

SRI RAMANA JYOTHI

January to December –2008

January - 2008

If I have made one human being happier, one creature more comfortable, one heart more hopeful, my day has not been wasted. – J.P. Vaswani

The supreme tragedy occurs when theory outstrips performance. – Leonardo Da Vinci

If only you will remain resting in consciousness, seeing your self as distinct from the body, then even now you will become happy, peaceful, and free from bonds. – Ashtavakra Gita

Service before self is the highest value of life. – Mahatma Gandhi

The mountain remains unmoved at seeming defeat by the mist. – Rabindranath Tagore

You are unconditioned, changeless, formless, immovable, unfathomable awareness, imperturbable: so hold to nothing but consciousness. – Ashtavakra Gita

The day one is able to see oneself with his inner eye as not the body, all his desires vanish, and he experiences perfect peace. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

THE SUPREME ENERGY: In feminine form it is manifested in three forms, namely, Maha Saraswati, Maha Lakshmi and Maha Kali. Their male counter parts are Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. They, respectively, represent three important facets of life, namely, Creation, Conservation and Annihilation. – *Anonymous*

HAVING ‘NO-MIND’: Beyond soul there is something known as *anantta*. It is utter emptiness. The Buddha calls it *sunya* or void. It is pure space, it contains nothing but itself; it is contentless consciousness. The mind contains memories, thoughts, desires, and a thousand and one things. All that is its food. Since long, there has been a search for a kind of food that will not strengthen the mind but will help it to finally dissolve; a kind of food which, instead of strengthening the mind, will strengthen meditation, no-mind...Talk less, listen only to the essential, be telegraphic in talking and listening. If you talk less, if you listen less, slowly you will see that a feeling of purity will start rising within you. That becomes the necessary soil for meditation. Don't go on reading or viewing all kinds of nonsense. Leave a few gaps in your mind

unoccupied. Those moments of unoccupied consciousness are the first glimpses of meditation, the first flashes of 'no-mind'. – www.osho.com

BECOME 'AWARE' TO ERADICATE EGO: The ego is like darkness; it has no positive existence. Like darkness which is simply the absence of light, the ego is nothing but the absence of awareness. To struggle to get rid of ego is like struggling to push the darkness out of a room. To expel darkness, what one needs to do is to forget all about dealing with the darkness, and focus energy on light instead. Just bring a small lamp into the room, and you will find that the darkness has fled of its own. So forget all about ego. Instead, focus on bringing a lamp of awareness into your being. What you have heard, read, been taught – 'Surrender the ego in order to attain Self-realisation' – this is unworkable. It can happen only the other way round. Self-realisation dawns and suddenly you cannot find the ego anymore... The ego is root cause of all your anxieties, sorrows, and tensions. To actively feel that you want to drop the ego, to feel the need to be rid of this burden is itself a step towards awareness. It shows that you are stirring from your sleep. – *Pramahansa Sri Nithyananda*

TAKE REFUGE WITHIN: When the Buddha was about to die, the teaching which he gave to his disciples was: There is a beautiful island within you, that you may take refuge every time you suffer. The island within you is for you to discover. It's a safe place where you can feel calm, you are not disturbed, and you feel happy and protected. For this you have to close the five windows, and should not be in touch with the outside world. The expression that the Buddha used was: *dmpa atta dmpa sarana*. *Atta* means self, *dmpa* means island, and *sarana* means refuge – take refuge in the island of self. – *Thich Nhat Hanh*

SRI RAMANA PRAYS TO ARUNACHALA TO SAVE MOTHER ALAGAMMAL

In 1914, Sri Ramana's mother paid a brief visit to him at the hill. At that time she suffered from a severe attack of fever making her delirious. While her life was in danger, the Maharshi composed a poem, excerpts from which are produced below.

O Sovereign medicine, in the form of a hill to cure the malady of births coming up like endless waves, your lotus feet alone are my refuge. To cure my mother's suffering is your duty. My sole refuge! Vouchsafe Thy grace into my mother and

shield her from Death. Arunachala, why you delay to dispel my mother's delirium. Besides you, is there anyone who with maternal solitude can protect the humble soul and ward off the strokes of destiny?

This seems to be the only instance when Sri Ramana Maharshi asked for a tangible favour from his father Arunachala. Needless to say, the mother recovered.

