayurveda*, written on palm leaves, in the other hand. He is the first teacher of medical science and is also reputed as the pioneer of surgery. (*Tattavakoka*, Sep., 2008)

GITA’S STHITA PRAJNA*

By Swami Shantananda Puri**

The ultimate purpose of all spiritual *sadhanas* is to control and still the mind. Only a person whose *prajna* is still is *sthita* can be free of the shackles of the *vasanas* and attain liberation.

The qualities or characteristics of a *sthita prajna* have been described in second chapter of the *Gita*. According to scholars, the terms *sthita prajna* and *gunatita* are

synonymous. The qualities of a *gunatita* described in chapter 14 of the *Gita* are identical to those of a *sthita prajna*. They can also be called *jivanmuktas*.

According to Shankara *sthita prajana* is one whose mind is rooted in the conviction that ‘I am the Supreme Being, Brahman.’

Factors necessary for becoming a *sthita prajna* are – renouncing all desires and remaining always content in oneself without depending on external objects for satisfaction. Further, whose mind remains unperturbed by any sorrow or suffering, whose attachment to pleasure is completely gone and who is free from attachment, fear and anger, is called a sage with stable wisdom.

Both joy and sorrow are only psychological states of the mind. It is thus possible to reason with one’s own mind and make it impervious to the reactions of joy and sorrow so that the mind could remain undisturbed and stable.

According to the *Gita*, the wisdom of that person is stable who wholly withdraws his senses from their objects just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs from all sides.

Attachment must be removed by our own efforts, by the grace of the Lord and the guru. *Satsang*, mantra *japa* and prayers are definitely of positive help. Once the mind is concentrated on the Self as a result of severe *sadhana*, all *vasanas* will begin to wane away without our being aware of them.

The mind of a person who keeps his senses under control by withdrawing and subduing them by means of uniting his mind at all times with the Lord and being completely engaged in him with devotion (*yukta*) is considered as stable or well-established. At no time of *sadhana* can a seeker be complacent that his attractions to the objects have ceased. The senses bid their time. Never for a moment relax your reins over them, but continue doing the *sadhana* till the attitude of ‘I’, the seeker, disappears so that there is no need to think, ‘I am keeping my senses under control.’ The senses are so powerful that they definitely drag down even a man of knowledge. The way to fight it down is constant remembrance of God. Let your mind be totally engaged in the Lord with sincere love and devotion, so that you are *yukta* – integrated in Him.

Desires, especially lust and passion, are the last things to leave a *sadhaka* in spite of all the *sadhanas*. Even when a person becomes very old, the *vasana* of *kama* expresses itself in apparently innocuous ways.

Prayers are extremely effective. Engage yourself in the reading of the biographies of saints so that the intensity of longing they had, the austerities they performed, will inspire you to emulate them.

The grace of guru is par excellence and infallible. It must be sought and secured.

*Excerpts from the summary of the book *Gita's Sthita Prajna Darshan*, which appeared in *Tattvaloka*, Nov. 2009. The book is published by Parvathamma C.P. Subbaraju Setty Charitable Trust, 13/8, Pamapa Mahakavi Road, Shankarapuram, Bangalore, 560 004. Phone: (080) 2242 3011 and 4151 6724.

**A great devotee of the Maharshi, who authored *Sri Ramana Suprabhatam*, which appears as first item in the *Centenary Souvenir*, published by Sri Ramanasramam, 1996. An article on the Swami appeared in November 2007 issue of this magazine.

TIRUCHUZH AND ITS GLORY

According to an ancient Tamil composition: Siva the Lord Supreme whom all adore/ Used once His Trident in a mighty act of Grace;/ That Trident-thrust He made in times of yore,/ Proclaims forever Tiruchuzhi a sacred place.

Tiruchuzhi has been celebrated as a sacred abode of Siva for many centuries. Vinoba Bhave during his *Bhoodan padayatra* (tour on foot for soliciting land from the rich landlords to be given to the poor) in 1950's, trudged miles out of the way to sit for a while in silence in the home where the Maharshi was born, and to bless, in his prayer speech, the good folk of this little town for their gift of a Maharshi to the modern world.

Tiruchuzhi goes by different names, one of them being *Avarta Chuzhi*, which means an eddy (a circular movement of water causing a small whirlpool). According to legend, there were several deluges and Lord Siva saved Tiruchuzhi from three of them. On one occasion, when the whole land was covered by water, Siva planted His spear in the earth at this place. All the water, which was flooding it was drawn into that hole and an eddy was formed, hence the name. Again in another deluge, He held the place aloft on the top of his trident. Hence, the name *Soolapuri*, from 'Trishool' (trident).

According to Puranas, once the earth was carried away by the *asura* Hiranyaksha, into the waters. When recovered by Vishnu, Mother Earth felt that she had been polluted by the *papaspara* (impure touch) of the *asura*. As a penance She worshipped Siva at Tiruchuzhi, so the place is called *Bhuminatheswara Kshetra*.

Tiruchuzhi is located on the bank of the river Koundinya. Koundinya was a *rishi*, for whose sake a sacred river began to flow here. The name in Tamil has been corrupted as Kundaru. It is also called *papahari*, which means the destroyer of sins. The village has the river on one side and a huge lake on the other. The lake-bed contains clay and measures about three miles in radius. The lake is, strangely, twenty feet above the level of the village, but even when it overflows, the water escapes in other directions, leaving the village unaffected.

Sri Bhuminatha's Temple in Tiruchuzhi is a well-built structure many centuries old. While Siva is worshipped here as Bhuminatha and Thirument Nathar, His consort Parvati is known here by the names Sahayamba, Sahayavalli and Thunai Nayaki. Saints like Sundaramuru and Mainckvachakar who had visited this place, have extolled the spiritual merits of pilgrimage to Tiruchuzhi.

Of particular sanctity are the water of the tank in front of the temple, known as Soola (Trisoola or Trident) Tirtham. That was the place of Siva's trident-thrust. Even now the water in the tank rise at the rate of about a foot every day for the ten days preceding the full moon in the Tamil month of Masi (Maghasuddha Pournami) just prior to the grand annual festival, the Brahmotsavam in the temple. It then gradually falls during the succeeding ten days. This phenomenon can be observed every year. The water contains sulphur and silver jewellery becomes dark after bathing in it.

Tiruchuzi is a small village some 48 kms off Madurai and 22 kms from Virudhunagar, the nearest railway station. It had long been the headquarters of a *taluk* in the Ramnad Setupati's Zamin, and contained the offices of the Police Inspector, the Sub Registrar, and that of a Sub Magistrate, with a group of pleaders practising before him. It also has a hospital. The village which has some local commercial importance, has grown around the temple. *(Arunachala's Ramana, Vol. I)*

SELF-ENQUIRY AND SURRENDER: Self-enquiry is the means given to us by the Maharshi for returning to Self-awareness and remaining steadily abiding in the Self. Self-enquiry and surrender are not two optional paths. They are an integral whole. Unless one surrenders to the *sadguru*, self-enquiry does not bear fruit.

Unless one dives in through self-enquiry it is impossible to understand the true meaning of surrender. (*Sarada Natarajan*)

THE EARLIEST SEEKER – GAMBHIRAM SESHIER AND THE MAHARSHI

Seshier was a Telugu Brahmin and a descendent of the renowned ministers, Akkanna and Maadanna, who were given the title Gambhiram by the Golkonda Ruler, and that became their surname. Since they had been staying in Tamil Nadu part of the country for a very long time, may be for generations, they were known as ‘Iyers’.*

As recorded by B.V. Narasimhaswami in his classic *Self Realization* (chapter 13) Seshier was a municipal overseer at Tiruvannamalai about 1900; from which time he assiduously paid his respects to the Maharshi. He was a devout *Ramabhakta*, constantly repeating the holy name of Rama. He was also studying yoga, especially Vivekananda’s lectures on *Raja Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* etc. Finding some problems in understanding these and similar books, he brought them to the Swami and mentioned his difficulties. The Swami then went through each of them and wrote out in easy Tamil prose the gist of these works on bits of paper, and answered similarly supplemental questions. Thus, Seshier had quite a sheaf of these slips written by the Swami in 1900, 1901 and 1902; and he copied them into a small note-book. From these slips and the note-book, the book *Vichara Sangraha*, translated into English under the title *Self Enquiry* was published. This book can be regarded as the gist of the Maharshi’s earliest teachings.

Seshier was deeply interested in *ashtanga yoga* and attached great importance to *parayanama* (breath control). The Swami had said over and over again that he never cared to practice *prayanama*. In the Swami’s case the mind’s outgoing tendency was arrested in his own peculiar way and he attained *samadhi* without trying to control his breath. As Seshier was anxious to know about *prayanama*, the Swami studied the brochure of Vivekananda and wrote brief notes...The Swami never engages in controversy, as it concerns only the externals and the activities of the intellect. When the intellect gives place to intuition, there is no difference in the ultimate realization, be it that of an *Advaitin*, *Dvaitin* or *Visishtadvaitin*, a *Saivite* or *Sakta*.

*Based on information made available by Sri Ramanasramam.

Happiness cannot be travelled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. It is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude. –

Denis Waitley

SRI RAMANA’S HELP AND INSTRUCTIONS TO A DEVOTEE FROM BANGALORE

T.S. Anantha Murthy, a judge from Bangalore, visited Sri Ramana in 1937. He later published *Life and Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi* (1972).

My wife and I entered the hall and felt awe as we stood and looked at the great sage. For about thirty minutes four Brahmins continued to recite verses from *Taittiriya Upanishad*. The Maharshi seemed to be listening to the recitation of the sacred verses. His mind was, as we could easily realize, absorbed within. I was astonished to see the sage keeping his eyes wide open without blinking for such a long period of time. I also felt that **Sri Ramana** who sat in front of me in such an engrossed manner, **was Brahman in human form and spiritual illumination enshrined in him. He was not only august to look at but also an inspiring figure.**

That evening after the meal was over, the Maharshi picked up his stick and slowly walked into the hall. As I was eager to talk to him, I went behind. He sat down on the sofa. A petromax lamp was illuminating the hall. There was no other devotee. This was the opportunity I was longing for, which by his grace became available without any effort on my part. There was no need to draw his attention. The merciful sage lifted up his face and smiled slightly. He did not utter even one word, nor made any gesture. However, his gentle smile gave me sufficient courage to address him.

With folded hands, I said, "Sir, I do not know Tamil. Please permit me to talk in English. I have not been in good health for some months. Dyspeptic troubles are the cause of my suffering. Doctors have failed to cure me. My eyes are always burning and I feel giddy now and then. I have come here to obtain your blessings." Sri Ramana heard these words patiently, lifted up his serene face and said, "All your troubles will disappear of their own accord." These were the nine English words uttered by him in his mellow voice. I was filled

with delight and gratitude on hearing the blessing so readily bestowed upon me by the great sage. I felt transformed. I prostrated to him and left the hall with my heart filled with joy and relief, and returned to the guest room. It was a memorable occasion indeed. My long cherished desire to obtain *darshan* of Sri Ramana had been fulfilled. In addition, within a few hours after I had set foot in Ramanasramam all my bodily troubles ceased to torment me as a result of the great blessing so readily bestowed upon me by the merciful saint.

During my ten days' stay, one day when practising meditation in the hall, I could not concentrate the mind in spite of my best efforts. Desirous to know the way to surmount the difficulty, I approached the sage and said in English, "Bhagavan, my mind is not steady today. What is to be done?" The great sage raised his head and recited verses 5 & 26 from chapter VI of the *Gita*.^{*} After quoting the verses, the sage, in his infinite mercy, said in English, "These two verses contain the needed instructions. All efforts must be made to become effortless." He then closed his eyes. (*Arunchala's Ramana*, Vol. III)

These, in brief, state that one should raise oneself by one's own efforts and that we are our own friend and our own enemy. From whatever cause the unsteady and restless mind wanders, it should be brought to control in the Self.

AVUDAI AKKAL

She was a great *jnani* who lived in early 18th century in a small town in Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu. By her guru's grace she became a realised soul. Bhagavan's mother used to sing her simple and meaningful Tamil songs. Many of her songs are composed in the style that Bhagavan adopted in the famous *pappadum* verses, revealing the highest truth using simple examples of things used in cooking a dish.

Even as a child, Akkal was extraordinarily intelligent, with serene virtuous nature. As per the custom prevailing in those days, she was married when only a child. Her husband died soon after her marriage. She was too young even to understand why her relations were mourning the death of 'somebody else's son'. In those days, the rules of conduct for a widow were very harsh. But her mother disregarded them and ensured good education for her daughter. However, after she attained puberty, she also could not ignore the dictates of the society and the young girl was shaved.

She had to wear white clothes and remain confined to her house. This treatment broke her heart and she spent time in a state of terrible despair.

Once, a great saint, Thiruvissainallur Ayyaval came to her town. He was walking the streets along with his disciples, singing devotional songs. Akkal heard the saint's voice and being captivated by it, rushed out of the house and fell at his feet, forgetting all conventions. The saint placed his hand on her head and blessed her. She was in a state of ecstasy when she was carried back into her house by the parents. That evening she stole out of the house and went to the river bank where the saint was staying in a *mandapam*. She fell at his feet and poured her agony. The saint blessed her and told her, "God is always with you. Realise that your very nature is happiness. It is the mind that wrongly tells you that you are unhappy. Always meditate upon this truth. Be steadfast in your practice."

From that moment onwards, Akkal spent all her time in meditation and spiritual pursuits. Despair and depression were things of the past. Her newfound happiness got expressed in numerous songs. All her compositions were in very simple language, but expounded the highest Truth. In many of her songs she extolled the greatness of her guru and stressed the need for a spiritual guide in every seeker's life. Her songs are considered to be comparable to the compositions of Avvaiyar, a well-known lady saint of Tamil Nadu. Her songs became very popular, especially among the womenfolk, who would sing them while they are about their household chores.

In due course, a small band of disciples attached themselves to her and accompanied her on her travels. After spending several years in pilgrimage, she happened to meet her guru, who wrote the *bijaksharam* (the seed word) on her tongue, and told her to go back to her town. The town folk received her with all respect, and begged her to stay with them. Once, on a full moon day, she told her devotees that she would go up the hill near the town and spend time in solitary meditation. She went up but never came back. All searches proved futile. Even her mortal remains could not be found. It is believed that she merged with the Supreme just like Manickavachagar, the great Saivite saint. To this day her songs are sung with great reverence largely in Tirunelveli area. (Abridged from a write-up by V.Kirithivasan, President of our Kendram.)

APRIL – 2009

SADHU OM – AN OUTSTANDING DEVOTEE OF SRI RAMANA

Natarajan (Sadhu Om) was born in 1922 near Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. After his SSLC he joined government service as a clerk. He had a strong spiritual inclination since his childhood. Having heard of Sri Ramakrishna he went to Ramakrishna Mission near Calcutta, where the swami directed him to visit Ramana Maharshi and get all his doubts cleared. After returning to Thanjavur he learned about Janaki Matha, a great devotee of Bhagavan, who helped his visit to the Ashram along with her in July 1946.

His mind was longing for Bhagavan's *darshan*. When he went to the hall he was wonder struck as there was no form of Bhagavan on the couch and the devotees coming in line were prostrating the couch. When his turn came he did his prostration and as he was getting up, he saw the form slowly building up. Thus, his first *darshan* of Bhagavan confirmed that He is not the body. Others were offering fruits and eatables, Sadhu Om offered a prayer – *Kuyilodu kooral*, and sung in His presence, but could not complete, as he was in tears.

Sadhu Om started visiting Tiruvannamalai frequently. He was editor of Tamil monthly *Arul*, published from Janaki Nilayam. Later he settled permanently in Tiruvannamalai. He has sung and written extensively about Bhagavan. He was instrumental in bringing out nine volumes of *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodha* with the help of Dr. K. Swaminathan. His great devotee Michael James (www.happinessofbeing.com), has translated a number of works relating to Bhagavan in English.

His totally dedicated life to Sri Ramana came to an end in March 1985. (Based on the write-up by N. Sankaran, Arunachala Ramana Nilayam, Tiruvannamalai.)

A sample of Sadhu Om's poems:

In any way You wish, You will bestow Your Grace (Eppadiyo Arulvay)

In any way You wish, You will bestow Your Grace upon me; how can I understand it?

To ask you to bestow Your Grace in this way or that way, is it not superfluous?

(In any way You wish...)

Whatever is good for me to have in my life, You know it well and also have the power to grant it all!

(In any way You wish...)

Bless me to accept whole-heartedly and enjoy whatever happens to me according to Your gracious Wish

(In any way You wish...)

A pure way of life You are giving me; You cannot bear with it if I suffer! Why then I worry any longer, **O Guru Ramana.**

(In any way You wish...)

ASHARAM'S COOK'S REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA

Sankarammal had served in the Ashram kitchen till the last evening of her life. She was fascinated by *advaitic* texts like *Vivekachudamani* even before coming to Bhagavan .

Theoretically, I was well equipped for a spiritual life. But only when I had the *darshan* of Bhagavan, I knew I had reached the Goal. The experience of inner peace transcended all the limitations imposed on me by the external and internal vacillations. I had just one doubt whether this state of inner poise unalloyed by thought was the final goal. I gathered courage and one day, when there was no one else except an attendant, I approached Bhagavan, prostrated to Him and said, "Lord! Glory to you who has put on this human form in order to redeem me through your *upadesa*! I do not know how I can repay your Grace for helping to liberate me. Glory! Glory to your holy feet!"

Understanding my plight, Bhagavan confirmed that the state of realization was really that simple and spontaneous by giving me a glorious glance of joyful

recognition and said, “Yes, yes! To stay fixed thus in the Self, is the highest return you can render me.” (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. II)

SWAMI RAMANAGIRI – A LESSER KNOWN DEVOTEE OF SRI RAMANA

Per Westin (b. 1921) belonged to the royal family of Sweden. In his youth he got attracted by Swami Vivekananda’s *Raja Yoga* and began to develop yogic powers following the methods prescribed therein. He came to India in 1945 on a scholarship to study philosophy at Benaras Hindu University. Sunyata, a Danish devotee of Bhagavan (refer entry no. 123 in the book *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*), met him soon after his arrival and the two became friends. When summer came, Sunyata invited him to stay with him in his *ashram* at Almora. In early 1949, he was introduced to Bhagavan by Sunyata. He did self-enquiry extensively for forty days in Bhagavan’s presence and was rewarded on Sivaratri day in 1949, with a direct experience of the Self. Bhagavan gave him the name Ramanagiri, and a begging bowl made by Himself. In the following days, he could not get sufficient quantity as *bhiksha*, and complained to Bhagavan, who told him that he need not go in search of food as it will come to him. From that time he did not have to bother about food. He then moved to different places and settled near a village, which is about 25 km from Madurai, where we can see his *samadhi* with a Siva Linga placed on it. For more information refer site: <http://sriramanagiriswamigal.com>

A small portion of his advice as contained in letters to his friends is as follows: Our own mind is the greatest cheater in the world. It will have thousands of reasons to go its own way. Three ways to handle this cheat are: (1) Treat him as a friend and give him full satisfaction. This is a very long and tiresome way as he is never satisfied. (2) Treat him as an enemy and with all force try to get rid of him. This is only possible by the grace of divine because the mind has got two very powerful weapons – the discriminating intellect and the imaginative faculty. These two can convince even God himself that black is white. (3) It is the way taught by Sri Ramana – treat the mind as thought-patients, who are coming to a doctor to complain about their ailments. Just as a doctor sits in his room receiving different kinds of patients, ‘this fool’ [the term he uses for himself] imagines himself sitting in the sacred cave of the Heart and receiving the thought-patients. You know a sick person likes to babble for hours about his complaint. In the same way, a

thought likes to multiply itself, but the doctor will cut it short saying, “Very good. Take this medicine. Thank you very much.’ And then he calls another patient. This is how ‘this fool’ decided to meditate.

First ‘this fool’ slows down his breath as much as possible, but only to the point where there is no discomfort. To ‘this fool’ two breaths per minute is the proper speed, but that may not be possible for you, without very long and sustained practice. You may be able to decrease your breathing to 8-10 per minute in the beginning. Don’t get to a level where you are uncomfortable.

‘This fool’ asks himself, “To whom have all these thoughts come?” Three times he slowly repeats this question. Then in the same slow manner he answers to himself, “To me, to me, to me.” “Then who am I” , “Then who am I” , “Then who am I? All questions and answers are repeated three times, very slowly. “This ‘I’ is not a thought. This ‘I’ is not a thought. This ‘I’ is not a thought. Then who is the receiver of the thought? Then who is the receiver of the thought? Then who is the receiver of the thought? “I” – “I” – “I”. Now the mind is centralized in the source itself. ‘Then who am I?’ ‘Then who am I?’ ‘Then who am I?’ Now the breath comes to an end and the attention is concentrated 100% on the sound caused by the palpitation of the heart, as if the sound would give answer to our questions. This is nothing but the *pranava* itself. If, during this time, the *sakti* which was static is converted to movements or becomes dynamic, trance will occur. If the primal energy reaches the space between the eyebrows, *savikalpa samadhi* will occur. If the energy rises up to the top of the head, *nirvikalpa samadhi* will occur, which is nothing but the Self itself.

Some thoughts of Swami Ramanagiri as contained in his notebook entitled ‘Cold Fire’, are as follows:

1. His Name taken once with whole-hearted love and one-pointed mind, is worth more than the knowledge collected from every book all over the world.
2. Learning is learned ignorance. Unlearning is learning.
3. What you speak about others doesn’t reveal anything about them, but about you.
4. The power of listening attracts more than the power of speaking.
5. *Jnana* and *bhakti* are not separate from each other. One cannot know Him without loving Him, and one cannot love Him without knowing Him.
6. Shut the doors and the door will be opened.
7. Religion is

experience. It should be practiced, not studied or discussed, and at the very least not preached. Those who preach don't know; those who know don't preach. 8. It is a good policy to keep away from other's plates, however sweet and inviting they look. Both sugar and arsenic are white. 9. When the *asuric* forces see a *sadhaka* progressing, they will put every possible obstacle in the form of worldly troubles, mental botherations and sex urges. 10. Selfless activity will give the power of introversion. 11. The disciple's love for the Guru is more important than the Guru's power. 12. We are imprisoned within the walls of our thoughts. 13. Meditation is for the strong, not for the weak. 14. It is not a question of balancing, but balancing without effort. (Source: <www.davidgodman.org>)

WHAT IS AURA: Auras are of many kinds. One can carry anything from a pitch black aura to a pure white aura. Between these two, there are millions of shades. When one is in a state of realisation, his aura will be pure white. When a yogi, who has experienced realisation, chooses to make himself dynamic, the aura will become electric blue. It is in this context that we refer to certain great beings of the past as 'the blue ones'... On the spiritual path it is best to ignore the aura and focus on the core (*atman*). If you are focused on the core, you will have a wonderful aura. Then you will see the core of everything because in the core this or that does not exist. In the core only 'this' exists. Only on the surface 'this and that exists'. (www.ishafoundation.org)

TRIVIKRAMA: In *Vamanavatara*, Lord Vishnu measured the earth and the sky in two steps, and for the third, placed his foot on the head of Mahabali, sending him to *patalaloka*. Since then he is known as Trivikrama. (*Tattvaloka*, Jan., 2009)

SVAHA: In *yagas*, ghee and other sacred commodities are offered to the *devatas* through *agni*, uttering the word *svaha*, which means offering. In the *yagas* the mantras end with the word *svaha*, meaning that the offering is to that *devata*. According to mythology, Svaha was the wife of Vahni or Abhimani, one of the *agnis*, and daughter of Daksha and Prasuti. (*Tattvaloka*, Jan., 2009)

Before you offer to lead others, be your own beacon light. It is far more difficult to guide your own steps than to direct others. – The Buddha

Contentment makes poor men rich; discontentment makes rich men poor – Benjamin Franklin

When it comes to freedom, we are but prisoners of our own desires. – Eric Schaub

BALANCING SPIRITUALITY AND MATERIAL DIMENSIONS: To grow spiritually in a world defined by power, money and influence is a Herculean task. Modern conveniences such as electronic equipments, gadgets, and tools as well as entertainment through television, magazines and the web have predisposed us to confine our attention mostly to physical needs and wants. As a result, our concepts of self-worth and self-meaning are muddled. How can we strike a balance between the material and spiritual aspects of lives?...To grow spiritually is to look inwards. You need to look closely and reflect on your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and motivations. Periodically examining your experiences, the decisions you make, the things you engage in, provide useful insights on your life goals, on the good traits you must sustain and the bad traits you have to discard...Like any skill, introspection can be learned; all it takes is the courage and willingness to seek the truths that lie within you. Here are some pointers when you introspect: be objective, be forgiving of yourself, and focus on your areas for improvement. To grow spiritually is to develop your potential... Great psychologist Maslow identified several human needs: physiological, security, belongingness, esteem, cognitive, aesthetic, self-actualisation and self-transcendence... To grow spiritually is to recognise interconnections. Thus we call other people ‘brothers and sisters’ even if there are no direct blood relations. In psychology connectedness is a characteristic of self-transcendence, the highest human need according to Maslow. Recognising your connection to all things makes you more humble and respectful of people, animals, plants, and things in nature. It makes you appreciative of everything around you. (*Times of India*)

A GANDHIAN RECORDS HIS VISIT TO THE ASHRAM

P.L.N. Sharma met Sri Ramana in 1932, when he went to Tiruvannamalai to attend a conference of co-operative organizations.