(Source: *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi* and *The Ramana Way*, Nov. 2007)

SADHU OM – A TURE DEVOTEE OF SRI RAMANA

The following is from a talk by Prof. K. Swaminathan at a meeting held on May 5, 1985, at Shri Ramana Kendra, Delhi, to honour the memory of Sadhu Om who had shed his mortal body on March 17, 1985, at the age of 63.

Sadhu Om was a great scholar, poet and composer, besides being an authoritative exponent of Sri Ramana's philosophy. He was closely associated with great poet Muruganar from 1945 and had immersed himself fully in the divine sweetness of Muruganar's poetic outpourings and was responsible for copying and preserving most of his verses. Sadhu Om's natural poetic gifts were fully enhanced by his intimate association with both Sri Bhagavan and Muruganar, and thus in accordance with the Tamil saying, 'The legs of a snake are known only to a snake', he was able to understand clearly the sublimity, sweetness and divinity of Muruganar's poetry. It was for this reason Muruganar had emphatically stated, "If any of my verses are to be printed at any time by anyone, they should be published only if Sadhu Om is entrusted with editing them and with seeing that they are printed without errors." When the third edition of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* and the second edition of *Guru Vachaka Kovai* were published by Sri Ramanasramam they were edited and proof-corrected by Sadhu Om.

A prolific writer, Sadhu Om was also a master of music and his lyrics freely lend themselves to be set to music. No wonder his countless songs on Sri Bhagavan are so immensely popular.

Till his last days Sadhu Om was living a very busy and active life, doing *giri pradakshina* with ritualistic regularity. His published works include the profound and comprehensive treatise *The Path of Sri Ramana* (in both English and Tamil) together with other books in Tamil such as *Sadhanai Saram*, *Sri Ramana Gitam* and his commentaries upon *Upadesa Undiyar* and *Guru Vachaka Kovai*.

The following entry dated August 11, 1946, regarding Sadhu Om appears in *Day by Day with Bhagavan*.

This morning, the young man Natarajan of Tanjore arrived. He brought from Janaki Ammal [a well-known devotee of Bhagavan] a walking stick with a silver knob and a pair of wooden slippers with silver gilt for Bhagavan. Bhagavan said, “I shall touch them and give them back. Let her have them in her Puja”. So saying, he inspected them and gave them back...It seems one morning during his last visit he came into the dining hall late for his lunch. All except Bhagavan had risen. It seems then Bhagavan also rose and came and stood by N’s side and when he tried to get up Bhagavan told him in Tamil ‘attend to your business for which you have come’ and walked on. N now read out before Bhagavan his Tamil poem which he had not read out on his previous visit.

Michael James, a well-known exponent of Sri Bhagavan’s philosophy wrote the following in the *Mountain Path* of July 1985. James maintains a website < www.happinessofbeing.com > dedicated to exploring in depth the philosophy and practice of the spiritual teaching of Sri Bhagavan. His e-mail is < [michael @ happinessofbeing.com](mailto:michael@happinessofbeing.com) >

When God incarnates Himself on the earth, He does not come alone. He brings with Him highly mature souls, in answer to whose prayers He gives his true teachings to the world, both through words and example. Among such rare, exemplary and pure devotees, whom Sri Ramana Bhagavan, the *Lok Maha Guru*, brought with him to the world is surely to be counted Swami Sri Sadhu Om.

Though he was one of the foremost devotees of Sri Bhagavan, during his life-time Sadhu Om remained little known to the world, except perhaps to a small circle of sincere Ramana *bhaktas*. A man of many gifts and talent – indeed a versatile genius – he nevertheless chose to live and pass away from the world without a least stain of name and fame. To say that he was a poet of surpassing excellence, a talented musician, a melodious and sweet-voiced singer, a lucid prose writer, a brilliant philosopher, a faithful exponent of Sri Bhagavan’s teachings, a man of deep, one-pointed devotion, clear spiritual insight and perfect humility, is to describe but a few of his many gifts and virtues. But none of these qualities, ever deterred him in the least from whole-heartedly following the principal precept taught and exemplified by Bhagavan, namely, that one should give no importance to one’s own individual entity, and should completely erase the ego.

APPRECIATE OTHERS AND GET BENEFITED IN THE PROCESS: We all need love and being appreciated. When we do something for somebody, or say something kind to somebody and they respond with appreciation – it makes you feel good. But how often have you have done something for someone and got no appreciation in return? When that happens you probably don't feel very good and you may even avoid that person in the future. If somebody doesn't respond kindly move on...When you appreciate others, you send out positive energy that comes back to you many fold. If you don't believe try it and see how things go. We all need little acts of kindness. We all benefit from these little acts of kindness. (From Internet)

RAMANACHALAM REMEMBERS SRI RAMANA

The following is based on a recorded video interview taped at Sri Ramanasramam.

their nocturnal escapades [daring adventures done at night]. After sneaking out in the dead of the night the boys would go to river bank and My father M.S. Venkataraman of Madurai was a few years younger to Bhagavan. He and Bhagavan lived in the same house which was situated close to the Vaigai river. He would join Ramana and his friends in practice '*chilambam*' (a martial art using long bamboo poles).

Once, when my father returned late at night, my grandfather caught him, tied him to a tree in front of the house and caned him. Sri Ramana was watching this. Later, when my father heard about the young Brahmana Swami dwelling in Virupaksha Cave at Arunachala he paid a visit to him out of curiosity. But the moment he stepped into Bhagavan's presence he began to shed copious tears. To his amazement he found that there was nothing there of the former Venkataraman, his playmate. When he was about to leave, Brahmana Swami asked him in a subdued tone, "Is that tree still there in front of your house?"

From then on, my father who was working in the District Board Office used to rush to Tiruvannamalai whenever he felt like visiting Bhagavan. At times, he would be accompanied by my mother. At Skandashram, Mother Alagammal, who was very fond of my mother, taught her many songs pregnant with deep spiritual meaning. Later when my mother sang the songs in front of Bhagavan, he would remark, "Oh! Did Mother teach you all these songs?" I remember visiting the Ashram when I was just five. I had high fever and was sleeping near the door of Bhagavan's hall. I felt delirious. Bhagavan would now and then lift his head from the sofa and tell me to go

to sleep. Once, while leaving Bhagavan a deep sorrow suddenly over took me and I began to cry. I refused to go with my mother, telling her that I wanted to stay with Bhagavan always. Bhagavan, who was going that way, stopped and told me gently, “Go with your mother now and come back when you are 21 years old.”

My father died in 1939 when I was just 17. After few months my mother took us for Bhagavan’s *darshan*. When she prostrated she began to shed tears. As it was the custom in those days, my mother was not wearing any jewellery, she had her head shaved and covered it with her sari. She was wondering whether Bhagavan would recognize her in this attire. She asked, “Bhagavan do you recognize me?” He smiled and said, “Why not? Only the makeup has changed (*veshamdhan maari irukku*).”

When I was twenty-one I got posted as a clerk with the Inspector of Schools at Polur. I could go Tiruvannamalai on Sundays and holidays and sit at his feet. Once I took his permission to go to the summit of the hill. There I scrapped some Kartikai Deepam residue soot from a rock and put it on a leaf. I wanted to present it to Bhagavan. When I came down Chinnaswami called and shouted, “Where were you? Bhagavan is waiting for you? Go and join him for the lunch?” After lunch, I approached him when the attendant Krishnaswami was not there, for he would never allow anyone to approach Bhagavan easily. I took out the Deepam ghee which I had collected from the summit and offered it to him. He pulled my hand closer and took the offered *prasada*, and with great reverence applied it on his forehead and asked me, “Are you satisfied now?” At times my mother used to help Bhagavan in the kitchen. One day she was helping him in grinding. While turning the grinding stone Bhagavan’s head butted against my mother’s head. Immediately Bhagavan rubbed his head and exclaimed, “Ah! Parvatham, it is paining?” I used to read religious books. Once I read a book which explained Dakshinamurti’s *chinmudra*. Wonder of wonders, when I entered Bhagavan’s hall on the weekend he was explaining *chinmudra*. The purport of his talk was: “It is just like when you point to God above with your index finger. We then generally point to ourselves using our thumb. Joining of the index finger and thumb is *chinmudra*, symbolically indicative of ‘That thou art’ (*tatvamsi*), the union of *jivatma* and *Paramatma*.”