In the subdued light of the hall **Bhagavan’s body shone like burnished gold and his eyes were luminous**, full of flashes of some very intense inner life. The more I looked at him, the more **his face seemed to be radiating a mysterious light**, the source of which was somewhere deep within. I could not make out whether he was aware of the world or not, whether he saw me or not, whether he was in some yogic trance or contemplation of something quite beyond my vision and knowledge.

The hall was full of silence, serenity and peace. About twenty people sat on the ground, apparently in deep meditation. When the bell rang for midday meal, the Maharshi invited us all with a nod of his head and we followed him to the dining hall.

Next morning, I sat facing the Maharshi. A government officer accompanied by his retinue entered the hall and at once started telling Bhagavan how corrupt the government servants were, how they abused and misused their positions, how he had been entrusted with the task of cleaning up the government machinery and in his anxiety to make a success of himself, he had lost his peace of mind and had come to Bhagavan to make him calm and contented. It was clear that he thought of himself to be a very important person whose request must be promptly met. After he had finished his long oration, he looked expectantly at Bhagavan as if saying, 'Now it is your turn to show what you can do.' Bhagavan did not even look at him. The clock was striking hours, but Bhagavan was completely silent. The officer lost patience, got up and said, "You are silent, Bhagavan. Does it mean that you want me to be silent too?" "Yes, yes", said Bhagavan, and that was all.

One day, all the delegates to the conference for which I had come to Tiruvannamalai, went in a body to the Ashram. The president of the conference said, "Bhagavan, we are all social workers and disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. We have sworn to devote ourselves to work for the removal of untouchability. Be gracious to tell your view on the subject." Again there was no reply. One could not even make out whether he had heard the question. Time was passing. The delegates were getting tired of sitting quietly. When the situation grew embarrassing, Yagnanarayana Iyer, principal of Pachayappa College, Madras, got up and said, "Bhagavan our question concerns worldly life. Perhaps it was improper to put it to you. Kindly forgive us." "There is nothing to forgive", said Bhagavan quite readily and with a bright smile. "When the ocean is surging and carrying away everything before it, who cares what are your views or mine?" The delegates could not find much sense in the answer. Only the great events years later gave meaning to it.

I was told that in Bhagavan's presence doubts get cleared without the need of questions or answers. Nothing of the kind happened to me. On the three previous days I tried to catch his eye, but could not. On the fourth day I managed to address him, while he seemed to be looking into the infinity of space, "Bhagavan, my mind does not obey me. It wanders as it likes and lands me into trouble. Be merciful and tell me how to bring it under control." Bhagavan looked at me affectionately and spoke most kindly, and his words sparkled with meaning, "All

religious and spiritual practices have no other purpose than getting the mind under control. The three paths – Knowledge, Devotion, and Duty, aim at this and this alone...The path of Devotion is the easiest of all. Meditate on God or on some mental or material image of Him. This will slow down your mind and it will get controlled of its own accord.” I felt satisfied, and there was deep peace in me when I looked at him for the last time. (*Ramana Smrti*, a publication of Sri Ramanasramam)

SRI RAMANA SHOWERS GRACE ON A DEVOTEE

Padma and her husband Venkataraman, trustees of T.M.P. Mahadevan Trust, Chennai, are devotees of Sri Ramana.

With my husband I went to see Bhagavan in 1947. After prostrating we stood near him. I said, “Bhagavan I want *atmasakshatkaram*” [Self realisation]. Bhagavan looked at me and smilingly asked, “*Appadiah?*” (Is it so?). The way Bhagavan asked me took my breath away. It was so charming. Then my husband said, “She wants to stay here permanently.” Bhagavan did not say anything but looked at me steadily pouring forth his grace.

I used to sit in the old hall spellbound for many hours; such was his power. While engaged in meditation, old memories would well up in my mind and disturb the flow of meditation. I wanted to find a way to quench all the *vasanas*. One day I found an opportunity and put my problem before Bhagavan. His reply was, “You be the subject instead of the object, then the *vasanas* would not trouble you any more.” This suggestion and his grace worked for me.

Once at 4 a.m. I went for *giri pradakshina* alone. When I had earlier sought Bhagavan’s permission before proceeding on my circuit, he told me to be careful. I did not feel any fear till I reached Adiannamalai, but I suddenly remembered what Bhagavan had said and felt sudden fear. At that time I saw somebody walking in front of me. It looked like Ammani Ammal, one of the devotees known to me. I called out her name loudly, but probably she could not hear me and kept on walking. When we reached Esanya Lingam, it was broad day light, and to my amazement, I could not see the lady. Even now, when I think of Bhagavan’s grace in sending someone when I needed, and withdrawing the company when I no more needed it, I simply shed tears. (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, vol. vii)

GET RID OF NAMES AND FORMS: Through names and forms the world appears in all its discordant diversity. When names and forms cease forever, it [the world] is *Brahman*. A person with a limited mind masks the true *Brahman* with concepts of names and forms, sees it as a world, and is bewildered and frightened.
– *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

AN ASPIRANT FROM SOUTH AMERICA MAKES HER WAY TO THE ASHRAM – A FACINATING STORY

Sharon Maas lived in Guyana (Cap. Georgetown, a British colony till 1966), a small country wedged between Venezuela and Brazil. Long ago, British planters had brought in a large number of indentured labour from India to work in their sugar estates. They came in thousands and soon outnumbered the local population. By 20th century Guyana's population had 52% Indians (34% Hindus). Diwali and Holi are national holidays and a cinema shows nothing but Bollywood movies. She writes:

Even as a child I was a seeker. I would sit quietly and ask myself, “Who am I? Why I am constantly thinking? What are thoughts made of? Where do they come from? What is in the space between the two thoughts? Can I ever stop thinking?” But having found no answers, I gave up the exercise as futile. When 19, and working as a journalist at a local newspaper, I happen to lay my hand on the book *In Days of Great Peace* by Mouni Sadhu. [A must-read book about Sri Ramana] By the time I had finished it I knew Ramana Maharshi is my guru, for whom I have been waiting for all my life. I addressed a letter to *Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, India*, and sent it by airmail, requesting for a photograph and whether I could come to stay. The answer came within a week, a time period in which it seemed physically impossible for a letter to get to India and back. But here it was.

My hands trembled as I opened the envelope. A photo fell out, I picked it up, looked at it – and burst into tears. A grey-haired old man with eyes that looked straight through me, saw my wretchedness – and loved me all the same. *Why me?* I wept, and the clear answer came through those eyes: *because you asked*. When I could I read the letter. The very first sentence drew more tears: “You are very welcome to come to the Ashram.” It was signed by V. Ganesan.

The miracle had taken place. Against all odds, my Guru had found me! The next few weeks were filled with such joy I could dance. I wanted to tell the world about Ramana – as I called him then – but was surprised at the lack of reaction from other people, so, after a while, I stopped showing people the photo, and kept my Guru as my own delicious secret.

My mother had noticed the positive change in me, and it was she who provided the solution. An insurance policy she had been paying into for years suddenly came to maturity, and she offered me a gift of money, enough for a plane journey to England and beyond. For me, another miracle, yet so fitting.

I had been corresponding with a Swiss friend who told me that he and his girlfriend were travelling overland to India, and that I could join them. I flew to England and from there to Switzerland, where my friend helped me to get a job locally as a maid. It wasn't the work that appealed to me. But I brought it to life by imagining that every room I cleared was occupied by Ramana – that I am doing it for him.

It was in Switzerland that I made my first acquaintance with Arunachala. I was sitting in meditation when all darkness of my soul threatened to drown me. Utterly smothered by this darkness there was nothing I could do but cry out for help, and out of the depths of my despair I cried out the word: *Arunachala!* It came only as a thought, but the effect was immediate: the darkness parted and a ray of light shone through my being. I repeated it: *Arunachala! Arunachala! Arunachala!* And with every repetition the darkness receded more and more, until all that was left was a glorious jewel of clearest light. Later I was to read Bhagavan's *Marital Garland of Letters* and recognize what had happened: *Fiery Gem, shining in all directions, do Thou burn my lowliness, O Arunachala.* From that day I knew the power of Arunachala, and that it is indeed unique.

Finally, in early October, 1973, a group of us left for India. The overland journey was the ultimate lesson in patience. This was the hippie trail, and the thing to do was to travel slowly. We hitchhiked, travelled by cheap trains and buses, through Europe to Turkey, then through Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan: fascinating cultures for my friends, but not for me; I was in hurry. I wanted only to move on, on, on to Arunachala. Homewards! I was an iron filing drawn by a magnet. I pushed them on. But being in the minority, mostly had to take the delays with fortitude.

Finally, on December 3, 1973, I walked through the arch of Ramanasramam for the first time. I had finally come home. (Abridged from *Mountain Path*, Jan.-Mar., 2009)

MAY - 2009

AN ALBUM OF FORGOTTEN TRUTH: Man is grandly related and a greater Being suckled him than his mother. In his wiser moments he may come to know this...There is that in man which belongs to an imperishable race. He neglects his True Self almost completely, but his neglect can never affect or alter its shining greatness. He may forget it and entirely go to sleep in the senses, yet on the day when it stretches forth its hand and touches him, he shall remember who he is and recover his soul... Man does not put true value upon himself because he has lost the divine sense. Therefore he runs after another man's opinion, when he could find complete certitude more surely in the spiritually authoritative centre of his own being. The Sphinx [The huge stone statue in Egypt having a lion's body and the head of a man.] surveys no earthly landscape. Its unflinching gaze is always directed inwards, and the secret of its inscrutable smile is self-knowledge...He who looks within and perceives only discontent, frailty, darkness and fear, need not curl his lip in mocking doubt. Let him look deeper and longer, deeper and longer, until he presently becomes aware of faint tokens and breath-like indications which appear when the heart is still. Let him heed them well, for they will take life and grow into high thoughts that will cross the threshold of his mind...The divine nature reveals itself anew in every human life, but if a man walk indifferently by, then the revelation is as seed on stony ground. (Source: *A Search in Secret India* by Paul Brunton. As mentioned by Brunton, this wisdom dawned upon him after he had realised the Self through Sri Ramana's grace.)

ADI SANKARA: Sankara means 'he who gives beneficial happiness' – *sham karoti*. It also means 'one who destroys all doubts' – *shanka aapah*. Swami Vivekananda says, "God arose in the south India in the form of Sankara." Sankara did not teach anything new – the ancient *rishis* had already expressed the same truths that he preached. Sankara's signal contribution is that he cleared the chaff (superstitions) that was covering the grain (the real truth). His main teaching is *atma jnana*, but he encouraged everyone in his *ishta deva upasana* (worship of their favourite divine form) by establishing *shan mathas* (six major forms). They

are worship of *Sauram* (Surya), *Vaishnavam* (Vishnu), *Saktam* (Sakti), *Ganapatyam* (Ganapati), *Kaumaram* (Kumara) and *Saivam* (Siva)...The world is our own creation. Everyone perceives the world (*loka*) in a different manner. *Aalokyathe iti loka* means that “we create our own world based on that which is perceived by us.”...In deep sleep, we have no identity, there is no ‘me’, no desires, no notion of superior or inferior, no worry, we have no roles like chairman, housewife, etc., but we are in total bliss. Is it possible to achieve this bliss in our waking state? We experience the real bliss that is within us, in an unknowing and uncomprehending state, during deep sleep. But we are in search for it outside. The state of *advaitya* (non-duality) is *sat, chit, ananda*, a state of love and happiness. To remind us of this and to guide us, a great saint like Sankara appeared on the earth. (Source: *Tattavaloka*, June, 2008)

SIVA’S INTEREST IN MUSIC, SONG AND DANCE: When Lord Siva introduced the science of intuitional practice [The ability to understand something without the need for conscious reasoning.], He had to keep in mind that there must be some adjustment in the objective life of those who follow the path of *sadhana*. In the absence of this adjustment the mind becomes irritated and degenerates and no concentration is possible. Lord Siva selected three things which are in use in the objective world but which are helpful in spiritual life as well. These are dance, song and instrumental music, collectively known as *samgita* or music. This could be why music plays a significant role in devotion... Vishnu *bhakt* Narada played the violin, sang songs and danced. All these things are intended to stir the ectoplasm [A substance that supposedly exudes from the body during spiritual trance.], vibrate it and finally to concentrate it at a point and touch the *atman*. (Shri Shri Anandamurthi) [It may be noted that Lord Siva is recognized as the originator of dance, song and instrumental music.]

THE MAHA MRITYUNJAYA MANTRA: We worship Siva – the three-eyed Tryambakam, Lord Yajamahe; who is fragrant (*sugandhim*); and nourishes strength (*pushti vardhanam*). As the ripened cucumber is automatically liberated – by the intervention of the ‘farmer’ – from its bondage to the creeper, may He liberate us from death for the sake of immortality. We pray to Siva whose eyes are the Sun, Moon and Fire. May He protect us from all disease, poverty and fear and bless us with prosperity, longevity and good health. (*Times of India*)

A WARNING: This physical body is as transitory as a bubble of water. No one knows when life would fly away like a winged bird freed from its cage. There will certainly come a day when friends and relations in whose attachment you are so much absorbed will be separated from you. Why do you not awake even under this

circumstance? Your enemies, lust, anger, greed, etc. are constantly on the lookout for an opportunity to catch you and destroy you... Why not you tread the royal road on which walk the saints bearing ideal conduct and wide hearts?.. Do you allow the mind to wander into evil even for a moment? Do you not possess the fear of death? Therefore, heed this warning; safeguard your future by taking to the path of *Dharma*. Practice of *Dharma* is the only means of protection. (*Mahabharata – Shanti Parva*)

The world does not exist in the state of ultimate truth [*paramartha*]. Its appearance, its [apparently] existing nature in *maya*, is like the imagined appearance of a snake in a rope, a thief in a wooden post, and water in a mirage. Their essential nature is delusion. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

MAHARSHI BHRIGU: one of the *Saptarishis*. He was very ambitious and passionate about multiplying the powers through penance. He was also short-tempered like Maharshi Durvasa. He was an ardent devotee of Siva. Once there was a debate in *Devaloka* as to who among the Trinity was the most powerful, and Bhrigu was chosen to pronounce a verdict in this regard. So Bhrigu first went to Brahma. Being immersed in meditation, while listening to the music emanating from the *veena* of Saraswati, he did not offer a seat to Bhrigu. The latter became very angry and cursed that Brahma would not be worshipped in any temple with rituals. He then went to Sivaloka, where Siva and Parvati being engaged in intense cosmic dance, did not take notice of him. Getting annoyed at this, he cursed that Siva would be worshipped only in the *linga* form and not in a gorgeous manner. Then he went to Vaikuntha where Vishnu being in his usual *yoganidra* (meditative sleep), also didn't take note of his presence. Bhrigu, who had felt insulted twice earlier, could not contain himself and kicked Vishnu in the chest. Vishnu not only remained calm and quiet, he touched the feet of Bhrigu tenderly asking him whether he had got injured because of the hit. Bhrigu was astonished and was filled with a sense of shame and repentance, and tender words flowed out of his mouth: "O Lord, you are the Supreme Being, You have the noblest trait of showering love and affection on the one who insults you." The Lord calmly said, "I will always carry your footprints on my chest as a mark of your love for me." The footprint of Bhrigu on the chest of Vishnu is known as *Srivatsa*. (*Tattavaloka*, March 2009)

MAHA SIVARATRI: It is a festival chosen to honour Siva, the Adi Guru. On this night the planetary positions in the northern hemisphere are such that there is a material upsurge of energies. If one just stays awake and keeps one's spine erect

throughout the night, it naturally pushes a person towards spiritual peak. www.ishafoundation.org

STORY OF KANTABHARANAM: A princess lost her golden necklace and she was searching for it everywhere with concern and worry. At last when somebody among the courtiers pointed out that the necklace was already in the neck, the princess became happy. It was not a case of finding the necklace but she had only to recognise the necklace which was already with her. Same is the case with the Self (*atman*). All the search is meant to recognise the Self which has always been with us. We are that 'Self'. Bhagavan Sri Ramana called this illustrative story as the story of *Kantabharanam* – the ornament which was already in the neck.

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. – Mahatma Gandhi

Let us keep under constant surveillance all our thoughts, words or actions. For these are the landmarks on our voyage to *nirvana*. – The Buddha

The highest destiny of the individual is to serve rather than to rule. – Albert Einstein

Every human being has an attendant spirit. If it does not always tell us what to do, it always cautions us what not to do. – Lydia M. Child

Life is like a play; it is not the length but the excellence of the acting that matters. – Seneca

SIDDHA MAHA YOGA: During daily *sadhana* of this yoga, all one has to do is to sit relaxed and simply surrender one's will to the awakened *Kundalini shakti* and be a calm witness as *prana shakti* works out various corrective *kiryas*. As a preparatory practice for this yoga, one should begin by learning to hand over the mind, at least for a few minutes every day, to this mother *prana shakti*, manifesting in all of us as breath. The aspirant could make a start as outlined here: 1. Sit in a comfortable position, keeping the body loose and relaxed. 2. Close the eyes and become a calm witness to the natural breathing. 3. As soon as the eyes are closed, feel a current or rising of a wave from the spine to the top of the brain. 4. Practise this for five minutes or more. Done regularly, this practice will result in many positive changes. The awakened *sakti* will cause to remove the physical, mental and emotional imbalances within the *sadhaka*. – mahayogi@vsnl.com

HAVE FAITH, BUT FIRST DO YOUR WORK: It is rightly said that God helps those who help themselves. H.W. Longfellow's concept in his *A Psalm of Life*, "learn to labour and to wait", is preceded by his earlier lines, "Let us then be up and doing / With a heart for any fate" and also his supreme lines in *The Ladders of St. Augustine*, "The heights by great reached and kept / Were not attained by sudden flights / But they, while their companions slept / Were toiling upward in the night." In this regard lines of W.E. Henley (*Invictus*) assume immense significance – "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul." Some believe that destiny, karma and planetary positions are insurmountable obstacles. But then free will and intensity of yearning within could overcome these through right application. Fatalism or inaction under the cover of destiny are often alibis for failures and escape routes for the weak in spirit. Dynamic optimism and the willingness "to labour and to wait" besides that abiding capacity to smile even "when everything goes dead wrong" – these are all the conquering weapons in the armoury of the great to transcend barriers. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

ESTABLISHING A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD – SOME THOUGHTS

By Siluveru Sudharshan*

When we call God from the heart with a deep yearning to know Him, we draw His response... When we enter the sanctuary of silence, we feel God's presence... Conversation with God is a natural, personal form of prayer... We have to pour our heart to Him... We should say to Him, "I have nothing to ask, except being with You"... We should develop the habit of silently conversing with God... First thought in the morning as we get up from the bed and the last thought in the night as we go to sleep should be, "I love you God, my Lord"... There is a wonderful release from the soul as we unburden ourselves to God all our weaknesses... We have to go on praying until He responds, and never give up... We must approach Him as a child and claim His love... God is as close to us as our thoughts allow Him to be... If we have faith in God we can rejoice in His company... Blissful relationship with God exists in learning to reside more within... Saints prefer not to speak much as their voice may drown the sweet voice of God... No one need to know of our silent worship... 'I am in You', let your mind always dwell on this thought... We have to realise that we are not alone. God is

always with us in all circumstances... We can experience the great joy by talking to Divine through the language of the soul... We can enjoy life by establishing a personal and close relationship with God...

* A devotee of Sri Ramana, who stays in Hyderabad. Phone: 3072 8074.

It is enough that one surrenders oneself. Surrender is to give oneself up to the original cause of one's being ... One's source is within oneself. Give yourself up to it. That means that you should seek the source and merge in it.

– Sri Ramana

Maharshi

KAMATH'S REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA

K. Vithoba Kamath (1924 -), a Gandhian, is an agriculturist. He lives in Brahmavar, Karnataka, with his son.

I had read about the Maharshi from an article by M.S. Kamath, and later when I read his book about the Maharshi, a magnetic attraction arose in me to see him. Visiting the Ashram in 1946, I beheld the Maharshi in the hall. I felt that he was not in any way attached to or connected with anything around him. **He radiated spiritual splendour through sublime silence.**

I used to sit in the hall in the last row. One day, an idea flashed that I should see Lord Krishna. I intently looked at Bhagavan and saw a dark cloud engulfing him and within that emerged the Lord. I was at my wit's end. I thought it was a hallucination and a projection of my own mind. I wanted to try again. This time I thought of Gandhiji. Ramana was nowhere, but in his place there was Gandhiji. Being bewildered, I looked at Bhagavan. There! He was looking straight at me with a benign smile on his face. I felt highly blessed.

Prior to my departure, I took courage to sit near Sri Ramana. Being the morning hour, there were few visitors. I verily felt vibrations emanating from him which thrilled me. I asked Bhagavan with much hesitation as to how to control the tossing of the mind. He simply looked at me but didn't give a reply. I thought it was not proper on my part, a raw graduate, to have asked him. Meanwhile Devaraja Mudaliar came and sat by my side. Bhagavan, though he knows English, rarely replied in that language. He asked me through Mudaliar, as to who was asking this

question: “Is it you or your mind?” I replied, “It is my mind.” Bhagavan’s response was, “Mind is a bundle of thoughts. See who you are, then these oscillations of the mind cease to exist.”

In the dining hall, I had the fortune of sitting in the row opposite to Bhagavan. The Maharshi would observe the leaves of all and direct the servers (mostly ladies) to restore any shortfall. He would take a small quantity of food and mash it well with his fingers.

I remember well, as if it just happened today, the figure of Bhagavan Ramana returning from his walk on the hill, radiating spiritual aura, with eyes glittering like live stars, emanating bliss. Decades later, the scene of that uplifting influence is still so fresh and inspiring. (*Mountain Path*, October-Dec., 2007)

AN ANDHRA FREEDOM-FIGHTER VISITS SRI RAMANA

Atmakuri Govindacharyulu, a known freedom fighter of Andhra Pradesh, first visited the Ashram in 1944-45.

One day as I was dwelling on the name of Rama I heard ‘Ramana, Ramana.’ The sound was pleasant. I don’t know why it gave me great joy. The yearning to see him grew day by day. Finally one morning I reached the Ashram and went to the hall. I joined my hands, prostrated and stood up and began to reflect, ‘How is it that this head which had bowed to none but Mahatma Gandhi has prostrated?’ The mind which had worshipped only Rama, becomes subdued here! It is inexplicable!

I sat down on the floor near the Sage’s feet and began to gaze at his countenance. Five minutes passed. Suddenly he turned his gaze upon me and I could not stand it. My hair stood on end and an unknown force began to rise throughout my frame. I prayed, ‘Thou alone art my refuge!’ Later, when introduced to the Sage, from the depth of that placid human statue a smile emerged that seemed to say, ‘Don’t I know him?’ That smile, mingled with that look of grace, stirred me deeply, and made me tremble like one who has passed through blazing fire. I could not bear to look at that face radiant like the sun.

The Maharshi is an ocean of peace. Whoever sets eyes upon this sea or sits near it for an instant, cannot fail to taste supreme peace, their mental movement held, be it only for a while. Such is the grace of this transcendent yogi, such is his

motiveless activity. Whoever gathers at his feet, he will not fail to shed on them at least a drop from his unfathomable ocean of tranquility. He will not fail to shower on them the transcendent seed that ends the ego and yields peace. He waters the fields of their hearts with the elixir of devotion that passes unperceived from his heart.

His handwriting is like a string of pearls. The style and the exposition of the Truth are outstanding in his poems. What is impossible for the perfect adept who has grasped the essence of all sciences? **He knows everything.** I offered him my book *Govinda Ramayana*.

I stayed for three days and only once or twice a day I heard him speaking. **He rules all through silence.** On the third day of my arrival, I drew near the sea of love and prostrating said, “I take leave, bless me.” He looked at me and nodded his head in assent. I stood transfixed, arrested by the power of that look. I came out of the Sage’s hall with peace in my heart. I said to myself, ‘I am blessed.’ (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. V)

MANTRA JAPA AND MANO-LAYA

As a result of a long practice of mantra *japa*, Sankarananda, an Andhra police officer, attained *mano-laya*, i.e., stillness of mind. He lost interest in all worldly things and could not attend to his duties either in the office or at home. He used to come and see Bhagavan often. Once he came to Bhagavan on a six-month leave. He sat in the hall and soon lost outer consciousness. One day, even after the lunch bell was rung he sat unmoved. Bhagavan brought him back to consciousness by giving a mild push with his foot and took him to the dining hall.

Since *mano-laya* would not lead one to the ultimate Truth, Bhagavan asked some senior resident devotees to take him to the temple in the morning and to Samudram lake in the evening and engage him in one way or another throughout the day and talk to him about the path of self-enquiry, thus preventing him from relapsing into *laya*. For many days this process of keeping him awake in the daytime continued. After sometime, by the grace of Bhagavan he became normal. At the end of his leave he returned home and began to lead a normal life. He also earned a promotion.*

(*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. II)

* It was Sankarananda who later took the *sarvadhikari* to Burma to procure teakwood for the Matrubhuteswara temple.

SAMATVA OF SRI RAMANA

The following piece is as narrated by Seshadri Sastrigal, who served in the dining hall.

Once when I was serving buttermilk to Bhagavan, I found I had no more left with me. Bhagavan asked me, “Could you get some more buttermilk for me?” This was very unusual as Bhagavan had never asked for a second helping. I went into the kitchen, got some more and served him. After tasting it he said, “There seems to be some difference between the buttermilk you served me earlier and this buttermilk.” As I did not know the answer I went into the kitchen and asked the cooks. They told me that the buttermilk that was served later was intended for the servants. Bhagavan asked, “Why not the same for everybody?” From next day onwards, everyone was served the same buttermilk.

During the rationing days, boiled wheat used to be served to the devotees, instead of rice. One night, instead of wheat, rice was served on Bhagavan’s leaf. When the *sarvadhikari*, who happened to be in the hall, was asked by Bhagavan as to why he got rice and others wheat, he said, “Wheat is not good for Bhagavan’s health.” Bhagavan retorted, “Oho! Are you a doctor? Serve me the same as is served to others. Make no discrimination.” (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. II)

SRI RAMANA RECALLS TWO INCIDENTS OF FORCED FEEDING TO HIM

The following episodes, narrated by Bhagavan himself to the devotees, are recorded in *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*.

1. About four or five years after I came to Tiruvannamalai, one day, Palaniswamy [Bhagavan’s attendant] and me went round the hill and came near the temple. It was about 8 p.m. As we were very tired, I lay down in Subrahmanya

temple . Palani went out to fetch food from the *choultry*. The head of Eesanya Mutt happen to go into the temple. As usual there were a number of disciples around him. One of them saw me and told him about it. While returning, he came with ten of his disciples and stood around me, saying, “Get up, Swamy. We shall go.” I was in *mouna* then, so I showed by signs that I wouldn’t accompany them. Was he the man to listen to me? “Lift him up bodily,” he said to his disciples. As there was no alternative, I got up. When I came out, there was a *bundy* (cart) ready. “Get in, Swamy,” he said. I declined and showed them by signs that I would prefer to walk and suggested that he should get into the *bundy*. He took no notice of my protestations. Instead, he told his disciples, “What are you looking at? Lift Swamy and put him in the cart.” They were ten of them and I was alone. What could I do? They lifted me bodily and put me into the cart. Without saying anything more, I went to the Mutt. He had a big leaf spread out for me, filled it with food of all kinds, showed great respect and began saying, “Please stay here always.” Palaniswamy went to the temple, enquired about me and then came to the Mutt. After he came, I somehow managed to escape from there. That was the only occasion on which I got into a cart after coming to Tiruvannamalai.

2. In 1896, I was at Gopura Subrahmanyeswarsa temple. Grandfather of T.P. Ramachandra Iyer [Refer entry 54 in the book *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* in regard to Ramachandra Iyer] used to come to me daily, sit for a while and go. I was in *mouna*. So there was no talk or consultation. He had great devotion. One day he had invited someone to his house for a feast. He thought of making me join on the occasion. He came to me with another person. Standing on either side they said, “Swamy, get up. Let is go” “Why?”, I enquired by signs. They told me the purpose. I refused. But would they go? They caught hold of my hands and forcibly pulled me up. They were prepared to carry me even in their arms. He was tall, stout and with a big belly. I was at that time lean and weak. I was nothing before him. His friend was even sturdier. What could I do? I was afraid that they might even carry me in their arms, if I resisted any further. I knew they were inviting me with great *bhakti*. So, thinking it was no use arguing with them, I walked with them. They fed me sumptuously with great respect and then sent me back. That is the only family house here where I have eaten on a leaf. (Letter dated 27th June, 1947)

SRI RAMANA’S MAHANIRVANA – THE GREAT EVENT

By R. Narayana Iyer

Iyer first met Bhagavan in 1929, when he was Sub-Registrar at Chetput, a town 30 miles from Tiruvannamalai. He also did personal service to Bhagavan. His other captivating and inspiring reminiscences are at pages 258-62 in the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

“Before some stars appear, light appears. After they vanish from vision, light also remains. That is state of a *jnani* – his birth and death.” These were the words of Sri Bhagavan in a talk about *jnani*s. The exact import of the words is as puzzling as the strange phenomenon that passed vividly before our eyes on the 14th April, 1950.

I was sitting in the open space in front of my house facing east. The sky was clear, the air still. 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 looks to our vision, and its movement was slow. It was so lustrous that at its zenith the light shed by its trail stretched all the way back to the horizon like an arc. The sight dazed me. Instinctively I jumped to my feet and ran as fast as I could to the Ashram, a hundred yards off. I cared not for the Ashram rules. And 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 and God in flesh and blood, was lying.

My heart thumped, breath choked. He had just breathed his last. I touched the body. There was no warmth. In frenzy I clasped hold of his 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 chanting filled the air, and my head reeled with dizzy thoughts. We will no longer see our Bhagavan in that beautiful form of molten gold, which charmed and enchanted us for decades. 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 the height of bliss, far, far above the world. Tears gushed forth from my eyes as from a fountain... the Divine *Leela* was over. (*The Maharshi* – Journal of Arunachala Ashram, New York, May-June, 2001)

JUNE – 2009

A WARNING: This physical body is as transitory as a bubble of water. No one knows when life would fly away like a winged bird freed from its cage. There will certainly come a day when friends and relations in whose attachment you are so much absorbed will be separated from you. Why do you not awake even under this circumstance? Your enemies, lust, anger, greed, etc. are constantly on the lookout for an opportunity to catch you and destroy you... Why not you tread the royal road on which walk the saints bearing ideal conduct and wide hearts?.. Do you allow the mind to wander into evil even for a moment? Do you not possess the fear of death? Therefore, heed this warning; safeguard your future by taking to the path of *Dharma*. Practice of *Dharma* is the only means of protection. (*Mahabharata – Shanti Parva*)

STORY OF KANTABHARANAM: A princess lost her golden necklace and she was searching for it everywhere with concern and worry. At last when somebody among the courtiers pointed out that the necklace was already in the neck, the princess became happy. It was not a case of finding the necklace but she had only to recognise the necklace which was already with her. Same is the case with the Self (*atman*). All the search is meant to recognise the Self which has always been with us. We are that ‘Self’. Bhagavan Sri Ramana called this illustrative story as the story of *Kantabharanam* – the ornament which was already in the neck. – *Anonymous*

Religion is for people who are scared to go to hell. Spirituality is for people who have already been there. – Bonnie Raitt

Faith is the force of life. – Leo Tolstoy

Everything is possible for the person who believes. – Adlin Sinclair

VIRUPAKSHA TEMPLE: The word Virupaksha is sacred to Sri Ramana devotees. Sri Bhagavan lived in Virupaksha cave at Arunachala for about 17 years. It is one of the names of Lord Siva, when his face got contorted due to anger at Sati’s immolation. The temple of Virupaksha, built in 7th century, is the largest temple in the historic city of Hampi, in Karnataka. Forty-eight meter high *gopuram* of this temple, which has nine tiers can be seen for miles around. The principal sanctum sanctorum of the temple enshrines the famous Virupaksha *linga*. An interesting feature of this temple is that a small channel cut from the river Tungabhadra (also known as Pampa *nadi*), runs along the terrace of the temple,

into the temple kitchen and then flows out through the outer courtyard. The historic site of Hampi is believed to be very near what was known as Kishkinda in *Ramayana*. (*Tattvaloka*, August, 2008)

A LAD'S INTENSE DESIRE TO BECOME A SADHU GETS BLESSINGS OF SRI RAMANA

Swami Tatvabodhananda who resides at Ramakrishana Math, Kolkata, writes how as a boy he stealthily left his school boarding house in Coorg to visit Tiruvannamalai to fulfill his desire to become a *sadhu*.

I went to Ramanasramam early in 1944. It happened all of a sudden after a person told me about the Maharshi. On hearing about him I was wonderstruck. Even though I was studying in the ninth form, I made up my mind to leave everything, go to the Maharshi and take *sannyasa*. I packed a small suitcase and set off secretly before dawn, making for the Ashram. The idea just came to me suddenly. I reached Tiruvannamalai at 8.30 p.m. Inside the Ashram I met Niranjananda Swami – the *savadhikari* of the Ashram. I knew Tamil, Malayalam and Tulu because all the three languages were spoken in the coffee estate of my father. On an enquiry, when I told him that I was a student, he wanted to know whether I had got clearance from the authorities and the parents before coming here. I spoke the truth. He seemed to have some sympathy for me, and I got accommodation to stay for three days.

Next day I went to the Maharshi's hall and sat very close to him, though there was a barrier in front of him. I looked at the Maharshi – he was looking at me intently. I did not speak but sat for a long time. And then, I don't know why, I began to weep. Tears were flowing spontaneously. My silk shirt and pant became soaked. The Maharshi continued to look steadily at me. Looking at him, I continued to weep without making a sound. Everybody was wondering why this boy was crying. I felt shamefully embarrassed. I looked around to see what everybody else was doing. Some were looking at the Maharshi. Some were meditating. Then I too closed my eyes and started meditating. I did not know even the meaning of meditation. I simply sat and closed my eyes. I am telling the truth. That day sitting before him – Oh! What an inexplicable state of mind I had! I was not aware of anything at all. I did not even notice that all had got up and left. Then someone shook me up. I was the last person there. I went back to my room, and washed my face.

When I entered the dining hall, I saw a place close to the Maharshi. It was reserved for someone else. But how was I to know that? I went and sat there. There was also a leaf plate. What happened next was very interesting. When rice was served to the Maharshi, he took a little of it and placed it in my hand. I started eating. I ate sumptuously and after washing my hands went to my room. After sometime a note came to me from the *sarvadhikari*, with instructions as to how I should go to Katpadi and catch a train to go to Bangalore. I went to the office and saw him. I told him that I wanted to speak to the Maharshi. “What do you want to say to him? Give it in writing,” he said. “No. I won’t give in writing. I want to have a talk with him.” Then he called someone and asked him to take me to the hall.

When I entered the hall, the Maharshi was sitting with a smiling face, legs dangling down. I approached him, did *pranam* touching his feet and sat before him courageously. I had no mind to tell him that I had come there to take *sannyasa* and become a sadhu and all that. What I did was simply sit quietly. The man who had accompanied me gently told me, *pesungo, pesungo* (talk, talk). But I was quiet. Then the Maharshi himself talked to me: *Nee saadhu aagappore samayam varudu. Nee ippo pogalaam.*” (The time is approaching when you will become a sadhu. Now you can go.) Just two sentences. Just I as if I had received his permission, I stood up. After he had spoken, I did not say anything more, but went straight to the office and offered thirty rupees as a donation. In those days it was a big amount but I had it with me. I also bought the books – *Who am I?* a biography of the Maharshi, and his photograph. Then I left.

After my *darshan* of the Maharshi, I saw Papa Ramdas and others. I read many books including *Ramakrishna Vijaya*. My mind which got attracted to Ramakrishna Mission, turned inwards and became disinterested in worldly activities. After sometime, I succeeded in getting my father’s consent to take *sannyas* and joined Ramakrishna Mutt, fulfilling my quest to become a sadhu. (Condensed from *Mountain Path*, Jan.- March, 2009)

YOGI RAMIAH – A HIGHTLY ADVANCED DEVOTEE OF SRI RAMANA

Yogi Ramaiah, who died in 1962, was a well-to-do Reddy farmer from Nellore in A.P. He was one of the few devotees who were bestowed the privilege of being a witness to Bhagavan’s will executed in March 1938, and who were allowed to put up their huts within the premises of the Ashram. According to

B. V. Narasimha Swami, he had appreciably helped in construction of the Ashram and in repairing Palitirtham. His closeness to Bhagavan and his spiritual attainment, culled from two places, are summarized below.

The following is from entries of 7th and 8th August, 1946, in Day by Day with Bhagavan by Devaraja Mudaliar.

Yogi Ramiah brought a small notebook in which Bhagavan had long ago copied for the Yogi some of Bhagavan's works, and wanted the binding to be mended. Bhagavan entrusted the work to a devotee with some directions, who in the evening gave back the book to Bhagavan after mending. Bhagavan handed over the notebook to the Yogi, saying, "Look at your notebook now." Yogi replied, "All is Bhagavan's grace." Muruganar took up the notebook and, seeing only a fourth of it had been written up and the rest unfilled, quoted the words of *Purusha Sukta* of the *Veda*, "Like a fourth only of God manifesting in the entire universe and the remaining three-fourths lying outside it unknown, this book contains only a fourth of Bhagavan." At this, all laughed, including Bhagavan.

Yogi Ramiah gave his notebook to Bhagavan and said, pointing to Muruganar, "People like him would write verses on occasions like the forthcoming Jubilee. But people like me can do no such a thing. Instead, I want Bhagavan to write something in my notebook." Thereupon Bhagavan wrote in the notebook the Telugu version of the Tamil song which Bhagavan had composed: "Here in this book I write / For you to read / An *akshara* / But who can write / The *akshara* / For ever shining in the heart."

The following is from Paul Brunton's A Search in Secret India, chapter XVII.

"One afternoon I noticed a new visitor walk with dignified step into the hall and take his seat quite close to the Maharishee's couch. He is extremely dark-skinned, but otherwise his face is highly refined. He makes no attempt to speak, but the Maharishee immediately gives him a welcome smile. The man's personality makes a powerful impression upon me. He looks like a graven Buddha. Extraordinary tranquility is deeply charactered on his face."

Next day the Yogi most unexpectedly came to his rescue, when he opened the door of his hut and found a big deadly snake in front of him. He writes:

"For the moment I am so struck with horror at my escape from the death which lurks underfoot, that I am at a complete loss what to do... My nerves are strung to their highest pitch of tension. Horror and loathing rise up in the depths of my

heart... The surprise encounter has quiet overwhelmed me. At last I manage to recover my senses and draw back with a rush... Then the figure of the Yogi appears in the clearing. His noble face, with its habitual look of dignified reflection, slightly restores my calm... He approaches my hut and imperturbably begins to enter the room. I shout a warning to him but he takes no notice... He holds both his hands towards the snake, but it does not attempt to attack him. The Yogi stands quite close to the snake, which bends his head before him, and then he gently strokes its tail! The snake slithers quickly out of the hut into the safe refuge of the jungle... I express my astonishment at the fearless way in which the Yogi handled the snake.

“It is not possible to enter into conversation with the Yogi because I discover that part of the special discipline which he has imposed upon himself consists in keeping strict silence, and because he is Telugu speaking and his acquaintance with English is as limited as mine with Telugu. I learn that he maintains an almost complete reserve and does not associate with the others in the place, as a rule; and that he has been a disciple of the Maharishee for ten year.

“The Yogi is not very communicative and evidently dislikes being interviewed, but I managed to elicit a few facts about him. He is on the right side of forty. He owned some landed property in Nellore district, and although he has not formally renounced the world, he lets his family carry on the active control of his estates...He has a group of his own disciples in Nellore... He has studied under different teachers...He appears to have outstripped his teachers, because he obtained experiences which they could not explain satisfactorily to him. As a consequence he came at last to the Maharishee, who quickly provided him with the correct explanation and assisted his further course.

“During the weeks that succeed my first meeting with Ramiah, I came to know him a little better. He has been glad to find a Westerner taking interest in the ancient wisdom of the East. I find in his outlook something which is comfortable to my own temperament. His large dark eyes possess a tranquility which is singularly attractive. We strike up a strange kind of silent friendship which culminates one day when he gives me his blessings by stroking my head then clasping each hand in his own. I feel something is being built up between Ramiah and me which can never be broken down...He is always a serene dignified figure whose noble carriage I cannot help but admire.”

Brunton got another “striking revelation of his extraordinary power.” Once, he got information that his financial resource could get dried up, endangering his further stay in India. This upset him greatly and as he says, he was badly shaken. He could not also effect his usual inner contact with the Maharshi in the hall and came to his hut desolate and disconcerted. At this moment of severe distress he was wholly surprised to find that the Yogi comes to his hut and looks at him with a questioning expression in his eyes. Brunton knew that the Yogi did not know English, but in a few jerky phrases he stated his problem and supplemented his speech “with gestures of defeat and expressions of disgust.” The Yogi then invited him to a long walk in the jungle nearby and made him sit under a tree and transmitted the required peace to him. In Brunton’s words:

“I become acutely susceptible to the silence of our lonely surroundings and to the amazing calm of my companion. Little by little, with an insidious but persistent gentleness, peace weaves itself into the texture of my soul. The mood of serene triumph over personal distresses, which I could not reach before, now comes to me more easily. In his own mysterious way the Yogi is helping me; I cannot doubt that... What is source of this beneficent radiation which emanates from him?

“A ray of vivid gold from the westerning sun falls on the Yogi’s face, turning his motionless body for the nonce [temporarily] into a haloed idol. I let go of him in thought that I may turn again to enjoy the increasing peace which is flowing in waves over my being...I perceive with startling clarity that a man can look serenely upon his tribulations, if only he can find the standpoint of his deeper self; that it is foolish to cling to the transient comfort of worldly hopes when the unchanging certainty of diviner protection awaits his acceptance; *and that the reason why the wise Galilean told his disciples to take no thought for the morrow was because a higher power had taken thought for them.* I perceive that once a man accepts this invitation to place his confidence in the prophetic element within his being, he may pass through the vicissitudes of human life in this world without fear and without faltering...Thus the burden which lay so heavy on my mind vanishes with this change of spiritual atmosphere...I at once resign myself to this protective aura, which I somehow feel is enfolding me.”

A PROFESSIONAL REMEMBERS SRI RAMANA

T.S. Narayanaswami, a professional from Madras, went to see Bhagavan just two months before the *mahanirvana*.

Ramana Maharshi was a seer such as those born on this earth once in a millennium. My cousin and I went to see him compelled by sheer curiosity; we had no desire for spiritual advancement. We had heard that the Maharshi was afflicted by sarcoma on his arm and he was bearing the pain without the least sign of suffering. In the opinion of the doctors who attended on him, any other person would have been crying aloud with pain, characteristic of this malady.

We entered the hall with a feeling of wonder and curiosity, as we wanted to have a look at this remarkable man of God. We took our seat along with other men. At seven in the morning appeared the tall, frail frame of the Sage. Clad only in a loin cloth, with an indescribable radiance on his face, he seated himself on a raised platform. Cries of *Annamalaikku Harohara* (Hallowed be the Lord of Arunachala, Siva) went up in the air as he took the seat.

He then cast his glance over every member of the audience. Seated by my side was the chief minister of Mysore, K.C. Reddy, who was a great devotee of the Maharshi. The entire gathering sat still for about fifteen minutes in pin-drop silence. Then suddenly something within impelled me to rise from my seat, proceed to where the Maharshi was seated, and prostrate myself for a second and a third time before I resumed my seat in the rear row of the audience. I still remember the Maharshi then turning towards me and nodding his head twice and casting his loving and gracious look at my face, which was suffused with awe and reverence in his august presence. To me it was like Dakshinamurthi [See Annexure V] Himself sitting before me, speaking to me through his benevolent eyes in solemn silence, a silence that was truly eloquent. I could feel a thrill, an ecstasy, and the calm of the great peace that filled the heart!

We took leave of the Ashram and with a wrench of the heart made our journey to Madras where the humdrum life of cares and anxieties awaited us. Looking back with nostalgia, our visit to the Ashram and the *darshan* of the Maharshi turned out to be the most fortunate happening and the most momentous event of our lives. (*Arunachala's Ramana*, Vol. VIII.)

SRI RAMANA ANSWERS A POLISH DEVOTEE

Uma Devi, a Polish lady (Wanda Dynowska) converted to Hinduism, has written *The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, which attracted many seekers from Poland to Sri Ramana. She also translated the *Gita* into Polish. She started a publishing house that printed many Indian texts in Polish. She was a frequent visitor the Ashram. The following relates to her visit in 1938.

She told the Maharshi about her vision of Siva and asked him as to how it could be everlasting. Sri Ramana told her that a vision depends on the subject. It would appear and disappear. The value of the vision is the same as of the 'seer'. A vision can never be eternal. Therefore enquire 'Who am I?' Sink deep within and abide in the Self.

When she asked as to how to effect it as quickly as possible, the reply was: There is no question of time. Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether he appears or vanishes, await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please, it is not surrender but a command to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet think that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden, no longer you have to have any cares. All your cares are His. Such is surrender. This is *bhakti*. Or enquire to whom these questions arise. Dive deep in the Heart and remain as the Self. One of these two ways is open to the aspirant.

Think of the man who sees only the cloth and not the cotton of which it is made, or the man who sees the pictures moving on the screen in a cinema show and not the screen itself as the background; or again the man who sees the letters which he reads but not the paper on which they written. The objects are the consciousness and forms. The ordinary person sees the objects in the universe but not the consciousness in these forms.

One cannot see God and yet retain individuality. The seer and the seen unite into one Being. There is no cogniser, nor cognition nor the cognised. All merge into One Supreme Siva only. (*Timeless in Time* by A.R. Natarajan and *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Feb. 3, 1938.)