Once, my two younger brothers came for Bhagavan’s *darshan* from Madurai along with my mother. Bhagavan asked me where they were living. I replied that we were living in the lane adjacent to the Central Theatre. Bhagavan could not remember it, so

I named the lane and immediately Bhagavan said, “Oh! In that dirty lane.” Bhagavan used a colloquial term by which that lane was known.

I got married in 1949 and came with my wife to the Ashram in March 1950. Bhagavan was in the Nirvana Room. Chinnaswami kindly permitted me and my wife to have Bhagavan’s *darshan* in that room. As soon as I prostrated Bhagavan talked to my wife Malayalam. How he knew that she was from Kerala is still a wonder to me. (Source: *The Maharshi*, Nov.-Dec., 2007)

HAPPINESS IS OUR ESSENTIAL BEING

By Michael James

The author came to know about teachings of Sri Ramana in 1976, while travelling around India ‘in search of something that would give a meaning and purpose to life’. He decided to visit Tiruvannamalai and ended up living there for the next twenty years. He was charmed by Sadhu Om, whom he accepted as his guru and served him for eight and a half years till the Sadhu’s *nirvana* in March 1985. An article on Sadhu Om appears elsewhere in this issue.

Happiness lies deep within us, in the very core of our being. Happiness does not exist in any external object, but only in us. Though we seem to derive happiness from external objects or experiences, the happiness that we thus enjoy in fact arises from within us.

Whatever turmoil our mind may be in, in the centre of our being there always exists a state of perfect peace and joy, like the calm in the eye of a storm. Desire and fear agitate our mind, and obscure from its vision the happiness that always exists within it. When a desire is satisfied, or the cause of a fear is removed, the surface agitation of our mind subsides, and in that temporary calm our mind enjoys a taste of its own innate happiness.

Happiness is thus a state of being – a state in which our mind's habitual agitation is calmed. The activity of our mind disturbs it from its calm state of just being, and causes it to lose sight of its own innermost happiness. To enjoy happiness, therefore, all our mind need do is to cease all activity, returning calmly to its natural state of inactive being, as it does in deep sleep.

True happiness of being is also described as ‘the peace of God, which passeth all

understanding', because it is experienced in full only in the perfectly peaceful state of just being, which is the state in which all mental activity has subsided in the clarity of unobstructed self-consciousness. Since it can be experienced perfectly only in the state in which we are conscious merely of our own essential being and not of any thoughts or objects, true happiness or peace is beyond all mental comprehension.

The degree of happiness that we experience at any moment is directly proportionate to the degree of clarity with which we are then conscious of our true and essential being. Therefore happiness is not only our essential being, but is also the consciousness of our being. In fact, since we are the consciousness that experiences our own being as 'I am', we are both being and consciousness.

So long as the mind is extroverted, attending to anything other than our own essential being, we can never experience perfect, permanent and unqualified happiness. In order to experience such true self-knowledge, we must withdraw our attention from everything other than ourselves, and focus it wholly and exclusively upon our own essential being.

Until and unless we attend to our innermost self in this manner, we cannot know who or what we really are, and unless we thereby experience a clear and certain knowledge of what we really are, we cannot be certain about the reality or validity of any knowledge that we may appear to have about other things. All our knowledge about the world and God – about science, religion, philosophy, physics, cosmology, psychology, theology or any other branch of human knowledge – is open to serious doubt so long as the knowledge about ourselves – the consciousness by which all those other things are known – is confused and uncertain. This, in brief, is the simple but profound truth revealed by Bhagavan Sri Ramana. (Excerpts from www.happinessofbeing.com)

THE MIND: The mind is a bundle of thoughts. The thoughts arise because there is the thinker. The thinker is the ego. The ego and the mind are the same. The ego is the root-thought from which all other thoughts arise. The ego, if sought, will automatically vanish. It is foolish to attempt to kill the mind by means of the mind. The only way to annihilate the mind is to find its source through intense and continuous probe through meditating on the question Who am I? The mind will then fade away of its own accord. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

BRAHMA'S FIFTH HEAD AND THE ORIGIN OF YOGA

Lord Siva took a good look at the world created by Brahma: it was terrible...he saw pain and suffering, death and disease; he saw frustrations, unhappiness and misery. He saw pettiness, viciousness and cruelty...and had an occasional glimpse of pleasure that beguiled all creatures into going through one life before moving on to the next. "What have you done, Brahma!" Siva cried, tormented by the plight of the living. "You haven't created a world, you have created a tantalizing mirage, *maya*, that snares man into eternity of aspiration and frustration." Brahma was in no mood to listen. Instead he sprouted four heads to survey all sides of his creation. He was quiet proud of it, so proud in fact that he popped a fifth head to accommodate his pride.