RAGA AND ANURAGA: The word *raga* means to love. All Hindustani *ragas* are scientifically structured and as you proceed to sing them, and you unfold their grammar, hidden principles of cosmic love may get revealed to you. The raga divides itself into two equal halves, in which each note of one half has a corresponding answering note in the second half. And yet, in terms of melody, neither of the two halves can stand alone. The melody gets created only at the exact

meeting point of the two halves, at the specific point where the two halves join. Throughout its rendering or exposition, the *raga* is the interplay of a musical dialogue between these two halves, virtually the ‘beloveds’...Pandit Amarnath of the Indore *gharana* would say that the word *raga* means ‘to love’, but the completion of this lies in the set of words ‘*raga-anuraga*’, which means ‘to love and to be loved’ in return. The import of this is that the musician sings his song of love, but it is when the cosmos returns his love that the cycle is said to be complete. This is the Sufi way. The *raga*’s yin and yang, male and female, become *alaf* and *meem*, I aur Allah; I the beloved of Allah and Allah my beloved, till there is no difference between the two. Ultimately, all becomes Allah and the I drops away. I becomes *fanaa* or extinct. In a beautiful *bandish* [composition] Pandit Amarnath says, “O heart, stay true to yourself/ the soul is the very Oversoul.” In another *bandish* he says, “Beloved, my destiny is with you/ May I receive your love in all our lives/ And may you remain eternal/ The light of my heart is to think of you/ The life of my body is to see you/ The vermilion on my forehead is your love/ Beloved my destiny is with you.”– *Bindu Chawla*

FIND THE REAL YOU: The deep sleep state is devoid of body-consciousness but in the waking state the ‘I-am-the-body’ thought is predominant. Yet the fact remains that there is no change in the one who slept and the one who is now awake. The difference between waking and deep sleep lies in the emergence of body-consciousness. No change occurs in pure consciousness that abides in eternity. And since the body is experienced in one state (waking) but not in the other (deep sleep), one can say that it arose at some particular moment and that it has both origin and end. The Self on the other hand, is the Eternal Consciousness which both pre-exists and survives the body. There is continuity of the Being, the Eternal Self, in all the states, while the body and the worlds that appear in the waking and dream states are ephemeral [one which lives for a short period]... Despite being devoid of worldly possessions and body, in deep sleep an individual experiences unalloyed happiness... Ramana Maharshi says: See how carefully people prepare their beds to gain that happiness. Soft cushions and pillows are all meant to induce sound sleep, that is to say, to end wakefulness. And yet all these are of no use in the state of deep sleep itself. Happiness therefore does not depend upon extraneous factors; it is inherent in us...The Self despite being eternal and omnipresent is not easily realised because of ignorance that falsely identifies Self with the body and the mind. Eradication of the false sense of ‘i’ (as ‘I’) through Self-enquiry is the goal of meditation. Then what remains is the pure ‘I’, the Eternal Self. – *Anup Taneja*

SATYAM, SIVAM, SUNDARAM: The nature of Self is described as *Satyam*, *Sivam*, *Sundaram*. *Sundaram* is beauty. We move from recognising beauty outside to beauty within. Adi Sankara in his composition *Saudarya Lahiri* (Waves of Beauty) glorifies the incomparable beauty of the Divine Mother. Beauty creates a thrill. It wakes up the sleeping consciousness. Beauty can also bring ecstasy and draw you into deep meditation. Meditation is complete relaxation, like a cool shower for the mind. It is the act of getting in touch with your own divinity, getting back to your nature. Your nature is truth, innocence and beauty... To be able to perceive truth or beauty in creation, calmness is essential. An agitated mind can neither see the truth nor appreciate beauty. That's why *Satyam*, *Sivam* and *Sundaram* always go together. The whole of creation is nothing but 'Waves of Beauty'. – *Bhanumathi Narasimhan*

THE HUMAN AURA: All bodies emit heat radiation or vibrations. With non-living bodies, since there is no immediate change in their structure, this emission remains constant. In living bodies cells are constantly being destroyed and created; the rate of vibrations is continuously changing. This is the superficial or logical explanation of what auras are and why they are changing... The colours of our mental states are manifested in the *pranic* substance of our auras. These colours are regulated at seven centres of the body called the *chakras*. Each of the chakras – *mooladhar*, *swadhisthan*, *manipoorak*, *anahat*, *vishuddhi*, *ajna* and *sahasrar* vibrate at a particular colour frequency... The entire spectrum of colour and light are in human auras. Different colours belong to different areas around the body. Lower centres or chakras of the body are associated with darker and heavier colours like reds and browns. The higher centres have light pink, violet and blue. Again, more evolved souls have much more luminescence in their auras than the average individual... Auras indicate one's state of health, mental and emotional state and level of intelligence. (www.dhyanfoundation.com)

THE GURU IS THE SUPREME LORD: When an individual keenly desirous of attaining the state of true knowledge, practices devotion and reaches a mature stage, the Lord comes forth in human form to bless the disciple and absorb him in Himself. According to this doctrine, the Guru can truly be called the Lord. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

JULY 2009

BRUNTON'S *A SEARCH IN SECRET INDIA* – SOME LIGHT ON

***A Search in Secret India* (London, 1934) made the Maharshi known the world over. In his later publication *The Quest of the Overself*, Brunton wrote about his earlier book. Some information about the book is also found in *The Note Books of Paul Brunton*, published after his death by his son in 16 volumes.**

The following is from The Quest of the Overself (London, 1937)

“India holds an ancient heritage of spiritual thought from its past that stands unparalleled for profundity and unmatched for width. Young Indians, therefore, should claim this birthright, finding what is worthy and applicable to present needs. They should neither be awed by Western skepticism, nor corrupted by modern materialism, nor stupefied by religious wrangling, but go to their best thinkers for guidance.

“Mysticism, too, has its representation in India and in the mysterious personality of the Maharishee I found its highest embodiment. Unlike that of religious medieval Europe, his mysticism took a thoroughly rational turn. His was, indeed, the outstanding figure in my book, and it was but fitting that I should have devoted so much of its space to a portrayal of him and his environment.

“*A Search in Secret India* has been very widely read. As the novelist, John Knittel, generously wrote in the Foreword to the German edition: In this book a bridge will be built – Europeans and Americans may now appraise India a little more highly, I hope, and bestow a little more respect upon her.

“I must now touch upon a matter about which I have long lain silent. The extraordinary nature of the contents of my book brought several criticisms which either scouted their possibility or sneered at my veracity. Being, somewhat selfishly perhaps, more interested by habit in my private quest of truth than in public controversies about it, I complacently ignored my critics. And even when an Indian gentleman of good standing and governmental associations wrote and accused me of having written a romance or semi-novel, adding that he was quite sure that the Maharishee did not exist outside my imagination, and my publishers passed the letter to me for comments, I thrust it aside in proud silence, too hurt to make a reply. If I say something on the matter now, it is because my books of the past have now provided a foundation for my message of the present.

“First of all, it is surely needless to remark that Sir Francis Younghusband – so distinguished an authority on India* – would not have lent his name, as writer of the Foreword to my book, if he thought I had composed an imaginary account. Even if he had nothing more, he had proofs in the large number of still unpublished photographs which he examined in London one afternoon at the Traveller’s Club. But I am glad to feel that I enjoy his confidence on other and *deeper* grounds.

“Secondly, the pictorial impressionist style of the book created the false impression among other critics that I had embroidered the stuff of truth with the coloured wool of fiction. They were wholly wrong. I have every right, if I choose to do so, to break away from the manner of conventional travel books in order to present my material as interestingly as possible. The fact that I try to report unusual incidents and scenes, to interview unusual men and to record my own unusual experiences, does not make me less a reporter for that, because I have to present them to the popular mind. In that sense, my book is but glorified journalese. I claim, therefore, the right of every reporter to make the most of his materials and work them up into effective journalistic results. I do not see why I should render these reports in the dullest, most colourless and bloodless style I can find; I do not see why I should refuse to make my experiences as living to the reader as they were to me. And even if I were to claim, which I do not, that my book is a piece of literature, I would surely have the privilege of the artist consciously to select and reshape his material rather than present it casually and syllogistically as the professor. And it must likewise be remembered that I tried to come down in my conversations with these yogis to the quintessence of things, to get at the final meaning which these men had for me, and then for the reader’s sake I distilled our talks into still more concentrated forms.

“The book is a faithful and honest narrative, written to record truth without its dullness. Indeed, when I re-visited Dayalbagh, near Agra, last year, His Holiness Sahabji Maharaj was kind enough to remark, that my published account of interviews with him had evinced an amazingly accurate memory. [A chapter in *A Search in Secret India* covers Brunton’s visit to Dayalbagh.]

“Finally, it is amazing for me to remember that when I first made tentative enquiries about the Maharishee in the city of Madras several years ago, no one had even heard of his existence, and I could discover nothing at all about him prior to making my visit. Today, one may ask almost anyone in the same city about the

Mystic of Arunachala and a great deal of information will quickly be forthcoming. It was left for me, as infidel foreigner, to make the Maharishee famous in his own country.

“If any other doubt exists, let me add that this ‘romantic creation’ of mine, this ‘imaginary literary figure’ was recently granted a special and unique exemption by the Government of Madras from attending to give evidence in a law-court. This was in connection with a civil suit about the ownership of the land upon which his new ashram (monastic building) had been erected. It is unlikely that the Government would have granted such an exemption to a person who did not exist!”

The following is from volume 8 of the Note Books of Paul Brunton:

*Brunton had met Bhagavan in 1930. But the book was first published in London in 1934. Regarding the delay, and where the book was written, Brunton says: “It was only after the nearly two years which were needed to get rid of the black water fever with which India had dragged me down that I was able to begin work on *A Search in Secret India*. Buckinghamshire was my favoured English country. I went there to write the book. The two rooms over an ancient village inn gave an open view of quiet countryside. The buxom red-faced landlady brought up the simple and rather plain vegetarian meals everyday – how deliciously garden-fresh they were! (p. 226)... *A Search in Secret India* and the *Spiritual Crisis of Man* were the only books written at a leisurely pace. All the others were thrown together at a somewhat fast speed, owing to the pressure and travel that accompanied their composition.” (p.163).*

* Sir Francis Younghusband, who wrote foreword for *A Search in Secret India*, was a legendary figure of his time. He was British Political Minister to State of Kashmir, Brigadier General of the British army in India, Commander of the British military expedition to Tibet and President of the Royal Geographical Society of England. He was born in the Himalayan region and belonged to a British military family which has been associated with India for generations. By his incredibly daring expeditions of the Mount Everest he managed to thrill a whole generation of Englishmen. *India Today* reviewed his book ‘*The Epic of Mount Everest*’ in its issue of October 23, 2000. The foreword by him contains a historic tribute to Sri Ramana: **He was the spring whence spirituality came gushing. He represented the true genius of India. Brunton found in the Maharishee, the very embodiment of all that India holds most sacred.**

ESSENCE OF RAJA YOGA: God resides in every one of us. To attain Him, the practice done through the mind and body is called Yoga. From the bottom of the trunk to the top of the head, *sushumna* (the consciousness) runs through the vertebrate. On its path there are six centres, namely, *mooladhara*, *swadhishtana*, *manipooraka*, *anhata* (heart), *visuddhi* (neck), *aagna* (forehead) and above that is *sahasraram*, which is stationed at the top of the head. At the *mooladhara*, *kundalini* (*jeeva sakthi*) coils like a small serpent facing downwards and in slumber. By balancing the breath, inhaling and retaining the air of *prana*, if one gets *kumbhaka*, *prana* becomes strong, heats up and raises the *kundalini* from sleep. When this wondrous power wakes up, it turns upright in a light form, breaking the six centres and reach via *sushmna*, the *sahasraram*. After waking, this *jeeva sakthi* becomes *Siva sakthi swaroopa* and burns away the attachment with the body helping the yogi to enter *sahasraram*, giving the freedom of *Brahma Jnana*, leading to *moksha*. – *Sadhu Om*

JADA-CHETANA-GRANTHI: With the *nadis*, the *chaitanya* light is totally tied with the body. This is called *granthi* or knot. Because of this, Self gets body consciousness, namely, *nadi bandhan*. And with that comes the delusion that ‘I am the body.’ By removing ‘I am the body’ consciousness through *sadhana* by persistent *atma vichara*, churning of the *nadis* will take place, leading to the rise up of *Kundalini*. When the effulgence of *chaitanya*, turning away from all *nadis*, resorts to one *nadi* called *sushmana*, the knot is broken. Once the knot is broken, the state of Supreme peace is achieved. – *Sri Ramana Gita*

INCREASING AWARENESS: Three times a day, sit quietly with no thoughts and no imagining, and be aware of All of yourself. Be aware of yourself, this is most important. If you are sitting on a chair be aware of your weight on the seat and of the back of the chair. Sense the pressure of your feet on the ground and so on. While sitting quietly be fully relaxed and alert. When observing the body, carry out an ‘inventory’ of all parts. Remember that in doing so, one senses the body, and not look at it. Don’t fight for quietness/stillness in mind. Relax and let it occur. Thoughts cannot be squashed, just let them naturally, by giving them no attention. When observing the body, the flow of the blood and the pulse can be sensed within the body. One should be patient in all this – never rush or hurry. – Excerpted from *Mountain Path*, Jan.-March. 2009.

AN AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLER VISITS SRI RAMANA

The following extracts are from the book *The Song of India* by Frank Clune, which was first published in Australia in 1946.

My next pilgrimage was to the Ashram of Shri Maharshi, the ‘Saint of Tiruvannamalai.’ I stayed a day and a night in this Ashram, and had a talk with the Saint, who is not a silent one, like the Yogi of Pondicherry. Maharshi is a likeable old chap, very human and approachable. He ‘radiates’ spiritual peace and joy.

Shri Aurobindo is a ‘learned’ saint, while Shri Maharshi is a simple saint – both have arrived at the same goal of purification by the spiritual discipline of yoga, the Indian system of mind control. The aim is ‘ecstasy’, to be attained through meditation. The Christian saints down the ages have also achieved ecstasy or ‘union with God’, by prayer and meditation. This may be the same thing as ‘yoga’ but under a different name.

Before leaving the Ashram, I attempted to interview the Saint – but he turned the tables and interviewed me for half an hour, quizzing me about my adventures in many lands. What interested him most, I think, was my mention of the Stone Age aborigines of central Australia and of the stone – Uluru – the biggest desert stone in the world, an aboriginal place of pilgrimage.

I got only one good question in, asking him the meaning of tiger skin on which he sat. “It is a symbol of my fierceness to protect my religion,” was his smiling reply. “But what is your religion?” I innocently asked. “Seeking the truth,” was his prompt reply.

I think it is not so much his actual teaching as his calm and serene atmosphere which attracts disciples. He appears, in some indefinable way, to have entirely purged his soul of evil, and to emanate Goodness in a kind of aura...He is immensely dignified and convincing. Some Christian bishops have also this quality – but I doubt whether they could radiate it, sitting clothed only in a loin cloth, on a tiger skin! (*Mountain Path*, Jan.-March, 2009)

HOW TO SECURE PEACE: Peace is not something one can get from outside. Nobody can give it to us. We have to discover it in our own hearts... Peace can be of different kinds. In the cremation ground there is ‘dead peace’. In deep sleep

there is lifeless peace. When a desire is fulfilled there is contentment which is a temporary rest from restlessness. With the use of tranquilizers one gets negative peace. We want positive peace – a peace which leads to happiness, creativity and progress. Many problems are solved when the mind is at peace; it gives us a feeling of being near the Supreme... To live in peace amidst all disturbing factors is within our reach, provided we have a **strong desire** for it and we make the **necessary and persistent effort** in proper direction. Both *abhayasa* and *vairagya* are essential for peace. – *S. Sudharshan*

TELUGU AND SRI RAMANA

Sri Ramana used to address his father by the Telugu term '*nayana*' (father) and not the Tamil word 'appa'. There was a relation called Lakshmana Iyer in their house who knew Telugu and was very fond of our Venkataraman. Although others called Venkataraman by his full name, Lakshmana Iyer called him by the pet name 'Ramana'. As that name subsequently became Bhagavan's chief name, we cannot forget its originator. It is because of Lakshmana Iyer that Sri Ramana learnt to speak Telugu in his boyhood. Because Sri Ramana called his father *nayana*, not only other children in the house but the entire village called him by this name. From this it can be seen that the people of Tiruchuzhi had a fatherly regard for Sundaram Iyer. If the Supreme Being Itself had chosen him as father, is it a wonder that he attained such popular esteem?

About Sri Ramana's mastery over Telugu, Professor G.V. Subbaramayya has the following to say: I had been reading the works of Sri Ramana. My main interest had been literary rather than philosophical. I had been struck with wonder at the style of the Telugu *Upadesa Saram*, which in its simplicity, felicity and classic finish, could equal that of the greatest Telugu poet Tikkana, I had felt convinced that a Tamilian who could compose such Telugu verse must be divinely inspired, and I had wanted to see him. (*Aurunchala's Ramana*, Vol. I, information based on the note of Ganapati Muni, and *Sri Ramana Reminiscences* by G.V. Subbaramayya)

Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it is called the present. Live in the present. – *The Internet*

THE *RAMAYANA* AND ITS *SUNDARA KANDA*

By Swami Tapasyananda*

The stories and achievements of divine incarnations may look like literary fiction or mere poetical narratives to a man who studies them from the purely literary or narrative point of view. Sages like Valmiki and Vyasa, who had gained penetrating vision through their spiritual development, could see in them a wealth of meaning... A small particle of matter is nothing to the naked eye, but the same is found to be intricate and complex under the microscopic view of a scientist... The *Sundara Kanda* as also the whole of the *Ramayana*, has got its spiritual as also its literary and narrative aspects. In the great epic, this chapter marks the acme of Valmiki's literary and poetic excellence, and so it is *Sundara* or beautiful. It is also suggested that it is *Sundara*, because it relieved Sita of her sorrow. *Sundara* can mean a messenger, and the *Kanda* includes the message sent by Rama to Sita. *Sundara* is also a name for an intermediary who establishes a mutual contact between a hero and a heroine, as Hanuman did in the case of Rama and Sita. *Sundara* is said to be a name for a monkey and this chapter is so called because it deals with the achievements of the monkey Hanuman. The recovery of something lost is sometimes described as *Sundara*, and in this section the topic dealt with is the discovery of the abducted Sita. The study of the *Sundara Kanda* is considered as being equivalent to the study of the whole of the *Ramayana* as far as spiritual merit is concerned. Just as the Upanishads are said to contain the supreme purport of the Vedas, this *Kanda* is supposed to be heart of *Ramayana*. (*The Times of India*)

*The Swami was head of Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, for two decades. His reminiscences of Bhagavan Sri Ramana appear in the second edition of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, to be brought out by our Kendram shortly.

AN ACCOUNT OF SRI RAMANA'S PHYSICAL PRESENCE DURING LAST FEW DAYS ON THIS PLANET

Prof. D. Gurumurthi came to see Bhagavan during his last days. He writes:

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 the weight as he moved forward. But the moment he ascended the *chowki* and settled down for 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. His face shone radiant with peace. It was a marvel of conquest over the body.

As devotees advanced to the presence of the 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 a powerful flood of benediction from him to the devotees on the ground. A veritable miracle was being performed. An aged body bent down by terrific penances, exhausted and enfeebled by a mortal illness, and yet the immortal spirit of the emancipated sage triumphed over the weakness of the body, which was resplendent and shedding benign grace on the assembled devotees. Few among mankind have had the great privilege of participating in such a spiritual feast.

When I sat in the evening session of *darshan*, a question formed 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, radiance was felt by me. His physical form on the *chowki* gradually became shrunken, smaller and smaller and vanished into radiance. As the radiance grew deeper and more powerful, I felt I had the answer to my query. Even though the body may disappear, 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 would draw spiritual sustenance. (*Arunachala's Ramana*, Vol. VIII)

The highest destiny of the individual is to serve rather than to rule. – *Albert Einstein*

We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. – *Mother Teresa*

AN AMERICAN DEVOTEE GETS SRI RAMANA'S GRACE

Thelma Rappold, an American, who was with Sri Ramana during 1947-50, had come to India and travelled all over to find a guru, landed in Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, where she learnt about Sri Ramana.

On my way to Sri Ramanasramam, when I was in a state of reverie, Sri Ramana appeared to me as a sort of dream. When I actually saw him, it was the same face that I had seen in my reverie. I was really, really shocked. When I sat in his presence, I felt that my little ego had slipped away. I opened my heart and let those beautiful waves enter into me. It seemed that the so-called problems I thought I had, just vanished. I went through a cleansing process.

It always amazed me how Ramana sat absolutely quiet and motionless, yet his eyes were so penetrating. When I had questions I did not verbalize them, because it wasn't necessary; the questions were answered almost immediately. It was our means of communication. It was a mind-to-mind connection.

When I first met Sri Ramana, he told me: You are what you are – accept it. When the time comes to give it up do it with grace. As the years went by, I kept trying to 'open' as much as possible. I recognized that we all choose our suffering because we do not open up and accept what life brings; we don't find out 'who' it is that is experiencing the suffering. I had never, at any previous time in my life, really let go and tried to just "be". When we can do this, love just pours out.

At the Ashram I had found my true home and teacher. It was as if I had lived several life times in those few years that I was with him. The person who came to him in the beginning was not the same person that left. I had understood how to open up the power locked within me. (*Western Seekers* by A.R. Natarajan)

A DEVOTEE'S CAPTIVATING REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA

Saroja Krishnan's family had close relationship with the Ashram. Her uncle, Rajagopala Iyer who was one of the attendants of Sri Ramana had also witnessed the will executed by Sri Ramana in 1938 in respect of Sri Ramanasramam.

When I was young I used to sit in the hall, watching with interest the happenings around me. One day, Bhagavan's eyes turned to me and rested there; my eyes

were locked in his, unable to turn away. How does one describe the indescribable? Dark and wide, cool and bright, melting with mercy and kindness, those heavenly orbs seemed to expand and fill the room and all space, engulfing me. Looking back, I understand that this was his *nayana diksha* (Initiation by look).

When fifteen or sixteen, I was undergoing mental suffering. My husband was not in town. In despair, I tried to put an end to my life, but did not succeed. My uncle Rajagopala Iyer chanced to take the family to the Ashram. Even here my agony continued. The time came for us to return home. One by one all members of the family prostrated and took Bhagavan's leave. When I raised my head after prostration, my eyes fell on Bhagavan's feet, placed on a low stool in front of his sofa. My hands shot forward as if propelled by some powerful force and I grasped those feet only for a very short time. A fount of happiness seemed to burst forth from somewhere deep within me. Wave after wave of bliss washed over me and I seemed to be floating in it. I was oblivious of everything else. Thoughts of Bhagavan and the surging happiness absorbed every nook and corner of my being. Back at home, even though the old situation continued, nothing touched me. In my lifetime I have never experienced anything remotely resembling it.

Back to Tiruvannamalai with my mother for delivery, I did not stop the daily practice of going round Bhagavan's hall 108 times, carrying the heavy load of advanced pregnancy. Medical facilities in Tiruvannamalai were rather inadequate. So my mother was anxious and decided to take Bhagavan's advice. With this in mind she was entering the hall, when she heard Bhagavan telling someone firmly and loudly, "No, no, not here." On hearing this my mother immediately decided to take me to Vellore. Bhagavan's advice was received, even though nothing was specifically asked!

I was in the third day of my dry labour, without making much progress. The third night the doctors decided to do a Caesarean, often very risky in pre-penicillin days. My mother and others were in great distress on hearing this and sent off a telegram of appeal to the Ashram. Bhagavan read the telegram in Tiruvannamalai and in Vellore my son Ramana Kumar was born, by normal delivery. The doctors were confounded that a normal delivery should occur in such a difficult situation without recourse to even the forceps!

Once Bhagavan was coming down the hill after his morning stroll. Suddenly, a dove fell down at his feet. Bhagavan bent down and picking it up, cradled it in his arms and gently soothed it by passing his hand lightly over its back. Then he

turned round to see how the bird happened to fall down. A young hunter was hesitantly standing a little distance away with a catapult in hand. Bhagavan remarked in quiet voice, “This is the poor boy’s food, but two *annas* [one eighth of one rupee] would do to buy something to satisfy his hunger,” which amount was paid immediately to the boy by my uncle.

The dove lay still and dazed in Bhagavan’s arms. It did not move ever after Bhagavan came back to the hall. “A few drops of green grapes juice applied on its head, would cure him,” as Bhagavan was saying this, an out-station devotee entered the hall with a few bunches of green grapes, as an offering to Bhagavan. “Hey look, we are just talking about green grapes and here they are!” exclaimed Bhagavan. Immediately, a few grapes were squeezed on the dove’s head. In a short while, the bird stirred, raised its head and looked around,. After a few tentative steps, it flattered its wings and flew away. Who is the vet who taught Bhagavan this treatment? I wondered. (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. IV)

TRUE JNANA: Spiritual leaning is only the husk. All book-learning and capacity to repeat the scriptures by memory is of no use. To know the Truth one need not necessarily undergo the torture of learning...Not by reading one gets to the Truth. Be quiet. That is the Truth. Be still, that is God. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

AUGUST – 2009

GANAPATI MUNI AND SRI RAMANA

By K. Natesan

The author (1913-2009), who studied at Municipal High School, Tiruvannamalai, used to visit the Ashram along with his teacher T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, a well-known devotee of Bhagavan. He has compiled the 12-volume *Collected Works of Ganapati Muni*.

After Ganapati Muni had received Bhagavan's Grace, all his doubts were dispelled at one stroke by the vision of the Reality. The Muni surrendered to the Maharshi on November 18, 1907, and wrote five verses (not traceable now) proclaiming him as Bhagavan. In the beginning, the Maharshi used to address him as Ganapati Sastrigam, which the Muni did not like because it was a respectful form. He felt uncomfortable being addressed by his guru in this manner. Understanding Muni's objection, he started calling him as 'Nayana', the name by which his disciples addressed him. In Telugu, the word 'Nayana' means both child and father.

In 1908, Nayana lived with the Maharshi at the Pachaiamman Temple. One early morning, he along with other disciples was sitting in front of the Maharshi, who was, as usual, withdrawn. The Muni saw a sparkling light come down from the sky and touch the forehead of the Maharshi six times. The seer-poet gave expression to the revelation that the Maharshi was an incarnation of the Lord Skanda through his eight verses "Ramana Astakam", which were later included in the "Forty Verses in Praise of Ramana".

Once the Muni asked Bhagavan whether he was correct in recognising him as Skanda and extolling him in the *Ramana Gita* as Lord Subramanya. The Maharshi remained silent. The Muni then mentally prayed to Bhagavan to answer his question at least by the next day. When the Muni went to him the following day, the Maharshi looked at him and said, "Ishwara Swami [a devotee of the Maharshi] wrote a verse in praise of this Vinayaka image sitting in a niche in the Virupaksha Cave. At his request I also wrote a *venba* verse on that Pillayar [Ganesha]". Then he explained the meaning of that verse to the Muni. In the verse, Bhagavan entreats Lord Ganesha to look after him because he is a younger brother who has come after him. The Muni was much gratified to hear this, as it was confirmation of his belief.

In April, 1922, the Muni composed as follows in praise of Bhagavan: 'May the ascetic, wearing only a white loin-cloth, who once used to ride on the celestial peacock and has now come down as a man on earth, reign over the world as its unique Master! In 1923, on January 3, when the first *Jayanti* of Bhagavan was celebrated, the Muni composed the following verse: 'There is the light of Uma in your eyes for dispelling your devotees' dark ignorance. Your face gleams lotus-like with grace and brilliance of Lakshmi. Your words contain the secret lore of Saraswati. Preceptor of the world! Ramana the great! How can a mortal sing your glory?' In this verse, the Muni hailed Bhagavan as *vishvacharya* – the universal Master. .

In 1936, after the Muni's demise, Bhagavan himself collected all the verses he had written on him and entitled them, "Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana," which was published by the Ashram in the same year.

Major Chadwick was one of the very few souls who moved closely with Bhagavan. Once he called me and requested me to show to Bhagavan a piece of paper in which he had given a definition of Self-Realization. Bhagavan read it and appreciated it very much. Chadwick had written: 'Self-realization – It is the death while yet alive of that which lives after death.'

Once Vaidyanathan Stapati, while showing Bhagavan the sculpture he was making of him, asked whether it had the likeness of him. Bhagavan said, "I can't say. Only Natesan knows." When Stapati looked at me, Bhagavan said, "Not this Natesan, the barber Natesan" [who used to provide hair cut and shave to Bhagavan every month.] (Condensed from *The Maharshi*, May-June, 2009)

PERCEPTION ABOUT PERMANENCY OF THE WORLD: Nobody can bathe in the same river again as the water is constantly flowing. Similarly, we not see the same flame again, as the flame is changing every second. As the oil get less and less, the flame keeps on changing. The waking state is also like this. The stationary appearance is an error of perception. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

FIRST BIOGRAPHER OF SRI RAMANA – A LIFE SKETCH

***Self Realization*, the first comprehensive and authoritative biography of Bhagavan in English is by B.V. Narasimha Swami (Narasimha Iyer).**

Iyer (1874-1956), born in Erode (Tamil Nadu) in a rich and religious family, was a reputed lawyer. A member of the Madras Legislative Council, he was well-known public figure. Till 1921, of his five children, the first three had got settled in life; the younger two, a son (15) and daughter (13) lived with him in a palatial bungalow at Salem. Then a tragedy struck the family. Both the children, while playing, accidentally fell into a half dug well in their compound and met a watery grave. Unable to bear the loss, their mother died within a year. Iyer left home in

1925, after distributing his wealth among his children. He went to Sankaracharya of Sringeri – Chandrasekhra Bharati, who directed him to Tiruvannamalai, where he arrived in January 1926.

Being adept in gathering information and interpreting it, Iyer assiduously collected all available facts about the Maharshi from inmates of the Ashram and others. In February 1929, Justice Sundaram Chetty, a judge of Madras High Court, visited the Maharshi and was surprised to find his classmate and old colleague at Salem, among devotees of Sri Ramana. He was deeply impressed by the manuscript prepared by Iyer and impressed upon M/s Higginbothams to publish it in a book form. As this firm had sales counters across Madras, the Maharshi's name spread all over Tamil Nadu and outside. In 1931, Ramanasramam itself brought out the publication with a thought-provoking foreword by Justice Chetty.

Iyer's stay with the Maharshi for over three years contributed a lot to his spiritual enlightenment. But as he wanted to move about the country as a wandering sadhu, he left the Ashram in August 1929, with the permission and blessings of the Maharshi.

First he went to the ashram of Siddharuda Swami at Hubli in Karnataka and lived there for about six months, before moving to Pandarapur in Maharashtra, where Krishna is worshipped as 'Vittal' or 'Vittoba'. After staying at Pandarapur for about 20 months, where he learnt Marathi, he moved extensively around Konkan, Pune and Nasik and met a number of *siddhas* and saints. When a court case was foisted upon a famous saint – Upasini Baba, a close disciple of Sai Baba, Iyer donned the lawyer's robe again for about 30 months and successfully defended the Baba. He also prepared a biography of Upasini Baba, which was published as a book.

Finally, he went to Shirdi, where he meticulously recorded the experiences of a large number of persons who had personal contact with Sai Baba, who had left this world in 1918. He compiled with much effort, an authoritative biography of Sai Baba, whom he adopted as his guru. In 1941, he founded All-India Sai Samaj, with headquarters at Madras, and laid a firm foundation for the Sai movement. (Excerpted from *As the flower sheds its fragrance – The Story of Sri Narasimha Swamiji* by G.R. Vijayakumar, published by Sri Sai Spiritual Centre, Bangalore)

ARUNACHALA – A JYOTI LINGAM: The great Carnatic music composer, Muthuswami Dikshitar, has composed a song, *Arunachalanatham*, praising the presiding deity of Tiruvannamalai. He describes Arunachalesa as *apraakrita tejomaya lingam. Smaranat kaivalya prada charana* – by mere thinking of his lotus feet one attains liberation, says Dikshitar... Both the *Panchakshari* mantra-*Nama-Si-vaa-ya* and *A-ru-na-cha-la* are made of five syllables... According to the *Skanda Purana*, Markandeya requested Nandi to name that *kshetra* of Siva, the mere thought (*smarana*) of which was enough to bestow salvation. Nandi went in deep *samadhi* and realised that Mount Kailas was only the abode of Siva, whereas Arunachala was the embodiment of Siva... Sage Bhiringi took the form of a bee and circled Siva because he wanted to do *pradakshina* of Siva alone and not of Sakti, who sat next to Siva. In order to enlighten Bhiringi, Siva made Sakti half of his body and became Ardhanarisvara. – *Lalita Ramakrishna*

THE DIVINE IS WITHIN YOU: A seeker once went to a Master and asked to be initiated into enlightenment. The Master replied, “*Tat tvam asi*, you are That. The Divine Self is within you. Meditate on that Self, merge in that Self, realise that Self.” “Is that all?” said the disappointed seeker. “But I already know that. Please reveal to me the inner secrets, the real stuff!” The Master replied, “That is all I know. This is the entire knowledge. I have no other secret. But since you do not seem to be satisfied you could visit such and such Master.” The seeker went to the other guru and posed the same question. “I do not part with my teachings so easily,” replied the other teacher. “You have got to earn them by sincere *sadhana* for 12 years.” The seeker agreed and was assigned to clean the cow sheds at the ashram as a part of his *sadhana*. Thus the years went by, with the seeker dreaming of enlightenment as he shoveled cow-dung every day. Finally, the great day arrived and the seeker ran up to the Master who said, “Oh Son! How well you have served me. So here it is: *Tat tvam asi*; know it, meditate on it and merge into it.” Is that all? cried the enraged seeker. “But that’s exactly the first guru said.” “Well,” the guru replied, “The truth hasn’t changed in 12 years.” – *Vithal C. Nadakarni*

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GAJENDRA MOKSHAM: The mighty elephant is a symbol of great excessive pride, ego and sense of power. The enticement of the world is represented by the charming lake, its flowers and fragrance. The crocodile is *Kala* – Time – that consumes all mortals, slowly dragging them towards death. When the *jiva* realises the vanity of all that he thought was valuable – when the power and support of others are futile against the

onslaught of time and death, in dire agony, he implores the Lord and casts himself at the feet of the Supreme in total surrender, and gets an immediate divine response. (Excerpted from the *Tattvaloka*, June, 2009)

TRUE JOY IS BEYOND MONEY: Instead of constantly striving to be ‘successful’ through making lots of money, one could make a ‘success’ of his/her life through tangible accomplishments in his/her chosen field of activity. This process of striving for excellence can lend meaning to life, regardless of the materialistic assets. Here money becomes a means and not an end in itself. The crux lies in one’s perceptions, approach and attitude towards money... Money will buy a bed not sleep; food but not appetite; a house but not a home; medicine but not health; luxuries but not culture; amusements but not happiness; religion but not salvation; a passport to everywhere but heaven. – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

A DEVOTEE REMEMBERS SRI RAMANA

Gouriammal visited Sri Ramana in Virupaksha cave as a child with her father, an earnest devotee. She lived in her house in Ramana Nagar, opposite to the Ashram.

When I asked Bhagavan what I should do to be on the spiritual path, he said, “Do what you want to do but keep doing it; don’t remain doing nothing. Repeat the name, or think deeply or seek the source of your ‘I’ consciousness, do *atma vichara* but keep working on yourself. This is very important.”

Once a well-meaning but ignorant devotee insisted that Bhagavan should take the glass of orange juice that he had brought. Bhagavan said, “If you give anything to me without giving it to all, it will be like poison to me.” When the devotee said that next time all would be given orange juice, Bhagavan said, “What is the use because I tell you? You should know by this time that they are all myself and what you give to them you are giving me.”

Once my sister’s five-year old son was bitten by a snake and in desperation she brought the child to Bhagavan. The doctors had given up hope and the boy was perspiring profusely and was in great pain. The child was already stiff with glazed eyes and was breathing heavily. The mother was weeping inconsolably. When Bhagavan saw her he said, “Do not weep. It is nothing.” He passed his hand over the child and within a few minutes the boy recovered his senses and sat up. As the mother was leaving, she saw a Muslim devotee in front of the hall. By profession

he was a snake charmer and a snakebite healer. He said, “Now the child is safe, but the poison is still in his body and I had better chant some charms to get it out.” He did so and asked them to go. Bhagavan had saved the child but wanted the snake charmer to take the credit. (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. III)

A DEVOTEE FEELS BLESSED IN SRI RAMANA’S PRESENCE

Shanti (pseudo name) visited Sri Ramana in 1943.

I had a letter to the *sarvadhikari* [chief manager of Sri Ramanasramam], who took me to the dining hall where Sri Ramana had gone for his breakfast. He introduced me to Bhagavan, who 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. It was only now that I understood the significance of Arjuna’s question to the Lord in the *Gita* [2.54], regarding the *sthitaprajna*.**

At about 9 a.m. Bhagavan came to the meditation hall and we too entered the hall and sat facing him. For the first time in my life, I realized how dynamic *shanti* 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. I felt *kritakritya* (one who has accomplished), and my heart softly whispered within me the words, ‘*dhanyoham, dhanyoham*’ (I am blessed, I am blessed).

I had a desire to dedicate a Sanskrit stanza to Bhagavan, but my knowledge of the language was not so much as to compose a verse with any degree of confidence. In my heart I prayed for his grace to fulfil my wish. That noon, when I got up from my usual siesta, a stanza occurred to me. Apparently, without any conscious mental process, a poem was formed in my mind ready to be transcribed. My prayer had been granted. With great joy I wrote it down on a piece of paper, took it to Bhagavan and placed it at his feet. He read the stanza twice and asked me to put the words ‘Sona Sailam’ for the words ‘Ramana Maharshi’. I changed the fourth line which read, “I meditate on Sona Sailam (Arunachala)”. Thus Bhagavan revealed to me that he was none other than Arunachala or Dakshinamurthi, who by

his sublime silence expounded to his devotees the mysteries of Self knowledge. At that time it stuck me so and my eyes were filled with tears of delight and gratitude.

According to *Viveka Chudamani*, the flight of steps leading to *jivanmukti* begins with *satsanga*, the company of sages and saint. Our Bhagavan is such a soul. I think we are too near Bhagavan's time to see him in correct perspective of history. As years roll on, his spiritual grandeur will assume Himalayan proportions. (Excepted from the *Mountain Path*, Jan.-March, 1987)

REMINISCENCES OF BANU SHARMA

Sharma was son of T.K. Sundersa Iyer, an established devotee of Sri Ramana, who has recorded his reminiscences in the book *At the Feet of Bhagavan*.

My father was my school teacher at the Municipal School, Tiruvannamalai. I was not promoted to the next class by him as I was a poor student. To secure a good future for me he spoke to devotees who visited Bhagavan. Both Maurice Frydman, and a devotee from Madurai, agreed to accommodate me. Unable to decide where I should go, I sought Bhagavan's opinion, who replied, "You can go to Bangalore."

Frydman, who was managing a government factory at Bangalore, took complete care of me and appointed me as his personal clerk. When 17, my marriage proposal came up. I asked Bhagavan about it. He replied that I could get married. My monthly salary was Rs. 28. Once, I incurred a debt of Rs. 28 for meeting my family needs. I wrote to my father about it, who showed my letter to Bhagavan. During my next visit, Bhagavan asked, "What, you have incurred a debt of Rs. 28. A debt is like cotton and fire together." When I came back to Bangalore, the accountant of the factory voluntarily offered me Rs. 30 and told me to clear the debt, giving me the option to pay back the money at Rs. 2 per month.

In 1940, Dr. Mees, a Dutch scholar [Read his wonderful account of Bhagavan in the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, entry no. 2], who was a friend of Frydman, had many philosophical doubts. He was directed by Frydman to visit Tiruvannamalai and was I accompany him. We reached the hall of Bhagavan at 8.30 a.m. While we were sitting, several persons asked questions and Bhagavan answered them, but Dr. Mees kept quiet. When we left for lunch, I asked him why he did not ask any question. His reply was, I got all doubts cleared, just by the *darshan* of Bhagavan. Dr. Mees wanted to visit the Arunacheleswara temple. At that time non-Hindus were not permitted to enter the temple sanctum. I

purchased a dhoti and made him wear it as a Brahmin and asked him to smear his forehead with *vibhuti*.

Frydman treated me like his own child and taught me English. Later, he took *sannyas* as Swami Bhartananda and continued the factory services until he left for Bombay.

On the night of April 12, 1950, I had a dream that Bhagavan had shed his mortal frame. Immediately, I left for Tiruvannamalai. My father was surprised to see me. When I told him about the dream, he exclaimed, “We are all here with our figures crossed and you come here with this news.” I was one of the blessed persons to carry Bhagavan’s body to the place of the present *Samadhi*. We filled a white cloth bag containing the body of Bhagavan with camphor *vibhuti* and *bilva* leaves, among other things, and lowered it into the *Samadhi*.

I continued to work at Frydman’s factory until 1956, when I started my own factory. Without Bhagavan’s grace I would not have been able, with minimum education, to lead a comfortable life, educate, marry and settle comfortably my eight children. Even now, I get dreams of prostrating to Bhagavan. (Excerpted from the *Mountain Path*, April-June, 2009)

SELF-REALISATION – SRI RAMANA WAY

By A. Devaraja Mudaliar

The Maharshi tells all earnest seekers of the truth:

At every stage and for everything you say ‘I’, ‘I’; you say, ‘I want to know this’, ‘I feel this’, ‘I think this’, and so on. Ask yourself who this ‘I’ is, whence this ‘I’ thought proceeds, what is its source; keep your mind firmly on this thought to the exclusion of all other thoughts, and the process will lead you sooner or later to the realisation of your Self.

The method is simply this: you ask yourself “Who am I?” and try to keep your whole mind concentrated on getting an answer to that question. True, various thoughts will arise unbidden within you and assault you and try to divert your attention. As each thought arises, without allowing it to go on developing itself, ask who gets this thought. The answer will be ‘I’. then ask yourself, “Who is this I

and whence?” The Maharshi says, “Don’t be discouraged by the variety and multitude of the thoughts which seek to distract you. Follow the above method with faith and hope and you will surely succeed.” And he gives an illustration.

You besiege a fort. As one soldier after another comes out, you cut each down with your sword. When you have thus killed the last soldier, you capture the fort. Till all thoughts are destroyed they will keep coming out. But kill them all with the sword, ‘Who am I’ and finally the fortress will be yours. It is not by simply muttering the words ‘Who am I?’ to oneself that one can gain the end. **A keen effort of the mind, complete introversion of all the faculties, total absorption in the quest wherefrom the ‘I’ springs – all this is needed for success.**

In one of his verses the Maharshi says: Plunge deep into yourself, in the inner most depths of your heart, as the pearl diver holding speech and breath plunges deep into the water and so secure with mind alert the treasure of the Self within.

Sri Bhagavan is, however, not opposed to other methods, such as the *karma*, *bhakti*, *raja yoga*, *mantra japa*, ceremonial worship, temple-going, observance of rituals, or any of the many ways chosen by devotees to reach God. He advises us to follow the method or a combination of methods, which appeals us best. (*Ramana Smrti*, Sri Ramanasramam)

MANIKKAVACHAKAR AND HIS THIRUVACHAKAM: The great poet was born near Madurai around third century. His immortal songs in praise of Lord Siva are compiled as *Thiruvachkam*. It has 658 verses, under 51 different headings. Usually, Bhagavan did not express his feeling, but when he listened to the singing of *Thiruvachkam*, he would shed tears of ecstasy...At many places the poet has sung verses in praise of Annamalaiyar, indicating his intense thirst and yearning for the holy hill...There is a famous section in the book entitled *Thiruvembhava*, which in twenty songs tells young girls who are fasting during the Tamil month of *Margahazi*, to wake up early morning to worship Lord Siva in the temple...Once on July 22, 1939, Bhagavan asked the devotees present whether they knew the significance of the day and added, “Today is Manikkavachakar’s Guru *Pooja*”, and he then retreated into deep silence for long hours. The silence pierced the hearts of those present and they experienced a blissful state...Once, Bhagavan asked Devaraja Mudaliar, “How fine it would be if the importance of *Thiruvachaka Sivapuranam* is told to others and how nice it would be if ten people chant the verses in chorus.” We can take this as Bhagavan’s direction to us, and

chant *Thiruvachkam* and experience inner bliss. (Excerpted from *Mountain Path*, Jan.-March, 2009, article by Karuna M. Namasivayam)

AN ATTENDANT REMEMBERS SRI RAMANA

Vaikuntavasar worked up his way to be Sri Ramana's attendant in 1940. Later he was a member of the Board of Trustees of Sri Ramanasramam.

Before becoming an attendant, I had talked to Him only once, soon after my arrival. After that there was no need for me to think of anything else. Bhagavan was God for me. Everything I did for Him was done with care and dedication. I used to devote considerable time to wash the only two pieces of cloth Bhagavan had (loin cloth and a small towel), as I wanted them to be spotlessly clean. Massaging His feet was another duty I welcomed. Bhagavan's rheumatism gave me an opportunity to massage His feet and legs.

On great occasions like *jayanti*, Bhagavan would ask me, "Have you attended to the 'boys' (monkeys)?" I used to take plenty of food and spread it on the rocks. After they finished eating, the monkeys would keep quiet, lying down content, and Bhagavan would remark, "Look, how good they all have become and do not do any mischief now."

Once there was a snake below my pillow. When I reported it to Bhagavan, He laughingly remarked, "Oh, it is quite all right. What else can make a better bed for you?" (Vaikuntavasar is one of the names of Vishnu, whose bed is Adishesha.) Such was His sense of humour.

Once, about nine at night, Bhagavan walked towards the Hill. I went along with Him. Bhagavan had gone a bit further to ease Himself. Then I heard the sound of wooden sandals moving nearer and nearer and passing on. There was no one to be seen. I was awe struck. I had heard from Bhagavan about the *siddhas* living on Arunachala. I began to sweat. When Bhagavan came near me, He looked at me and said, "So, you too have heard it." (*Arunachala's Ramana*, Vol. IV)

It is neither wise nor brave to question God. It is the folly of a prideful heart. –
Annoymous

In the end, all religions point to the same light. In between the light and us, sometimes there are too many rules. – Paulo Coelho

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honours the servant and has forgotten the gift. – Albert Einstein

TRUTH ABOUT LIFE: We are travellers on a cosmic journey, swirling and dancing in the eddies and whirlpools of infinity. Life is eternal. But the expressions of life are ephemeral, momentary and transient. The Buddha, has said: This existence of ours is as transient as autumn clouds / To watch the birth and death of beings is like looking at the movements of dance / A lifetime is like a flash of lightening in the sky / Rushing by like a torrent down a steep mountain. – Deepak Chopra

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To see a light, no other light is needed. So also, the Self being self-effulgent, needs no other means of knowledge. It shines of itself...The whole objective world is born of ignorance and is transient like a bubble on water. Know the Self to be distinct from it and identical with the Supreme. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

DEVELOP PURE POTENTIALITY: We are, in our essential nature, pure consciousness, pure potentiality. If we want to enjoy the benefits of our potentiality, we have to have access to it. One way for this is daily practice of silence and meditation. Practicing silence means making a commitment to take a certain amount of time to simply *Be*. Experiencing silence means periodically withdrawing from the activity of speech. It also means periodically withdrawing from such activities as watching television, listening to the radio, or reading a book...Ideally, one should meditate at least thirty minutes in the morning, and thirty minutes in the evening. Through meditation one will learn to experience the field of awareness. Another way to access the field of pure potentiality is through the practice of non-judgment. When we constantly evaluate, classify, label, analyse, we create a lot of turbulence in our internal dialogue. Non-judgment creates silence in the mind. To begin with one may say to oneself, “For the next

two hours, I won't judge anything, or will experience non-judgment." Then one can extend it gradually. – *Deepak Chopra*

DISCOVER THE HIDDEN TREASURE: We have an inner survival kit that gets activated when our energies flag. Everyday prayer is a necessity and not a luxury. It helps us to dip into our inner core and activate our survival kit. Once we become aware of the life force that each of us carries within, we realise that we are on this earth for a purpose. It helps us to develop deep insight... We perceive differently and so our lives acquire an added dimension. It raises our sights to higher goals and helps us connect with others more deeply. Many of us live most of our lives without becoming conscious of the hidden treasure that we have within – the goal worth reaching. Discover your hidden treasure. It will take you places on the inner journey, we all should undertake in our lives. – *spirituality.indiatime.com*

IMPORTANCE OF SINGLE THOUGHT: *Samadhi* starts with the engagement with a single thought. The awareness of a single straying thought by itself may seem pretty ineffectual. But if repeated with sufficient determination (*abhyasa*) and detachment (*vairagya*) over a period of time, it results in a state of thoughtlessness in our brain known as *nirvikalpa samadhi*, says Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra*. – *Vithal C. Nadkarnai*

CHADWICK ANSWERS A SPIRITUAL QUERY

Major A.W. Chadwick was an outstanding devotee of the Maharshi. The following extracts from his letter to another devotee Dilip Kumar Roy, who sought some guidance from the Major.

“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.

“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 majority attained in a flash once and for all. The moment I came into the presence of my Guru Sri Maharshi, eleven years ago, I found peace. My staying here was never

premeditated; it was just something which had to be in spite of myself. However, the pendulum swings, in time the beats grow 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. 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 how few of us can! May the Supreme Guru give us the necessary strength!” (*Forever is in the Now* by A.R. Natarajan, article by Dilip Kumar Roy)

MUTHUSWAMI REMEMBERS SRI RAMANA

P.T. Muthuswami came from Madras to have *darshan* of the Maharshi in 1947.