The sight of an uncaring creator, the pompous five headed Brahma, infuriated Siva. He became Bhairava, the furious one. With his sharp claws he attacked Brahma and wrenched out his fifth head. "Brahma, you have created this world filled with misery. You are unworthy of reverence. You shall never be worshipped. Few will bother to build temples for you. And so it is, that the cosmic creator is not worshipped except at two shrines: Pushkar and Kumbakonam.

Brahma said, "I just created the world, not the misery. The world is neither beautiful nor ugly; neither joyful nor sorrowful; neither right nor wrong. It just is! The rest are just perceptions of the mind..." Siva interrupted, "But you created the mind too." Brahma's response was, "The mind can be deluded by perceptions or it can be enlightened by the truth. Whose choice is it? Whose choice? Who controls the mind?" Siva went to Kashi and brooded over the questions that plagued his mind. He sought a way to control his mind, make it see the truth, beyond the veils of illusions. Finally, he found the way. It was **yoga**: the means to yoke the individual's mind to the way of the cosmos. All who felt frustrations of life and sought a release rushed to learn the secret from Siva. Under a great banyan tree, seated on a tiger skin, facing the south, *dakshin*, Siva revealed it all. He charged no fee, *dakshina*, and so his students called this great cosmic teacher **Dakshinamurthi**.

"Know this," he said to his students, "there are two realities of existence, both external, both distinct. One is the *purusha*, the serene cosmic spirit that stands still, beyond the reach of time and space. Then there is *prakriti*, matter, the cosmic substance, always in a state of flux. What is born and reborn, what feels the pain and the pleasure is not the *purusha*, it is your body and your mind, your *prakriti*."

"You cannot escape the material world as you are enchanted by the eternal transformations of *prakriti*. It makes you act, react. You do not see its true nature. You have lost touch with your *purusha*."

“Yoga helps you to see the world for what it is, clearly, wisely, dispassionately, uncoloured by opinions, emotions and perceptions. It raises your level of consciousness and gives you a more panoramic perspective. It gets rid of all delusion, ignorance, attachments and fear, *kleshas*, that trap you within relative truths. Having done that, yoga stills the mind. It makes you serene, aware, and undisturbed by the turbulence of the world around.”

“Only then you will transcend joys and sorrows, attractions and rejections, birth and death. Only then you will move towards perfect bliss, *kaivalya*, and find *mukti*, liberation from the cycle of life.” (Source: *Shiva – An Introduction* by Devdutt Pattanaik)

TIRTHAS: The word *tirtha* is derived from the root *tri*, which means ‘to cross over’. The *Mahabharata* says: “Just as certain parts of the body are called pure, so are certain parts of the earth and certain waters called holy.” These parts of the earth are called *tirthas*. A *tirtha* is a ford, a crossing and a passageway by visiting which one could be freed of sins. The metaphor of a ford or a bridge acts as a linking function. The bridge is not a stable habitat, you are not expected to stay or stand on it for long periods... A *tirtha* is not only *mokshada* or bestower of liberation; it is also *sukhda* or bestower of happiness. The various *tirthas* in India are spread out geographically, forming *mahapradakshina*, the great circumambulation of the entire country. *Tirthas*, therefore, yield not just spiritual gains, they help individuals familiarize themselves with the geographical vastness, cultural diversity and unity of the country. – *Ashok Vohra*

ULLADU NARPADU (SAT DARSANA) OF SRI RAMANA – VERSE 39: Even though we may act as if we are one with Brahma, Vishnu or Siva, whose respective functions are to create, sustain and dissolve this world-illusion, we should never act as if we are one with *guru*, whose function is to destroy our self-ignorance, which is the root cause of our primal illusion that we are this object-knowing consciousness that we call our 'mind', because even though our mind may have the power to create, sustain or dissolve an entire world (as it does in dream), it does not have the power to destroy its own self-ignorance, without which it cannot exist. Moreover, *advaita* can never truly be practised in action, because it is an action-free state of being. Action is possible only in a state of duality, because we can do action only when we mistake ourself to be a body or mind, which are the instruments through which we seem to do action.