Some visitors were taking snapshots of the Maharshi. In my heart of hearts I was deeply thinking whether I could be so fortunate as to have a photo with Bhagavan. It so happened that a devotee arranged for a group photo. I was observing this from a respectable distance. The photo was about to be taken when the *sarvadhikari* hurrying up to the spot, saw me and asked me to follow him and join the group. The photo was taken. My happiness was beyond expression. I have a copy of this eventful photo with me. This is how *kripa* of Bhagavan works miraculously.

Punctuality was observed in every activity of the Ashram. Breakfast, lunch, tea and supper used to be served precisely at 7 a.m., 11 a.m., 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m., respectively.

At the ringing of the bell, Bhagavan would go to the dining hall. The devotees followed him with great reverence. Different varieties of delicious dishes used to be served systematically and briskly. When serving was finished, he used to ask, ‘finished?’ meaning whether serving was completed. The *sarvadhikari* replying in the affirmative used to prostrate before him. Bhagavan would then cast a benign glance all around and nod his head signifying to commence eating. Perfect silence would prevail in the dining hall, although the number of persons would be more than a hundred. Bhagavan would leave his plantain leaf after the meal as clean as before the meal was served. (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. 4)

GURU: In Sanskrit, the word for gravity is *gurutvakarshan*. The earth holds on to us with the force of gravity. Without this attraction or love, we would not have a base. Similarly, *gurutva* is the basis of our life. The guru is the guiding light who removes the darkness of ignorance and shows the path of knowledge. The guru is a *tatva* – an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent principle. Establishing connection with this *tatva* is a source of great strength... We feel gratitude towards the master who moves us from a limited understanding and pride of “I” know everything to “I am everything.”... A disciple seeks knowledge. A devotee seeks nothing. A devotee is soaked in love and devotion... When the devotee meets the divine, only Divinity remains. The individual “I” dissolves in the One Divinity. – *Bhanumathi Narasimhan*

SEX AND SADHANA – SRI RAMANA’S VIEWS

There is nothing to show that the Maharshi ever felt the least concerned about *kama*, a constant bugbear and a huge challenge for most *sadhakas*. He never allowed himself to be drawn into discussion on the issue. His way of handling the subject is illustrated by the following:

1. Once S.S. Cohen told Bhagavan: “Last night Mr. Brunton and myself had a heated discussion on the question of sex and marriage, especially as it affects the spiritual life. What does the Maharshi think about it?” Bhagavan kept silent for a moment and remarked, “As far as *sadhana* is concerned, *brahmacharya* means dwelling in Brahman,” leaving me to take it as I willed.
2. Major A.W. Chadwick writes: “Bhagavan never taught morals, and had no special abhorrence to sex. He once said in answer to troubled disciples in my hearing, “It is better to do it than to be always thinking about it.”
3. Viswanatha Swami once asked Bhagavan to tell him as to how he could rise above the animal existence. Sri Bhagavan replied, “Moderation in food and similar restraints will be helpful in maintaining the inner poise. So long as you identify yourself with the body, you can never escape sex thoughts and distractions.”

(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (A publication of our Kendram), pp. 78, 113 and 172, respectively.)

God talks incessantly. But, as it turns out, mankind is deaf. – *Don Williams Jr*

Fish does not try to swim, it just swims. Least effort is spent when our actions are motivated by love and acceptance. – *Anonymous*

We do not find God because we are searching for Him everywhere, and not within where he dwells forever. – *Swami Sivananda*

A boy asked his mother how many Gods were there. The mother answered, “Only one to be sure.” But how do you know that enquired the boy? The mother’s reply was, “Because God fills every space, so there can be no room for any other.” – *Anonymous*

THE ZEN DOCTRINE OF NO-MIND

By Swami Siddheswarananda*

Once upon a time a Zen Master was standing on the top of a hill. Some villagers were observing him from the valley while discussing among themselves the reasons that drew him up there. “He must be looking for a lost animal”, said one of them; the second one guessed that he might be waiting for a friend and the third declared, “He is simply admiring the landscape.” The three friends went up to see the unknown person and to question him. The first asked, “Oh, my friend, have you lost an animal?” – “No”, answered the man, “I have not lost anything.” – “Are you expecting a friend?” inquired the second one. – “No, I don’t expect anyone.” – “Then,” said the third, “You are breathing / enjoying the fresh air.” – “No, sir.” – “So what are you doing then?” inquired the third men. “I am standing,” was the answer.

I had personally the same experience with Ramana Maharshi. While walking with him, he suddenly stopped and stayed still for about fifteen minutes. The spot was lonely and I asked him, “Are you admiring the landscape?” – “No, he replied, I am standing.” (*Mountain Path*, July-Sep. 2009)

[Gudipati Venkatachalam's observation about Bhagavan is relevant here. He says, "*Jnanis* cannot be understood because their minds have been destroyed. Sometimes we may feel that their actions have no rational explanation. But it is sheer ignorance to search for an explanation in apparent contradictions in the behaviour of a *jnani*." (*Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 140-1.)

*The Swami was born into the royal house of Cochin in 1897. He joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1920. His uplifting reminiscences of Bhagavan are at pp. 41-2 of the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

AN INSIGHT INTO SRI RAMANA'S IMMORTAL HYMN – *AKSHARAMANAMALAI*

Aksharamanamalai was composed in Tamil in 1913 by Bhagavan in response to a request by sadhu devotees for a song to be sung while wandering in the town for alms. It is an acrostic [A poem in which certain letters form a message when read in sequence.] of one hundred and eight couplets with the initial letters in alphabetical order and with a popular refrain – Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva. It unfolds an allegorical [A poem which can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning.] love story and depicts the *madhura bhava* (love aspect) of devotion. Arunachala is the lover and the singer is the beloved. The lover made secret love to the beloved while she was in her parental home. At the mere thought of his name, he stole her heart. He eloped with her stealthily and brought her here. While she is now harassed by so many enemies, he remains unmoved as a mountain. She complains of her lover's neglect and indifference – "Having entered my home and lured me to yours, why do you keep me prisoner in your cave? ... Having seduced and ravished me, if you deny me union and abandon me now, would it be justice? No, such desertion will be a shame for you...Having called me and lured me here, it is your responsibility to look after my well-being...If you will not unite with me, I shall be melting away in tears of anguish... Pray rain your mercy on me before your fire consumes me to ashes." So runs her appeal for love.

Then for harsh words of protest, she apologizes to her lover and prays for the bliss of complete union and merging – "Pray close me in, limb by limb, body by body, or I am lost...Let us embrace, one in the Real Self on the soft flower-bed of the

Mind...Come and sport with me in the open space of the Heart where there is neither night nor day...May I be absorbed into you as food is assimilated into the feeder.” At last the prayer is fulfilled. The love is completed through marriage, and with the bride’s prayer to the bridegroom, “O Lord Arunachala, throw around me your garland and let me place on your chest this garland woven by me,” the song concludes.

In this poem Arunachala is described and addressed in the most fascinating terms. Arunachala is “the real meaning of OM unexcelled, unparalleled,” “the magnet that attracts the iron filing of devotees and holds them fast,” “the Ocean of Grace in the shape of a mountain,” “the gem of fire sparking all round,” “the treasure of Divine Grace got without seeking,” the magical medicine of the life’s ills,” “the spider whose spreading webs attract into its meshes and destroy all ego,” “the magician who controls the ghost of the ego and then himself possesses the being,” “the mountain drug for all madness.”

The word *Arul* (Grace) occurs in nearly every stanza, so the whole song may be called a rhapsody [an epic poem of a suitable length for recitation at one time] of Grace. This love-song is indeed an allegory of Sri Ramana’s own life story and so is full of autobiographical interest. While reaching the depths of philosophical wisdom, this song stirs the tenderest chords of the human heart and makes the most daring description of love and romance in the spiritual sphere.

Though Sri Ramana always declined to be drawn into a discussion of its diverse interpretations, he would sit up in a trance of ecstasy [An overwhelming feeling of great happiness] whenever it was sung. Just before the *Mahanirvana*, when this song was being sung in a chorus by the devotees who had assembled outside the room of the Maharshi, he opened his eyes, looked in the direction from where the voices came, and then as he closed his eyes, tears of ecstasy gushed from their outer edges and he breathed his last. So this song into which Sri Ramana had breathed the essence of his Divine Spirit became appropriately the background music to his life’s last moments. (*Mountain Path*, April 1980, adapted from the article of Prof. G. V. Subbaramayya)

SRI RAMANA PROVIDES INITIATION THROUGH A DREAM

By T.P. Ramachandra Iyer*

“Is there any significance in a dream or is it a mere phenomenon?” was the question I put to Bhagavan in writing. In those times, the subjects of ‘guru and *sishya*,’ and of ‘initiation and *diksha*’ were the foremost topics of general discussion.

My intense feeling was that if Bhagavan was to give me initiation, it would be a blessing for me. His pithy utterances were very cryptic, “Who is the Guru? Who is the *sishya*? Who is to give to whom? What is there to give? There is neither Guru nor disciple other than the ‘Self’. Guru is the 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 an impression on my whole being. It was neither a dream nor a waking state experience. I was perfectly alive to it and aware of its pervading nature, which consumed and overpowered me. After the experience, I immediately wrote the following in a notebook and later went to the Ashram. Reaching Bhagavan’s presence, I left my notebook with him for perusal. (The record in the notebook was dated 18th November, 1939, 3 a.m.)

It was an apparent dream. I was in a huge quadrangle of some college building, when I suddenly saw Bhagavan had come down, youthful and vigorous in appearance. Thousands of people gathered round at a distance encircling Bhagavan, perched on all walls, and any available space around. I darted towards Bhagavan and embraced him and Bhagavan embraced me. At once I found Bhagavan in my house. First welcoming him was my mother and then my father. Bhagavan had a cold bath, myself pouring pots of water over him. Then in a few moments he went up and down our house throwing us all in confusion. Then in the presence of my mother he asked me, pointing to my sacred thread, “What is all this! Throw this away and I shall give you this.” He was holding in his hands a bunch of *darba* (*kusa* grass). At first I hesitated to discard my sacred thread for the 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 he gave me two handfuls of *kusa* grass, and the moment I received it a great serenity pervaded my entire being. Just then I experienced a descent of dynamic force into my being, flowing as it were from and through the *sahasrara*, pervading downwards slowly to the heart-centre, and I felt that my physical frame would not be able to stand the flow of the force. With courage and determination I looked at Bhagavan to ask him what all this was about. There was no answer, but I saw his form changing into the shape of

Rama and telling me something which I could not catch. So I asked, “Who are you?” and the reply was “I am Sri Rama,” whereupon Rama disappeared and I saw Bhagavan in its place.

My mother began to cry aloud and said, “I will die, I will die”, thinking I fell prey to Bhagavan’s lures. She was rolling on the ground when Bhagavan asked me, “What is earliest train to Bombay and the cheapest route?” He said he had to go there and to one or two other places.” I was thinking how best to take Bhagavan and go with him when I felt completely awake and began reflecting on the event. Did it have any significance or was it merely a dream phenomenon?

When next morning I entered the hall, Bhagavan’s welcome nod and penetrating look overwhelmed me and even as I was halfway through 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 his head bent down clutching my feet in his hands. I asked, ‘What are you doing?’ ‘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 Bhagavan’s touch, which stirred my being, though in a dreamy condition, and asked if initiation or *diksha* could be had in this way also? Bhagavan slowly spoke, interspersed with short intervals of silent gaze, “*Jagrat* and *swapna* are states that come and go. 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 and the Self are deemed external, all *upadesa*, initiation and the 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 *swapana* states.” (Adapted from *The Maharshi*, journal of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Centre, New York, May-June, 2001)

*Iyer was a long standing devotee of Bhagavan. Many of his reminiscences are in the Kendram’s publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* at pp. 159-61.

THYAGARAJA (1767-1847) was a saint par excellence, who lived and moved always in the joy of higher consciousness of his personal deity Lord Rama. He had chosen the path of *Bhakti* and made music as a channel of communion with Him every moment of his conscious existence. His unfathomable love and innocence

and his exclusive devotion and dedication to the Lord were beyond compare. He poured out his divine love through soul-stirring songs in praise of the Lord. His highly lyrical and sweet compositions adoring Lord Rama are called *Kritis* or *Kirtans*. (*Thyagaraja Tattva-Bodha* by M. Bhimasen Rao)

MURUGANAR'S *SRI GURU RAMANA PRASADAM*

By Robert Butler*

Muruganar's work, *Sri Ramana Anubhuti*, part I, later renamed as *Sri Guru Ramana Prasadam*, expresses his profound gratitude and love in a lyrical outpouring of praise. This work expresses the ways in which the realisation – *anubhuti*, conveyed to Muruganar by Bhagavan's grace, transformed and subsumed his entire existence. He says:

I was a learned fool. My flawed mind knew nothing until I came to dwell with Him whose glance filled my heart with the light of awareness...Dwelling in that gracious state of peace whose nature is *mauna*, so hard to gain and know, I entered into union with the deathless state of the knowledge of reality.

Lest anyone should assume that spiritual knowledge is a free food, dispensed at will by the guru, Muruganar makes it clear that the disciple too must play his part in this process.

With spiritual practice comes insights, and in this work Muruganar gives vivid expression to a number of these. He explains that the propensity of the mind to identify with the objects and desire is like that of bees that instinctively rise up and rush towards nectar the moment they see it. Clearly the mind is not to be trusted...The treacherous mental imagination can be eliminated employing the method of *atma vichara*, investigation of the source of 'I' sense, as advocated by Bhagavan.

In Bhagavan's radiant presence, Muruganar had no need of any tools to accomplish the task of controlling the mind. He says: He entered my heart, imparting the state of supreme bliss upon which it is delightful to dwell. Grace flowed sweetly from Him as He filled me with the richness of *mauna*.

Muruganar was fond of casting himself in the role of the faithful wife, with Ramana-Siva as her husband, echoing the conventions of classical Tamil love poetry...He shows us how, through a combination of intense devotion and enquiry, the antics of the mind will finally come to an end.

The loss of ego-self is a terrifying prospect indeed. T.R. Kanakamma records in her biography of Muruganar how, on the occasion of two of his early visits, he felt compelled to flee the presence of Bhagavan due to intense fear he felt, as Bhagavan's physical form became incandescent with light, and the world around Muruganar and his own sense of identity melted away. To step into the seeming void beyond the mind and senses requires a leap of faith: Know that those glorious feet which lie beyond the realm of thought are perceived differently according to the minds that reflect upon them.

Muruganar's verses show us how he was able, through the power of love and devotion, to make that final leap of faith, and allow the knot of the mind that bound him to his physical body to be finally and irrevocably severed. (*Mountain Path*, April-June 2009)

*Butler, an American, lived for some years in Tiruvannamalai studying Tamil at Sri Ramanasramam. He now visits every year and has dedicated his life to understanding and translating Tamil spiritual texts.

OCTOBER 2009

To one who is established in what is infinite, pure consciousness, bliss and unqualified non-duality, where is the question of bondage or liberation, seeing that there is no second reality? O Rama, the mind has, by its own activity, bound itself; when it is calm, it is free. – Sage Vasishtha's percepts to Prince Rama in Yoga Vasistha.

HAPPINESS: It does not happen to us, it happens *by us*. Know that each one of us is the creator of our own thoughts and state of mind. You can choose your response to something at any given moment. For example, you can choose to be furious with

the demands and pressures of a hectic day, feeling miserable about bad luck, colleagues, weather or whatever else. Or you call upon the grace of the moment – reminding yourself to stop and breathe calmly for just a few moments, finding some beauty to focus on, something to be grateful for in all this. You can choose between forever brooding on an unhappy childhood, or focusing on healing and moving on... Happiness, at its core, is about discovering meaning, and counting your blessings, not your woes. – *Marguerite Theophil*

LIVE IN THE PRESENT: The present is continuously being distorted by memories of the past or by projections into the future. The present intrinsically has no characteristic. It is devoid of any emotional shade. It is just awareness. Pure being-ness... It is a common experience that anticipation of happiness is probably more joyful than the actual event, and anticipation of pain is more painful than the point of suffering. In both the cases it is the present moment that is pregnant with perception of an event that has yet to happen...Meditation is training the mind to be in the here and now. Chanting and rhythmic breathing are means to this end. Focusing on a particular deity or mantra serve a similar purpose...While listening to soulful music we may experience quasi-meditative states off and on but we might not be aware of it. Losing one's identity, even if for a few moments, is pleasurable. – *Deepak Ranade*

'I -AM-THE-BODY' NOTION

By V. Krithivasan*

Sri Bhagavan says that the fundamental illusion experienced by everyone is 'I am the body'. On this faulty foundation the entire superstructure of the world that we experience through the senses is built and sustained. The connection between the Pure Consciousness that we essentially are and the inert body is a mysterious one. This connection or the identity is the one that gives rise to the ego or the individual self. Sri Bhagavan says this is the *chit-jada-granthi* – the knot that results in the incompatible marriage between Pure Consciousness and the body.

This false identity lasts till Self Realization dawns, at which time the knot is broken permanently. A Self-realized *jnani* does not identify himself with the body. Here are some analogies on the subject that Vylamore Srinivasa Iyer, Dr.K.S.'s uncle has recorded while in Sri Bhagavan's presence:

1. A *jnani*'s association with the body is like the flame inside a hurricane lamp ; the flame stands separate from the glass frame surrounding it. The *jgnani* knows himself as Pure Consciousness, essentially separate from his body. Whereas, an *ajnani*, the ordinary individual, has an association with his body which is akin to a red hot wooden log, burning inside a fireplace; the fire is inseparable from the wood. The ordinary individual is unable to separate his conscious self from his body.

2. A *jnani*'s association with his body is like that of a dried up coconut – the core inside does not stick to the outer shell. When the coconut is shaken, the core inside can be felt moving. On the other hand, the association that an ordinary individual has with his body can be likened to a normal coconut where the inner core sticks to the outer shell; one needs to pry out the core with a knife.

3. A *jnani*'s association with his body is like that of the butter that floats on a thoroughly churned buttermilk. The ordinary individual is like the milk; the butter remains totally mingled with the milk.

The fourth verse of *Ashtavakra Gita* says, “If you detach yourself from the body and rest in Consciousness, you will at once be happy, peaceful and free from bondage.”

Sri Bhagavan always pointed out that our essential nature is formless Consciousness, by drawing attention to our experience in deep sleep. **Talk 286** from ‘*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*’ is given below to substantiate it.

D.: How is realization made possible?

M.: There is the absolute Self from which a spark proceeds as from fire. The spark is called the ego. In the case of an ignorant man it identifies itself with an object simultaneously with its rise. It cannot remain independent of such association with objects. This association is *ajnana* or ignorance, whose destruction is the objective of our efforts. If its objectifying tendency is killed it remains pure, and also merges into the source. The wrong identification with the body is *dehatmabuddhi* (‘I-am-the-body’ idea). This must go before good results follow.

D.: How to eradicate it?

M.: We exist in *sushupti* without being associated with the body and mind. But in the other two states we are associated with them. If one with the body, how can we exist without the body in *sushupti*? We can separate ourselves from that which is

external to us and not from that which is one with us. Hence the ego is not one with the body. This must be realized in the waking state. *Avasthatraya* (the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep) should be studied only for gaining this outlook. The ego in its purity is experienced in intervals between two states or two thoughts. Ego is like that caterpillar which leaves its hold only after catching another. Its true nature can be found when it is out of contact with objects or thoughts. Realize this interval with the conviction gained by the study of *avasthatraya* (the three states of consciousness).

*The author, a scholar, is a past President of our Kendram.

A PROFESOR GETS ANSWERS TO HIS QUERIES

Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee, a well-known professor of Calcutta University, visited Sri Ramana in 1935.

In reply to Mukerjee's question that Self-Realization was hard to attain, Sri Ramana's reply was that one should make concerted effort and not give up the efforts, with a defeatist mentality.

In answer to the question on meditation and distraction, Sri Ramana said that when there are thoughts, it is distraction: when there are no thoughts, it is meditation. Regarding a question on silence, Sri Ramana said that silence is never-ending speech. Vocal speech obstructs the other speech of silence. In silence one is in intimate contact with the surroundings. The silence of Dakshinamurthy removed the doubts of the four sages. *Mouna vyakhya prakatita tatvam* [Truth is expounded by silence]. Silence is so potent that it is said to be exposition. For vocal speech, organs of speech are necessary and they precede speech. But the other speech lies even beyond thought. It is, in short, transcendent speech or unspoken words, *para vak*.

When the professor asked Bhagavan to extend His grace to him although he would soon be a thousand miles off, Bhagavan said that time and space are only concepts of mind. "Think that you are always in my presence. That will make you feel right." (*Arunachala's Ramana*, Vol. 3)

SWAMI VISHWANANDA VISITS SRI RAMANA

I was born in Karnataka. From boyhood I longed to know about the purpose of life. How it is that we are born or selected for this life and if God is there, how does he come into our life? In 1941, when 20 years old, I happen get Kannada translation of the Maharshi's *Nan Yar?* All of a sudden I decided to visit Tiruvannamalai. Walking into the room of the Maharshi I saw many people around the couch of the Swami, who took no notice of me as he was gazing through a window out into the sky.

When I entered the dining hall I had the privilege of the Maharshi sitting along with us when we ate. I had gone to Sringeri Sankara but the experience was not the same. The Maharshi was sitting in the midst of us all and eating whatever was being served to us. It had a great impact on me. Here is a real way of life observing *samadharama* (equality to all). I also realized that Bhagavan was deeply caring for me even though he seemed not to look at me.

When the cow Lakshmi was ailing at the end of her life, I was a witness to it. Bhagavan came to *gosala* and called 'Lakshmi.' The way he spoke to the cow was as if he was addressing his own mother. His body was shaking as he held on to his stick and we were afraid he would fall down. He walked towards her with a limp and sat before the cow. He patted her on the head between the horns. The cow lifted her head and looked at Bhagavan. The eyes of the cow and Bhagavan met in an intense communion. Bhagavan wanted to pour some water on the cow's head, so I ran to my room, brought water in a vessel and slowly poured the water. At that moment I was touching Bhagavan's hands with water as he laid them on the cow's head. By that time many people had gathered around. It was a thrilling experience to see Bhagavan so full of deep concern. Though we think she appeared to be an ordinary cow, she had more attachment and love for Bhagavan than us. The scene has remained engraved in my memory. There is no other place where animals are given ceremonial burials, except Ramanasramam. The cow Lakshmi was given a decent *samadhi* by Bhagavan himself amidst singing of Vedic verses.

I longed to touch the feet of Bhagavan and do prostration as traditionally prescribed. Bhagavan's attendant who had become a friend of mine, told me that it was not possible. Once when he was massaging Bhagavan's legs with oil, I happened to be at his side. As he had to go away for a while, he asked me to hold the cup of oil. As I was standing with the cup in my hands, waiting for my friend to return, Bhagavan told me, "Hei, why do you stand, go on." I immediately

applied oil and massaged his right knee. After a while Bhagavan said it was enough. Before I withdrew I bowed and touched his feet with both hands. The joy and thrill I felt could not be described in words.

The *avarana* (sheaths covering the Self) will be removed by Bhagavan's grace only. Bhagavan was never born, never lived and never died; he has always been here and everywhere. (Excerpts from the video interview of the Swami, *Mountain Path*, July-September, 2009)

SRI RAMANA RESPONDS TO PROBLEMS OF A *SADHAKA*

D. During the enquiry, should I repeat mentally the question, 'Who am I (*Koham*)' etc. just like the japa of a mantra again and again, with feeling and understanding the same?

B. Japa of *Koham* is not correct. Put the question once only and then concentrate on finding the source of the ego, and preventing recurrence of thoughts.

D. Should I endeavour to breathe in and out deeply and rhythmically during the enquiry, and synchronize the formula, *Koham*, with the same? Or should I pay attention to the incoming and outgoing breaths, while repeating the questions *Koham*, *Kutoham*, etc.

B. You should not attend to 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 practice *kevala kumbhaka* [retention of breath] 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 their aid. *Prayanama* is to be practised with the usual caution. It will gradually increase the power and duration of the *kumbhaka*. It will make the mind one-pointed. Take its help if unable to concentrate without it. *Prayanama* is like reins to control the mind-horse, or like brakes to control the wheel of thoughts. '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.

D. In the enquiry 'Who am I?' does the 'I' refer to the ego or the Atman?

M. In the enquiry, ‘I’ refers to the ego.

D. Is it helpful in the enquiry to be in *siddhasana*, keeping the spine erect, sitting on deerskin, *kushasana*, etc. during the meditation, or are they not quite necessary? Will they expedite the progress?

M. The 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 ‘I’ and sit there. Do not 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 a posture, etc. may distract the mind towards them or the body.

D. If doubts, fears and worries harass me during meditation, how can they be most effectively removed?

M. 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. If you turn the mind inwards 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 to it. The best method to annihilate them is to ask, ‘To whom do they occur?’ and they will disappear.

D. What can I do to increase the receptivity of the mind to spiritual vibrations while sitting in the hall, and to increase the frequency and duration of the efforts at enquiry in the hall, or to ease such efforts?

M. Keep the mind quiet. That is enough. Sitting in the hall will help you. The purpose of efforts is to get rid of all efforts. The force will be clearly felt when the stillness is achieved. Spiritual vibrations exist everywhere. They will manifest when the mind is stilled. (*Mountain Path*, October, 1969)

THE MIND AND SOUL: Water in the clouds is pure but when it falls on the ground as rain, it mixes with mud and gathers impurities. It then completely loses sight of its original purity and begins to think that it is itself nothing but muddy earth. When, however, as a result of the heat of the sun’s rays it rises as vapour, it merges in its source, the clouds. The soul is in the same condition as that of the rain. The soul was originally pure but because of its association with the mind,

tarnished with desires and attachments, it has become impure. And when the soul begins to overcome the mind, it begins to know itself. – *Kulbir Kaur*

KASHMIR SAIVISM – THE TRIKA TRADITION: From the time of *Svetasvatara Upanishad* there is an unbroken chain of thought which sees Siva as the Inexpressible Truth which the yogis realise by focusing their minds on the Self. The Trika tradition of Kashmir Saivism puts Siva at the centre of the matrix of Being and Becoming. There is only one Being, Siva, who is the nature and existence of all beings, filled with the infinite light or *prakasha* of universal consciousness. The external world, too, is seen as a reflection of the Siva consciousness, *pratibimbavada*, the theory of reflection, where Creation, the *Sakti* is not external or independent of God-consciousness, but is a mirror of this Siva principle... The Kashmir Saivite believes that even though every being has the intrinsic knowledge of his Siva nature, it is overshadowed completely by the mind, and its act of incessant thinking by which all beings have got into the habit of defining themselves. To transcend the mind is to find the Siva nature within oneself, which is to realise that the ‘you’ and ‘I’ are actually the same. This transcendence of mind can be achieved through disciplining the ego through meditative practices or through the method wherein energy centres are sought to be activated by centering one’s attention to the silence which comes up between the end of one thought and the beginning of another, usually not even felt, but ever present, the *Kundalini* path. The path of grace through total surrender is another method of recognition of one’s Siva consciousness and Trika believes this to be the most effective. – *Pranav Khullar* [It is relevant here to mention the episode recorded by Dr. K.S.: “Once someone enquired of Bhagavan as to what he would request if Lord Siva appeared before him on His bull prompting him to ask for a boon. Bhagavan is reported to have said, “Do not try to deceive me. He has no form. I do not want to be tempted by your question. He is the formless Self in all.” *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 68]

THE TRUTH TO REMEMBER: The divine nature reveals itself anew in every human life, but if a man walks indifferently by, then the revelation is as seed on stony ground. No one is excluded from this divine consciousness; it is man who excludes himself. That life which brought you to birth, O Man! is nobler and greater than your farthest thought; believe in its beneficent intention towards you and obey its subtle injunctions whispered to your heart in half-felt intuitions... The man who thinks he may live as freely as his unconsidered desires prompt him and yet not carry the burden of an eventual reckoning, is binding his life to a hollow dream. Whoever sins against his fellows or against himself pronounces his own

sentence thereby. He may hide his sins from the sight of others, but he cannot hide them from the all-recording eye of the gods. Whoever escapes from paying the legal penalties of earth can never escape from paying the just penalties which the gods impose. *Paul Brunton – A Search in Secret India*

SPIRITUAL PATH REQUIRES ETERNAL PATIENCE: Spiritual development could be a frustratingly slow process demanding sustained and committed effort. Some might think it to be a boring process. But it is highly rewarding and very much worth the effort as it brings lasting and indescribable peace to the avid seeker. There is nothing higher than this to be achieved by a human being. One must be willing to wait for it longer than one birth. Arjuna was blessed with the divine grace, but as the Lord Himself reminded him, before attaining this state he had to pass through many births which he totally forgot. The Jataka tales say that the Buddha had to experience several births before being enlightened. – *M.M. Bhattacharyya*

TRUE REALISATION: All chemicals such as alcohol and drugs induce a state of disconnect, which is pleasurable as it blunts the sensibilities and makes the individual immune to any unpleasantness of daily living. But it also fortifies the sense of separateness. This feeling of disconnect and indifference is momentarily blissful. These chemicals which are addictive give an illusionary, fleeting glimpse of ‘spiritual’ experience...The chemical disconnect is ‘exclusive’ in the sense that it refurbishes the sense of separateness and isolates the individual. The state of realisation is ‘inclusive’ and results in an all-pervading sense of oneness, in which any connection is superfluous...We are conditioned to believe that realisation would mean probably some divine light, or hearing some soulful music and so on...The unqualified sense of awareness celebrates a sense of ‘am-ness’ unadulterated by expectations and longings. The intangibility and dissolution of one’s identity can scarcely be expressed by any means of communication. – *Deepak Ranade*

BASIC TENETS OF SUFISM: Sufis make a conscious effort to prepare us as perfect beings. The first step for the seeker is *tauba*, that is, to repent for his past sins and resolve not to repeat those mistakes. The next step is renunciation, lack of desire for worldly possessions. Then comes abstinence, that is, control of one’s mind. Sufis lay stress on the evolution of the inner-self and consider it more important than physical restraints. Receiving grace of the Master (*tavajjooh*) is considered more helpful. In the company of the Master, the seeker starts feeling that the knots of sensual pleasure hitherto tying his mind are loosening. After this,

the aspirant reaches the stage of *tawakkul*, complete trust in God, and to *raza* – to live as God desires. One should have firm faith in Him. All that happens, happens according to His desire. With this firm faith the seeker learns to be thankful to the Almighty in whatever condition He keeps him. His grace is everything. The ego vanishes and the seeker now moves to the state of *fana* or annihilation, which is considered to be the end of the journey of the wayfarer in search for Truth. – *spirituality.indiatimes.com*

I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance. – *Socrates*

God often visits us, but most of the time we are not at home. – *Joseph Roux*

It is highly convenient to believe in the infinite mercy of God when one feels the need for mercy, but remember also his infinite justice. – *B. R. Haydon*

The more you give the more you will get back. – *Anonymous*

In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins – not through strength but by perseverance. – *Jackson Brown*

AJNA CHAKRA: It is between the two eyebrows and holds a special significance. It is also referred to as *Trikuti*. It has two petals, *yoga nadis*, on each of its sides. The spiritual vibration that emanate from these subtle *nadis* corresponds to Sanskrit letters that mean *So Ham* (I am That). With deep focus, the seeker can experience *jyoti*, and inhale the divine fragrance, the *divya gandha*. At this centre, advanced seekers receive the guru's command, *ajna*, and blessings to go higher up to the boundless spaces where a divine light of great brilliance is perceived. As a mark of respect for the inner guru and the constantly blazing flame, also called *divya jyoti*, within the *Ajna Chakra*, many people apply *kumkum* or sandalwood paste at the point between the two eyebrows. Some people sport three stripes and a red dot on their foreheads; the former symbolizes the three *gunas*, while the latter symbolizes the higher power that transcends three *gunas*. – *Anup Taneja*

HINT FOR A SADHAKA: Even a physical machine will not generate enough power to accomplish its work if the steam leaks out through unauthorized apertures. Neither spasmodic efforts nor a general vague desire for achievement can so strengthen the technique of *sadhana* as to make it effective. A steadily burning upward turned flame of rightly guided aspiration is necessary for that. – *Arthur Osborne*

November – 2009

WORLD AN ILLUSION: A motion picture is made up of a series of still pictures. When each of these still pictures is followed by another in less than sixth of a second; the brain interprets the sequence as continuum. And so we see the sequence of images as a motion picture without realizing that what we think we see is just an illusion, a perception...We are constantly changing and so is the environment. Thus any perceived continuity or seeming constancy is just an illusion of our perception. If we wake up to the fact that every aspect of existence is in a constant flux, then the question that automatically arises is ‘What is unchangeable, permanent and eternal?’...When scriptures comment on the illusory nature of all creation, they are alluding to the impermanence and deception created by sensory perception. The continuum of existence is only a mirage. We are not the same entity at two discrete points of time... Quantum physics expounds that if the observer does not observe an event, then it never happened. All perception is centered on awareness. Once the observer ceases to exist, as in deep sleep, then from his perspective, the universe also does not exist. – *Deepak Ranade*

NAMBIAR’S DREAM VISIONS OF SRI RAMANA – FIVE AMAZING EPISODES

K.K. Nambiar*, a great devotee of Bhagavan, was Chief Engineer, Highways, Madras Presidency. *The Guiding Presence of Sri Ramana* contains his reminiscences.

1. One evening in 1936 I wanted to ask Bhagavan a question on some spiritual practice. But amidst crowd I could not do so and returned home somewhat disappointed. Early next morning when I was lying half awake, Bhagavan appeared before me in a dream and answered the very question I had in mind. Before vanishing he told me that he wanted a notebook. I said I have one readily available but it is of a small size. He said that would do. I woke up with a pleasant thrill. The dream vision has made such a deep impression on my mind that I could not delay carrying out the command. After an early bath, I traced the notebook and

hurried to the Ashram. Prostrating before Bhagavan as usual, I handed over the notebook to him. He received it with a smile and asked me why I had brought it to him, so I told him in a whisper all about the dream. He immediately called his attendant Madhavaswami, and remarked to him, “Didn’t I ask you yesterday evening to get a notebook to write out a Malayalam translation of the Sanskrit text of *Sri Ramana Gita* in? You didn’t bring one. Well, here is Nambiar who has brought it for me. It seems he had a dream in which I asked for the notebook and he has brought it.”

2. On another occasion in 1936, I dreamt of the Maharshi seated on his couch with a number of devotees on the floor. Among them I recognised a young devotee seated in *padmasana* and doing *pranayama*. I saw sparks rising from the base of his spine up to his head. Bhagavan, who was watching him, said, “There is no need for all this gymnastics with breath control. It is easier and safer to follow the method of Self-enquiry as enunciated by me.” Next morning when I went to the Ashram I sought out this young Swami. I had no occasion to speak to him before. I gave him a full account of the dream I had had. He was visibly moved and, somewhat to my embarrassment, embraced me with delight in the North Indian fashion. He said, “Brother, I was all the while waiting for an opportunity to ask Bhagavan whether I should continue or give up this practice of *pranayaman* which I have been steadily carrying on for several years past. Indeed, last night, while sitting in his presence I was eagerly waiting for an opportunity to put the question to him but couldn’t find a suitable occasion. Now there is no need to ask him about it.”

3. In 1936 I was transferred to Mangalore as District Board Engineer of South Canara District. From there I was transferred for a short period to Cocanada for preparation of a design for a new bridge over Godavari. It was here that Bhagavan alerted me in a dream about a mistake I was about to commit in the design of the well foundations of the Godavari Bridge.

4. Sometime in 1942, I dreamt Bhagavan telling me that I would be transferred to Madras and He would be going with me. I was confused and could not believe it. I had not the faintest idea that transfer to Madras was possible, where there was no place for a District Board Engineer. A few days later, I came to know that the City Engineer’s post in the Madras Corporation had fallen vacant due to the then incumbent having been suspended on some corruption charges, and they were thinking of posting a new engineer, with foreign qualifications. I was selected for appointment.

5. On April 2, 1950, I dreamt Bhagavan lying on the bed in the *nirvana* room talking to two persons. He could see me standing outside, and told those persons, “Nambiar is waiting outside, call him in.” On my entering the room, Bhagavan got down from the bed and leaning on a walking stick, walked outside followed by three of us. He took us to a spot parallel to the Matrubhuteswara Shrine and drew a rectangle on the ground with his walking stick, as though to indicate the place of his *samadhi*. After Bhagavan’s *mahanirvana* on the night of April 14, a large number of persons led by the *sarvadhikari* protested vehemently against the idea of locating Bhagavan’s *samadhi* as a subsidiary to the Mother’s shrine. They wanted a bigger shrine for Bhagavan. The *sarvadhikari* told me, “You please keep these dreams and visions to yourself.” Only after much argument and under heavy pressure he had to give up and the *samadhi* came up at the place Bhagavan himself had indicated.

*Many reminiscences of Nambiar appear in our Kendram’s publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* at pp. 84-8.

SRI RAMANA’S ANSWERS TO QUERIES BY DEVOTEES

The following brief extracts are from Cohen’s notes of Bhagavan’s replies to questions in the 1930s and 40s. Cohen* says: Bhagavan always spoke in Tamil, except when the questions were put in Telugu or Malayalam, when he answered in the same language. The visitors who knew none of these languages received answers through an interpreter in English. Although the Maharshi could read and understand English well, he did not like to speak in it. .

The Real is ever-present, like the screen on which the cinematographic pictures move. While the picture appears on it, the screen remains invisible. Stop the picture and the screen will become clear. All thoughts and events are merely pictures moving on the screen of Pure Consciousness, which alone is real.

In a cinema-show you can see pictures only in a very dim light or in darkness. But when all lights are switched on, pictures disappear. So also in the floodlight of the Supreme *atman* all objects disappear.

Think of God, attachments will gradually drop away. If you wait till all desires disappear, before starting your devotion and prayer, you will have to wait for a very long time indeed.

It is every intelligent man's experience that evil doing recoils on the doer sooner or later. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' means that you should love him, because he is your Self.

Fate is overcome by *jnana*, Self-knowledge, which is beyond will and Fate.

That which comes and goes, rises and sets, is born and dies is the ego. That which always abides, never changes and is devoid of qualities is the Self.

Pain and pleasure are to the ego, which is itself imagined. When the ego disappears through a constant enquiry into its nature, the illusion of pleasure and pain also disappears, and the Self alone remains.

Habits create the false notion that thinking is a permanent institution, with which it is impossible to dispense, but enquiry and discrimination will blast this fallacy. None succeeds without effort and the successful few owe their victory to perseverance.

We are so accustomed to objectivity that we have lost the knowledge of ourself simply because the Self cannot be objectified. We are the Self, yet we ask how to know the Self.

I have never said that there is no need for a guru. All depends on what you call guru. He need not be in a human form. Dattatreya had 24 gurus. The Upanishads say that none but a guru can take a man out of the jungle of intellect and sense perceptions. Did I not sing hymns to Arunachala? Guru is God or the Self. First a man prays to God to fulfill his desires. A time comes when he will no more pray for the fulfilment of material desires but for God itself. God then appears to him in some form or other, human or non-human, to guide him to Himself in answer to his prayer and according to his needs.

Meditation includes mind control, the subtle watchfulness against intruding thoughts. In the beginning, efforts for control are greater than for actual meditation, but in due course, meditation wins and becomes effortless.

Heart is the seat of *jnanam*. It is represented in the physical body by a hole smaller than the smallest pinpoint, which is always shut. When the mind drops down in *kevala-nirvikalpa* it opens, but shuts again after it. When *sahaja* is attained, it opens for good. The former is like the mental bucket under the water, which can be pulled out any moment. The latter is like the river that has linked up with the ocean from which there is no return. (*Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 82-4)

* S.S. Cohen, a qualified accountant, was a Jew, who adopted Ramanasramam as his home in 1936, and lived there till his death in 1980.

That which is not thought by the mind, but that by which the mind is made to think – know that as Brahman. – *Kenopanishad*

LIVE THE PRESENT MOMENT: Living in the present is the way to live. Each moment of the 24-hour day is a renewed invitation to live in the now. When we choose to live our lives by dwelling in the past and with our attention riveted on a future that has not yet arrived, forgetting the present, we lose the precious now that is in the moment. If we live in the now, we experience the richness of the present moment. The now helps us to arrive at our destination in the most effective way possible. Live now to the full. Begin and finish day with a prayer. The now will never let you down. – *Janina Gomes*

ACHIEVING THE SUPREME GOAL: The journey of life can be safely completed and the Supreme goal reached only if one keeps a watchful control over the senses. The body is like a chariot to which the senses are yoked like horses. The mind is like the reins, which enables the charioteer, to hold the horses, i.e., the senses, in check. The Soul rides on the chariot, and the road is the world of objects over which the senses move. If the reins are not held firmly and wisely, the senses, like vicious horses, will get out of control, and the chariot will not reach the goal, but will go round and round in births and re-births. If a person is wise and controls the mind, his senses will be like good horses driven by a good driver. – *Kathopanisad*

SRI RAMANA SHOWS THE WAY TO A DESOLATE VISITOR

M.C. Ekanatha Rao, an engineer with the Madras Government, met Sri Ramana, consequent upon death of his wife.

I bowed to Bhagavan and told him of my forlorn condition. He said nothing about it. I stayed at the Ashram for the night and had Bhagavan's *darshan* again next morning. He asked me if I had slept well and I replied in the affirmative. He then asked if I felt grief then but I said nothing. Bhagavan then explained that grief is absent during sleep and comes up only when one wakes up. That is to say, grief is experienced only along with body consciousness. As long as one identifies with the body there will be some trouble or the other. "Find out if you are the body," he

said. “Enquire *who am I?*” With this *upadesa* of Bhagavan my sorrow melted away.

‘*Talks*’ records Bhagavan’s answers to his questions:

D. Whether solitude is necessary for *vichara*.

M. There is solitude everywhere. The individual is solitary always. His business is to find out within and not seek it without.

D. Is the work-a-day world not distracting?

M. Do not allow yourself to be distracted. Enquire for whom there is distraction. It will not afflict you after some practice.

D. Even the attempt is impossible.

M. Make it and it will be found not so difficult.

D. But there is no incentive for want of encouragement.

M. Does not one find some kind of peace while in meditation? That is the sign of progress. That peace will be deeper and more prolonged with continued practice. (*Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. III)

SRI RAMANA ANSWERS QUESTIONS ON *DHYANA* AND *JNANA*

Ellappa Chettiar, a member of Madras Legislative Council, visited Sri Ramana in

in 1935 and 1936.

D. Why it is said that the knowledge born of hearing is not firm, whereas that born of contemplation is firm?

M. Hearing helps the intellectual understanding of the Truth, meditation makes the understanding clear and finally contemplation brings about realization of the Truth. There are those who affirm that hearing alone will suffice because a competent

person, who had already, perhaps in previous incarnations, qualified himself, realises and abides in peace as soon as he hears the Truth told to him only once, whereas the person not so qualified must pass through various prescribed stages before falling into *samadhi*.

D. Is it enough to introvert the mind or should we meditate on ‘I am Brahman’?

M. To introvert the mind is the prime thing. Why should one be meditating ‘I am Brahman’? Only annihilation of ‘I’ is Liberation. But it can be gained only by keeping the ‘I’ – ‘I’ always in view. So the need is for investigation of the ‘I’ thought.

D. What is reality?

M. It is not with forms and names. That which underlies these is the Reality. It underlies limitations being itself limitless. It underlies unrealities, itself being real. It transcends speech and is beyond expressions.

D. Can *jnana* be lost after being once attained?

M. The Self remains veiled by *vasanas* and reveals itself when there are no *vasanas*. Owing to the fluctuations of the *vasanas*, *jnana* takes time to steady itself. *Jnana* cannot remain unshaken side by side with *vasanas*. In the proximity of great master, the *vasanas* will cease to be active; the mind becomes still and *samadhi* results. Thus, the disciple gains true knowledge and right experience in the presence of the master. To remain unshaken in it further efforts are necessary. *Samadhi* with closed eyes is certainly good, but one must go further until it is realised that actionlessness and action are not hostile to each other. There is a state beyond our efforts or effortlessness. Until it is realised effort is necessary. After tasting such Bliss even once, one will repeatedly try to regain it... It is as difficult for a *jnani* to engage in thoughts, as it is for an *ajnani* to be free from thoughts. (*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, no. 21 and 139)

STORY OF LORD DATTATREYA

By J.P. Vaswani*

Dattatreya having many gurus was mentioned by Bhagavan more than once. The following is a brief account of his 24 gurus.

The word Datta in Sanskrit means 'given' and 'Atreya' signifies the lineage of the great sage Atri. Dattatreya was 'given' to the sage and his wife Anasuya as a gift of the gods.** According to the *Bhagavat Purana*, Dattatreya had learnt invaluable lessons and percepts from each of his 24 gurus, as follows: **1. Earth** taught him the qualities of patience, forbearance and doing good to others. **2. Water** taught him the lesson of purity. **3. Air** taught him detachment. **4. Sky** taught him the nature of all pervading Brahma which is all around us, everywhere, and yet not in contact with any object. **5. Fire:** The seeker must be like the fire which destroys all evil, and continues to shed radiance. **6. Sun:** There is only one sun, its reflections are in various forms in reservoirs, rivers and small pots. Thus, *jivatamas* are but reflections of the one *Paramatama*. **7. Moon** taught him that the Reality is unchanging, while appearances are illusory. The moon seems to wax and wane in our sight, but it is ever the same. **8. Pigeon:** A hunter spread his net and caught the young birds. When the parents returned, in profound grief they also threw themselves into the net and all of them perished at the hands of the hunter. The seeker must learn that attachment is the root cause of all bondage. **9. Python** is a gigantic creature and cannot move much to gather its food. But God sends food to this creature also. **10. Ocean** teaches the aspirant to remain calm and still, as the tides of change rise and flow all around him. **11. Moth** rushes into the flame. If a man becomes dazzled by earthly enchantments, he will meet the same end. **12. Honeybee** teaches us that the nectar of life is gathered bit by bit with great effort from various sources. **13. Elephant** teaches us to be wary of temptation and lust. Lured by the sight of the female, the elephant walks into a trap and gets caught. **14. Honey-gatherer** steals the honey stored by the bees for the future. The lesson is not to store for a future which may never come. **15. Deer** is lured and trapped through enthralling music. The enchanting music represents the sensory pleasures that the world has to offer. **16. Fish** allows itself to be hooked by swallowing the bait and then suffer a miserable death. **17. Dancing-girl** Pingala depended on wealthy customers who deserted her for some reason. Out of this grew her sense of dispassion and she turned to God. The lesson is that worldly ambitions may end up in disillusionment. **18. King-fisher** bird holding fish in its beak is chased by other stronger birds. Once he gets rid of it, the birds of prey quit following him. **19. Child** lives a carefree existence and enjoys happiness. **20. Poor maiden** was attracting unwarranted attention due to jingling of her bangles. She removed all but one on each hand, the noise abated. The lesson is that many bonds and attachments

add to the stress and clamour of life. **21. Arrow-maker's** mind, eyes and hands were all directed towards the task of forging arrows, to the extent that he took no note of the royal possession. The aspirant should practice *sadhana* with one-pointed mind. **22. Serpent** does not make home for itself and lives on its own and not in groups. An aspirant must also learn to do without possessions and attachment. **23. Spider** webs out its own saliva and sometimes gets entangled in it. Guard against getting entangled in the web of our own desires. **24. Wasp's** life cycle passes from egg, through the larva and the pupa to its final form. The lesson is not to identify with the body but to realise our final form, namely, Brahman. (Excerpted from *Mountain Path*, April-June 2009)

*Vaswani is Head of Sadhu Vaswani Mission, Pune. He first met Bhagavan in 1939. His stimulating reminiscences are in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 221-23.

**For story of Dattatreya's birth, see *Sri Ramana Jyothi*, September 2008, p.29.

GATE KEEPERS OF THE PALACE OF LIBERATION

In *Yoga Vasishtha* the great sage tells Rama that the palace of liberation has four gatekeepers, as given below, which need to be befriended.