(www.happinessofbeing.blogspot.com)

FEBRUARY - 2008

SWAMI RAMANANANDA'S REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Swami Ramanananda Saraswati, earlier T.N. Venkataraman (1914- 2007) was president of Sri Ramanashramam for forty years. The following is based on his reminiscences obtained from the current president of the Ashram at Tiruvannamalai.

My birth had the blessings of Bhagavan. When Bhagavan's mother (my grandmother) Alagammal came to the hill in 1913 along with my mother Mangalam, she told Bhagavan that Nagaswami (Bhagavan's elder brother) had died without a issue, Alamelu (his younger sister) also had no children and his younger brother Nagasundaram's wife, that is my mother, had lost two children in their childhood. She prayed that my mother be blessed with a male child so that the family line might continue. Bhagavan smiled graciously and she took this as his blessing. I was born a year later and everyone was sure that it was due to Bhagavan's grace.

My mother Mangalam passed away when I was not yet three and my father Nagasundaram, who later became Swami Niranjanananda, and was called Chinnaswamy at the Ashram, left me at the house of my aunt Alamelu (Bhagavan's sister) and her husband Pinchu Iyer at Kunrakudi and went away. They brought me up with great love.

My aunt and uncle, who had taken the responsibility of my upbringing would go to Tiruvannamalai at least once a year along with me, stay in the town and visit Skandashram for Bhagavan's *darshan*. I vividly remember some incidents which I saw as a boy of four and five.

I was blessed with first *upadesam* of Bhagavan when I was five years old: In 1920 at Skandashram a plate of fruit and sweets had been put aside for the monkey called 'Nondy'. But when nobody was looking I went near the plate, took a sweet and put it in my mouth. All of a sudden the monkey appeared, limped towards me, slapped me and grabbed the plate. My grandmother pleaded with Nondy not to harm me. Then Bhagavan appeared on the scene and said, "This is a lesson for you; now understand that we should not desire things which belong to others." I fully understood the profound meaning of this *upadesam* long afterwards when I was president of the Ashram.

With the exception of saffron-robed grandma Alagammal, no other woman could stay at night at Skandashram. So my aunt and uncle would return to the town in the evening, taking me along with them. As they had to carry me in their arms, on some

days, they would leave me at Skandashram. On those days Bhagavan would put me to bed by his side and see that I slept comfortably. In the morning he would brush my teeth and bathe me. He would sit outside on the stone couch and ask me to sit beside him. He would say, “What are the pranks that you play back home?” When aunt and uncle would come up the hill from the town, he would point his finger at them and tell me “See there, your aunt is coming” and would get up, saying with a laugh, “Now you are her responsibility, it’s between her and you.” On days when the aunt was late in coming he would ask Perumalswamy, his faithful devotee, who later turned against the Ashram, to take care of me.

My aunt and uncle and I were staying at a devotee’s house in Tiruvannamalai. At night, my uncle and I would sleep outside on the veranda. One early morning, before dawn, Karuppan, the Ashram dog, which would on some days accompany us to the town, barked softly by my side waking me up alone. Then he ran a little distance, stopped and looked back. I thought he wanted me to follow him, which I did. We reached the hill and then climbed on till we reached Skandashram. Bhagavan, who was surprised to see me, called Kunju Swamy and asked him to go down to the town and inform my aunt and uncle that I was safe on the hill at the Ashram.

In May 1922, when my grandmother was on her death bed, she wanted to see me, her only grandchild. I was seven then. A telegram was sent to my uncle at Kunrakudi. We arrived only the day after the mother had left the body which, by then, had been carried down the hill to be buried near Pali Teertham. We went there straight from Tiruvannamalai Railway Station as arranged by Bhagavan. Bhagavan’s devotees wished that I should perform the final obsequies and lay the Samadhi. It fell to my lucky lot to lay to rest the blessed mother who gave birth to such a great *jnani*.