1. Shama (serenity). It implies mastery over the senses. A serene person is like the sky, unaffected by the clouds. When you are serene, you have an objective view of situations. If you are armoured by the shield of serenity, the world's torments cannot affect you.

2. Santosh (contentment). If you are contented you have no stress. You enjoy inner peace. Just as the dust in the atmosphere settles down when there is a shower of rain, all anxious desires of the mind settle down under the shower of contentment. A contented person is not agitated by *raga* (attachment) and *dvesha* (aversion), nor dominated by ego and its expectations.

3. Satsanga (good company). It is the most potent remedy for all troubles that assail human beings. It bestows countless blessings on a person. It is a remover of obstacles, preventer of miseries to come and promoter of limitless happiness.

4. Vichar (spiritual inquiry). It literally means inquiry. It refers to spiritual reflection on the question Who am I? In its broader implication, *vichar* includes promoting purity of intellect so that one is governed by one's intellect and not mind and senses. If one uses one's intellect, one is clear about the goal one wants

to accomplish. Allow the intellect to grasp that the real 'I Am' is unchanging. The senses, mind and intellect are all variable. What is variable is not real. To understand and imbibe this is the goal of inquiry. By constant practice of *vichar* on 'Who am I?' the intellect develops a subtle quality, enabling the soul to discover, 'I am Brahman.'

The practice of these virtues requires repeated, persistent and regular effort. Use your intellect and will to promote them day by day. They will not unfold over night. One has to be patient and optimist about his success. No one can attain enlightenment without sincerely and steadfastly promoting these virtues. (Excerpts from lectures on *Yoga Vasishtha* by Swami Jyotirmayananda, *Tattavaloka*, July 2009)

'STAY WHERE YOU ARE' – SRI RAMANA'S RESPONSE TO A QUESTION

An Andhra young man approached Bhagavan and said, "Swami, I have come here because I want to perform *tapas* and don't know what would be a good place for it." Bhagavan didn't answer. He was stooping down rubbing his legs and knees, as he often did before beginning to walk, on account of rheumatism in them and was smiling quietly to himself. A moment later he took the staff that he used to steady himself in walking and, looking at the young man, said, "How can I tell you where to stay? It is best to stay where you are." And with a smile went out of the hall.

The young man was bewildered. "What is the meaning of this?" he exclaimed. Then a devotee took him out of the hall and explained, "Even when Bhagavan says something in a light vein there is always some deep meaning in it. Where the feeling 'I' arises is one's Self. *Tapas* means knowing where the Self is, and abiding there. For that, one has to know who one is; and what then does it matter, where one stays? That is what he meant." He thus pacified the young man and sent him away. (*Letters from Sri Ramanasraman* by Suri Nagamma, Sept. 10, 1947)

THE DREAM WORLD: A dreamer dreams a dream. He sees the dream world with pleasures, pains, etc. When he wakes up he loses all interest in the dream-world. Just as the dream-world ceases to interest you, so also the present world would cease to be of interest to you if you awake from this waking dream [*samsara*] and realise that it is a part of yourself, and not an objective reality.

Because you think that you are apart from the objects around you, you desire a thing. But if you understand that the thing was only a thought-form you would no longer desire it. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

THE MIND AND INTELLECT: The mind is the realm of emotions, impulses, likes and dislikes. The intellect is the rational, discriminating faculty. The intellect judges, discerns and distinguishes between pairs of opposites. Our actions can be driven by whims and fancies of the mind or by the clear counsel of the intellect. Impulse-led actions are weak; they lead to failure. Actions propelled by the intellect take one to success. Often the mind and intellect point in different directions. The mind might go for instant gratification. The intellect might prefer short-term pain for long-term gain. Whenever there is conflict between the two, it is intellect that ought to prevail. – *Jaya Row, www.vedantavision.com*

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HOTLINE TO GOD: It is said that prayer can accomplish more than any other force in the world. Prayer can heal. It can repair relationships. It can bring peace. It can change hearts. Prayer can transform. There is nothing we do or hope to do that cannot be bettered by personal prayer, which is like a hotline to God. Prayer has the power of personal experience, making the communion truly intimate...It is not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how eloquent they may be; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they be; how argumentative they may be; nor the method of our prayers, how orderly they may be, that counts. The true prayer is that which comes from the heart...Prayer reveals to us God's grace. He gives us the privilege of experiencing miracles – a new dawn, a new day with all its little moments. – *Janina Gomes*

LEARN TO ACCEPT THINGS YOU CAN'T CHANGE: We have the choice to continuously resenting whatever comes our way or equanimously accepting the same. Liberation is when we intelligently accept people and circumstances as they come. What can be set right is neither the circumstances nor the other person but our (mis) understanding. – *Deepak Ranade*

THE POWER OF ARUNACHALA

By Michael James*

In his writings Bhagavan has repeatedly confirmed the mysterious power that the thought of Arunachala has over the mind. In his Tamil *Collected Works*, under the picture of Arunachala, there is a verse that can be considered as his *dhyana sloka* (verse of contemplation) upon his *Sadguru*, Arunachala Siva. In this verse he sings, 'This is Arunachala-Siva, the ocean of grace that bestows liberation when thought of'.

In the first verse of *Aksharamanamalai* he sings, 'O Arunachala, you root out the ego of those who think of you in the heart as Arunachala'. In the 102nd verse, he sings, 'O Arunachala, the moment I thought of Arunai [the holy town of Arunachala] I was caught in the trap of your grace. Can the net of your grace ever fail?'

In the last line of the second verse of *Sri Arunachala Navamanimalai* (*The Necklet of Nine Gems*) he sings, '*Mukti Ninaikka varul Arunachalam*,' meaning, 'Arunachala, the mere thought of which bestows liberation'.

In the tenth verse of *Sri Arunachala Patikam* Bhagavan sings: I have seen a wonder, a magnetic hill that forcibly attracts the soul. Arresting the activities of the soul who thinks of it even once, drawing it to face itself, the One, making it thus motionless like itself, it feeds upon that pure and ripened soul. What a wonder is this! O souls, be saved by thinking of this great Arunagiri, which shines in the mind as the destroyer of the ego.

Bhagavan has said that Arunachala is the supreme Self that shines as 'I' in the hearts of all living beings. In other words, Arunachala is truly the non-dual reality that transcends time, space, name and form. Hence, many of the verses in *The Five Hymns to Arunachala*, being very mystic in nature, can well be interpreted as applying to the nameless and formless Self, rather than to the name and form of Arunachala. For this reason, some devotees tend to view Bhagavan's revelation about the power of Arunachala as being purely allegorical, and a few even ask, 'When Arunachala is the Self, why should we attach any particular importance to this hill'.

In order to understand the importance that Bhagavan attached to the name and form of the hill, we refer to verse four of *Ulladu Narpadu* (*The Forty Verses on Reality*) where Bhagavan says, 'If oneself is a form, the world and God will also be likewise'. That is, they will also be forms. In *Arunachala Ashtakam* he addresses Arunachala and sings, 'When I approach you, regarding you as having form, you stand here as a hill on earth'. That is, so long as we identify the body as 'I', it is equally true that this hill is God. Indeed, Bhagavan used to say that because we identify the body as 'I', Lord Siva, the Supreme Reality, out of his immense

compassion for us, identifies this hill as 'I', so that we may see him, think of him and thereby receive his grace and guidance.' 'Only to reveal your transcendent state without speech i.e. through silence, you stand as a hill shining from earth to sky,' sings Bhagavan in the last line of the second verse of the *Ashtakam*.

Being the perfect spiritual Master that he was, Bhagavan knew well how important and necessary is the form of God for the human mind, which is ever attached to forms. And from his own personal experience he knew the unique power of the form of Arunachala, a power that cannot be found in such abundance in any other form of God, namely the power to turn the mind towards Self and thereby to root out the ego.

In verse eleven of *Arunachala Patikam* Bhagavan exclaims with joy and wonder, 'Lo! How many are there like me who have been destroyed by thinking this hill to be the Supreme?' there by assuring us that if we regard this hill as God, our egos will surely be destroyed. Though Arunachala appears outwardly as a hill of mere insentient rock, the true devotee understands it to be the all-knowing, all-loving and all-powerful Supreme Lord, who is guiding him both from within and without at every step and turn of life, leading him steadily and surely towards the goal of egolessness. 'What a wonder! It stands as if an insentient hill yet its action is mysterious - impossible for anyone to understand,' sings Bhagavan in *Arunachala Ashtakam*.

The power of the name Arunachala was once directly confirmed by Sri Bhagavan. In 1948 a devotee from Bombay brought a notebook in which he had written the name 'Arunachala Siva' many thousands of times. On the last page of the notebook he wrote a prayer to the following effect, 'O Bhagavan, in the life of Sarada Devi [the wife of Sri Ramakrishna] it is written that she has said that if even an animal dies in Kasi it will attain liberation. Therefore, graciously bestow upon me the boon of death in Kasi,' and gave the notebook to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan looked through the notebook and when he came to the last page he read out loud the devotee's prayer: at once he expressed the greatest surprise and exclaimed, '*Smaranat Arunachalam*', which mean 'by remembering Arunachala'... Bhagavan explained that not everyone can die in Kasi, but anyone and everyone can think of Arunachala from wherever they may be, and thereby they will surely attain liberation.

Bhagavan encouraged devotees to have absolute faith in Arunachala, since he knew from personal experience the great power of the name and form of Arunachala. (*Mountain Path*, 1982)

* He spent more than eight years studying the original Tamil writings of Sri Ramana and Muruganar under the guidance of Sadhu Om. His book *Happiness and the Art of Being* is valuable for all those interested in understanding Bhagavan's philosophy and teachings. His website < www.happinessofbeing.com > is worth a visit.

SELF-REALISATION THROUGH AROUSING KUNDALINI: It is a high-level *tantric* technique. Kundalini could best be described as the spiritual vitality of a man or as his *shakti*. In an ordinary man she is a serpent sleeping coiled up at the base of the spine. She has to be awakened and directed up the *sushumna*, the central column along the spine. Along this there are seven *chakras* or wheels which she has to pierce on her route. Each of them has its colour, form, symbolism, and opens the way to a new mode of consciousness with its attendant powers. Highest of them is *sahasrara* or thousand-petalled lotus in the crown of the head. This is the seat of Siva and its activation is the union of Siva and Shakti. It is like blazing of a thousand suns with indescribable lightness and bliss...The awakening of the Kundalini and her direction to one after another of the stages of ascent is achieved by *sadhana* which employs breath-control, incantation [ritual recitation to produce a magical effect], and concentration on the centre to be activated and its symbolism. It is a highly technical path...What is to be stressed is that the *sushumna* and *chakras* are not physical organs nor Kundalini a physical force (although its rising has powerful physical repercussions); nor are they imaginary or metaphorical. They are very real and potent: not a part of the purely physical state of man (if there is such a thing) but a means by which to transcend it. – *Arthur Osborn (Mountain Path, April 1965)*

VISWANATHAN SWAMI'S REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA

I* had my first darshan of Bhagavan in January 1921 at Skandashram. He was then 41 and I was 17. Apart from five or six inmates of the Ashram, including Bhagavan's mother and younger brother [later *sarvadhikari* of the Ashram], there were Sivaprakasham Pillai, and a few other earnest devotees who had come for a short stay. Overwhelmed by Bhagavan's subtle Grace, I stayed on in that rare atmosphere of purity and peace for five or six days. I felt the tenderness of a mother in Bhagavan. As I took leave of him he gave me that look of Grace that bound me to his feet for ever.

Two years later, on the evening of January 2nd I returned to Bhagavan, this time with the intention of staying with him for good. I need not say so; he gave me an indication that he knew it. Next morning there was a gathering of devotees in his presence, one of whom attracted me and held my attention like a magnet – he was Ganapati Muni. He impressed me as a man of dynamic energy, with the air of a *rishi* and at the same time great gentleness. The audience listened with rapt

attention as he read out a Sanskrit poem he had composed in praise of Bhagavan, and explained its import. The poem praised Bhagavan as the embodiment of the Mother of the Universe, the *Tapas* of Brahman, manifestation of the three *Shaktis* – Uma, Lakshmi and Sarasvati.

Having been with Bhagavan and the Muni for many years I can testify to the great regard and affection shown by Bhagavan for this esteemed disciple. It was at his request that Bhagavan wrote his wonderful Sanskrit hymn of ‘Five Verses to Arunachala’ elucidating the significance of Arunachala and the paths of *karma*, *bhakti*, *yoga* and *jnana*. Whenever any one asked Bhagavan about mantra and *upasana* he would send them to the Muni, and the Muni used to direct those interested in Self-enquiry and Vedanta to Bhagavan.

Ganapathi Muni passed away at Kharagpur in July 1936, at the age of 58. Bhagavan held the telegram bringing the sad news in his hand until the evening chanting of the Vedas was finished. Only then did he say with evident emotion, “This is a shock; Nayana has passed away!” After a short pause he added, “Has he?” indicating that he has not. With tears in his eyes he exclaimed, “Where can we find the like of him.” (*Mountain Path*, April 1965)

*Viswanatha Swami (1904-79), was a scholar of Tamil and Sanskrit. He edited the *Mountain Path* for some time and authored the famous *Ramana Ashtotra*. Many of his reminiscences are contained in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of our Kendram, pp. 171-3.

DEVI – COSMIC ENERGY: Subrahmanya Bharati invokes Mahashakti – “Mind and words are powerless/ to encompass your glory/ whose extent is as immeasurable/ as that of cosmic space.” Devi is Durga and Kali in Bengal, Ambika and Bhadrakali in Gujarat, Vaishnodevi in Jammu and Kashmir, Chamundi in Karnataka, Santoshi Ma and Bhavani in Maharashtra and Kamkhya in Assam. To most of us she is just Ma, the universal mother, who is conceived as protector of those who need her protection...In seven hundred verses of the *Devi Mahatmyam*, also called *Durga Saptashati* of the *Markandeya Purana*, she is hailed as the origin of all the worlds. In first of the episodes of the *Devi Mahatmyam*, Vishnu kills the two demons, deluded by Mahamaya, Madhu and Kaitaba. In the second story, Mahishasura, the buffalo-demon with his gang of desperadoes creates havoc in heaven and drives out the gods from their abode. The Devi Chandi, created by the combined effulgence of the gods, mounted on a lion and equipped with diverse weapons, kills the buffalo-demon and his aides after a protracted and gruesome battle. In the third and final episode, the longest one, she overcomes the ferocious Shumbha and Nishumbha along with their aides, Chanda and Munda. She is therefore called Chamundi. Central to her identity is her victory

over the buffalo-demon, his annihilation and subsequent restoration of cosmic balance. It is her emergence as Mahishasuramardini, which is etched in the popular imagination and this is what is mainly celebrated during the Navaratri festival...The cosmic energy of the supreme Shakti with the power of all the gods concentrated in her, marking a shift of the power paradigm from the all-male preserve to the feminine dimension of divinity, is a unique aspect of the Hindu polytheistic [belief in more than one god] pantheon [all the gods of a religion collectively]. – *M. N. Charatterjee*

SRI RAMANA TELLS ABOUT MIND CONTROL

Leena Sarabhai who belonged to the renowned Gujarati family – Ambalal Sarabhai, visited the Ashram in 1936. The Maharshi's replies to her questions are summarized below.

The state of equanimity is the state of bliss. The state free from thoughts is the only real state. There is no such action as Realisation. It is the mind that stands between, and veils our happiness. The mind cannot kill itself. So our business is to find the real nature of the mind. When the Self is sought, the mind is nowhere. Abiding in the Self, one need not worry about the mind.

When the ego is gone, Realisation results by itself. The ego is like one's shadow thrown on the ground. If one attempts to bury it, it will be foolish. The Self is only one. If limited it is the ego. If unlimited, it is infinite and is the Reality. The bubbles are different from one another and numerous, but the ocean is only one. Similarly the egos are many, whereas the Self is one and only one. Reality is simply the loss of the ego. Destroy the ego by seeking its identity. Because the ego has no entity it will automatically vanish and Reality will shine forth by itself. This is the direct method. No *sadhanas* are necessary for engaging in this quest. The quest "Who am I?" is the axe with which to cut off the ego.

There is no greater mystery than this – namely – ourselves being the Reality we seek to gain Reality. We think that there is something hiding our Reality and that it must be destroyed before the Reality is gained. A day will dawn when you will yourself laugh at your past efforts. In *Yoga Vashishtha* it is said, "What is Real is hidden from us, but what is false is revealed as true." We are experiencing the Reality only; still we do not know it. Is it not a wonder of wonders? – *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk no. 146

SRI CHAKRA AT RAMANASRAMAM

By Krishan Bhikshu*

In the sanctum sanctorum of the Matrubhuteswara Temple at Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, in a small niche in the western wall, stands an object of worship. It is two feet square, cut out of a single piece of granite, resting on a base of gold plate on which is etched a particular symbolical geometric figure. This was installed by Bhagavan himself in 1949.

All the geometrical figures used in the *chakra* are variants of circles and triangles. A *bindu* surrounded by a triangle in a circle can represent the entire creation; but all the manifestations of power have to figure in the completed *yantra*, as can be seen when one looks at the figure carved on the stone in the temple.

Tantric sadhana proceeds by concentration of a form. This is usually a geometrical figure called a *yantra*. The *sadhana* involves the utterance of mantras and the use of the requisite *dravyas* or supports at the right moment and in the right manner. It can only be validly performed by one who has been initiated into it by a guru. The *tantras* declare that the *devata* or god worshipped, the *yantra* or symbol used, the mantra or words uttered, and the *mantri* or worshipper are all one and the same; and therefore the purpose of this worship is to rise from the state of creature to the state of Creator.

Bhagavan was present at the installation of the Sri Chakra, and took great interest in its *pratishthapana*, personally adding some details to the forms on the *chakra*. The explanation of this unusual show of interest by Bhagavan is probably found in the necessity for the Shakti always to accompany Siva. It is not enough to have Siva alone.

Bhagavan supervised the entire construction of the Matrubhuteswara Temple. He inspected every stone of the temple carefully during its construction and told the workmen to eliminate every defect. It is through his grace that the Temple is now *Rishi-pratishthapita*, radiating his Light, which is the Light of the Mother. Its very name signifies that it is Ishwara (God) who has become the Mother, pointing to the identity between Ishwara and Mother or between Siva and Shakti. Thus the *advaitic* doctrine of identity is not negated by this act of Bhagavan but, on the

contrary, reinforced so as to be available for those who require a more ritualistic path.

Major Chadwick says, “I was instrumental after Bhagavan’s passing in persuading the Ashram authorities to start the *Sri Chakra Pujas* six times a month. On the only occasion when such a *puja* was performed in Bhagavan’s life-time he refused to go to his evening meal at the usual time but insisted on staying to watch it to the very end.” When Chadwick remarked how magnificent it had been and what a good thing it would be if such *pujas* could be performed regularly, Bhagavan replied, “Yes, but who will see to this?” (*Mountain Path*, April 1965)

*A law graduate, authored *Ramana Leela*, an authoritative biography of Sri Ramana and *Ramana Yoga Sutras*, which contains teachings of the Maharshi. His reminiscences of the Maharshi are in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp.178-82.

SRI RAMANA CURES A DEVOTEE OF A SERIOUS AILMENT

Firoza Taleyarkhan (1898-1984), who has recorded the following incident, was born in Hyderabad. Her father was in the service of the Nizam. She belonged to an affluent Parsi family of Bombay, and had spiritual inclination since her childhood.

In 1947, I was having pain in my abdomen which did not respond to the homoeopathic remedies administered by my friend S.S. Cohen [an established devotee of Bhagavan, who also lived in Tiruvannamalai] So, with Bhagavan’s permission, I went to Bangalore for treatment. At the hospital, x-ray diagnosis revealed a big lump on the left side. The doctors decided to perform an operation for the removal of this growth.

Around that time a letter from Shri Rajaji*, then Governor-General, was redirected to me from Tiruvannamalai to Bangalore. In my reply I informed him of my condition. So kind and solicitous of my welfare was Shri Rajaji that even when he occupied the highest position in India, he found time to write to the doctors in charge to bestow close attention on me. The letter came to the notice of the Dewan of Mysore, Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, who decided to visit me in the hospital. These factors made the doctors evince deep interest in my case. I was alone; none of my relatives were at my bedside. The operation would be the eighth of a series of operations I had undergone in my life. But the doctors encouraged me and made me feel quite at home in the hospital.

Suspecting that I might have to undergo this operation, I wrote to Bhagavan, praying to him to grant that I might close my eyes in peace [die] rather than undergo this eighth operation. When this letter reached Bhagavan and was read out to him, he made kind mention of me to the people present in the hall. Following Bhagavan's directions, a letter was written to me asking me to come back to Tiruvannamalai, assuring me that things would be all right.

The Dewan and the doctors all assured me that the operation that was scheduled to take place within the next two days would relieve me of my pain, and that I would go back fit and healthy. I told them that I had decided against the operation, and then showed them the photo of Bhagavan which was on my table near the bed. He, I said, was my doctor and in accordance with his instructions, I would be returning to Tiruvannamalai without undergoing the operation. Dear reader, believe me that I, who for ten days earlier, could not retain any food, that day enjoyed toast and scrambled eggs without pain or discomfort. That evening I attended a cinema show with the matron of the hospital.

When I approached the chief surgeon to take leave of him, he was pretty incredulous. He again had x-ray photos taken of me, but to his utter astonishment they did not show the growth where it had been previously located. Assuring the doctors that I would place myself at their disposal for treatment in case of the recurrence of the trouble, I returned to the Ashram. Bhagavan's gracious smile on the day I returned to the Ashram is still a priceless treasure in my memory. Nearly two decades have passed since then, and I have not had any recurrence of this particular trouble so far. Miraculous cures like mine by Bhagavan, may I say in all humility, were not uncommon. (*Sages, Saints and Arunachala Ramana* by Bhagavan Priya Ma F. Taleyarkhan, Orient Longman, 1970. A large part of the book has been reproduced by David Godman in his [blog www.davidgodman.org](http://www.davidgodman.org))

*Mrs. Taleyarkhan was close to Rajaji (C. Rajagopalachari, Governor-General of India). When she got Patala Linga (where Bhagavan had sat for performing austerities), renovated she got him to perform the opening ceremony on May 14, 1949. Some of her reminiscences are contained in *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, pp. 364-6.

WHO IS A BRAHMIN?

According to Sri Ramana Maharshi, one does not become a Brahmin merely by the comprehensive mastery of chanting the four Vedas so long as one continues to perceive objects as separate from oneself. Only those who, as

enquirers, have realised their true nature shining within their hearts, are Brahmins, possessors of *jnana*...A Brahmin is one who has a heart that possesses the true *jnana* experience and cool compassion in his mind. – *Guru Vachaka Kovai* by David Godman

THE MOUNTAIN PATH

Quotes from the message of M. Bhaktavatsalam, Chief Minister of Madras, published in the first issue of the journal, April 1964.

“The Mountain Arunachala is the *achala tattawa*, commonly known as *nischala tattwa*, upon which, as the screen, runs the entire panorama of manifestation. Seeing the pictures, forgetting the screen, he who sees is in delusion. With the realisation that the screen alone IS, comes the Peace of Being, born out of the understanding of Truth. This realisation that the *nischala tattwa* alone is the ever present Present, is screened off by *avidya* (ignorance). This *avidya*, the knot between *chit* and *achit*, is cut asunder by the *smruthi* (recollection of the highest), also known as *druva smruthi*. The *smruthi* (remembrance) is Arunachala-*smruthi*, which made the boy Venkataraman into Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, who blessed us, all with his benign Presence for 50 years from Tiruvannamalai.”

“In his pure Transcendental Existence, he imparted to us the import of *nija mouna bhava* of Lord Dakshinamurthi. He was a living commentary on the Upanishadic Truth and with his plenary [unqualified, absolute] experience, he attracted the elite of all religions and creeds to him to confirm to them that in realisation of That, as it is, is the fulfillment of all religions and philosophies.”

Of all means of liberation, knowledge (through *vichar* about the Self) is the only direct one – as essential as fire to cooking; without it liberation cannot be gained. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

The past and future both reside in our mind. Only awareness of the present moment is real. – *Anonymous*

When the heart weeps for what it has lost, the soul laughs for what it has found. – *Sufi aphorism*