Seshadri Swamigal, a great contemporary of Bhagavan left his body on January 14, 1929. He was interred the same day and a Samadhi was laid on the spot adjacent to the Ashram complex. Bhagavan attended the ceremony taking me along with him. I was 15 years old then and felt thrilled to participate in the rites of passing away of a very great soul. In the month of May of the same year I was married to Nagalakshmi, affectionately called Nagu, who was 13, two years younger than me. The marriage was blessed by Bhagavan.

Here I cannot help but refer to the first upadesa of Bhagavan to newly married Nagu which set the tone for her entire life. Soon after our marriage, aunt Alamelu and uncle Pichu Iyer took Nagu to Bhagavan for his blessings. When she came out of the old hall after Bhagavan’s *darshan*, she saw a young woman (Mangalam), who had come from Madras with her parents. Nagu was impressed by the *saree* worn by that young lady, and told her “How beautiful is your *saree*!” Mangalam later mentioned this to her father, who on returning to Madras, purchased two similar *sarees* and sent them to the Ashram with a request that the packet be given to Nagu.

All letters addressed to the Ashram were invariably placed before Bhagavan and so was this packet and the covering letter. Next day, when Bhagavan saw Nagu at the Ashram kitchen, he said, “Nagu, when you see someone wearing nice ornaments or a nice saree, you should think that you are wearing them.” Nagu, with her eyes moist and voice tremulous, said, “Bhagavan, I did not ask for the *saree*, I only said that the *saree* was beautiful.” But Bhagavan repeated his *upadesa* and moved on. From that day onward till her last moment 55 years later, Nagu never asked for anything from anybody. She found contentment to be the best of riches, thanks to Bhagavan’s gracious *upadesa*.

It was Sri Bhagavan who named every one of my three sons and four daughters. He would choose an apt name and explained the reason for the choice.

Sometime in 1944, Bhagavan broke his collarbone when he fell down trying to save a squirrel chased by a dog. The doctor put a bandage round his arm. The next day when I went to the Ashram with my children, my third son Mani prostrated before Bhagavan. He noticed the bandage and started giving vent to his annoyance with Bhagavan’s attendants: “Devotees walk behind Bhagavan, what were they doing? Ought they not to see that Bhagavan does not fall down?” On hearing this Bhagavan put his right index finger on his lips and exclaimed, “*Mani manippayal thaan. Manimaniyaa pesaraane!*” (Mani is real smart. He talks so well!)

A week before the *mahanirvana*, the cancerous growth near Bhagavan’s left elbow had swollen to a big size and had a bandage around it. A number of doctors and many important people were in the Nirvana Room. Aunt Alamelu took my last child Saraswati, barely 11 months old, near Bhagavan. The child started prattling ‘inga, inga’ unusually loudly. Alamelu took the child far from Bhagavan but her prattle was audible to Bhagavan. Those were the days when the smallest movement of any part of the body would entail excruciating pain for Bhagavan. But he turned his face in all directions and said, “I hear the voice of ‘inga’ baby. Is she here? Poor child if she raises her voice, she is carried far away!” Some one ran to Aunt Alamelu who brought the child to Bhagavan, who looked at her with compassion saying ‘inga’. The child shouted ‘inga’ and Bhagavan’s face was wreathed in smiles.

I worked with the Bank of Chettinad from 1932 to 1937. My flair for accountancy was acknowledged and appreciated. In 1938, I finally moved to Tiruvannamalai with my family and started performing Ashram duties assigned by my father who was the *sarvadikari*. Upon arrival at the Ashram I was in a dilemma. I was a householder, the family consisting of myself, Nagu, two sons, Aunt Alamelu and Uncle Pichu Iyer. My father was fiercely strict and would not permit a family to live within the Ashram. I sent a family friend to the Ashram to obtain Bhagavan’s approval in the matter, who was told by Bhagavan, “Venkitoo is a family man. So what? The needs of the family

can be met by the Ashram.” This solved the problem. I would go there in the morning and return after dusk to our family home outside the Ashram.

Perumalswamy had served Bhagavan when he was on the hill and would play with me when I was a boy. He later turned against the Ashram and gave us much trouble, including involving the Ashram in litigation. When he fell sick in 1945 and was evicted from his place, he moved to a hut in Seshadri Swamy ashram, adjacent to the Ashram. I took pity on him and with Bhagavan’s blessings would take food and medicines for him. One day Bhagavan told me, “Poor Perumalswamy! How he did all sorts of mischief, but we should remember the good that he did in the past. Once when I suffered from serious stomach upset and diarrhea, he used to clean up and attend upon me with devotion.” On another occasion Bhagavan referred to him as “Our Perumalswamy”.

My father was a stern administrator. From the day I started serving at the Ashram till his last days, he never said a kind word to me which would smack of paternal affection. Being a renunciate, he kept his relationship with me at the most impersonal level. He would object to my leaving town even for a day or two. If I left with my family to attend a marriage in a neighbouring village, he would complain to Bhagavan. Bhagavan would pacify him saying that it was not proper to object to Venkitoo fulfilling his social obligations as a householder.

My father would occasionally go out of the town on Ashram work. I would then attend to his work. If Ashram people approached Bhagavan for any approval, he would say, “Why not ask Venkitoo, the little *sarvadhikari*?”

In 1949, I got Sri Chakra Meru blessed by Bhagavan and fixed it over the Mother’s *samadhi*. I had also the good fortune of installing the Matrubhuteswara Lingam in the sanctum of the Temple.

I met Mahatma Gandhi at Madras in January 1946 and presented him a photo of Bhagavan and some Ashram publications. Gandhiji kept looking at the photo and said in Hindi, “What a great Sage!”

During Bhagavan’s last months, the *sarvadhikari* would not allow anyone to enter his room, later called the *Nirvana* Room. I would however go in flouting his orders. Arguments would ensue. Once I said in a firm tone, “Bhagavan is bed-ridden and either of us two should always be by his side. In your absence, I will be with Him.” Bhagavan, who was lying down, turned his head towards us with effort and slightly nodded his head in approval.

A DEVOTEE'S HEART FELT LOVE FOR SRI RAMANA

An extract from the poem of Maurice Frydman

I am at the end of the tether and can't break the cord

All my going ahead is a deceitful dream,

All my thinking not true, all my feeling not pure,

All my doing not right, all my living not clear.

I am tied to myself by myself through myself,

The knot out of reach, I am in your hands.

There is a Heart and a mind, and a body and soul

Waiting for you. You will come when you choose,

And whatever you like you are welcome to do.

(Some details about Frydman and his unique experience of being near Bhagavan are at pages 75-7 of *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, a publication of the Kendram.)

THE PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE AND ART OF TRUE SELF-KNOWLEDGE

By Michael James

James while travelling around India “in search of something that would give a meaning and purpose to life”, landed in Tiruvannamalai in 1976, and ended up living there for next 20 years, the first eight and a half years of which were spent at the feet of Sadhu Om (he passed away in May 1987), whom he accepted as his guru. His website [www. happinessofbeing. com](http://www.happinessofbeing.com) is worth visiting by any devotee of Sri Ramana.

The philosophy of Sri Ramana derives solely from his experience of true, absolute and non-dual self-knowledge, an experience that transcends all thought, both rational and irrational. However, since we imagine the existence of duality, multiplicity and relativity, we seem to lack the non-dual and absolute knowledge of our own essential self-conscious being that Sri Ramana experienced as his natural state. Therefore he presented his philosophy to us in terms of a rational and logical analysis of our present experience of ourselves as a finite individual consciousness, in order to enable

us to be firmly convinced of the absolute reality that underlies this finite consciousness that we now mistake to be ourself.

The spiritual teachings of Sri Ramana are not only a rational philosophy, but are also a precise science and art. He intended his philosophy to serve only as the theoretical foundation upon which we should practice the empirical science of self-investigation, which is the art of abiding firmly and steadily in our natural state of keenly self-attentive and therefore perfectly thought-free being.

The practice of *atma-vichara* – self-enquiry or self-scrutiny

A Sanskrit term that was often used, both by Sri Ramana and by other more ancient sages such as Sri Adi Sankara, to describe this empirical practice of self-investigation or self-attentiveness is *atma-vichara*, which is often loosely translated in English as 'self-enquiry' or 'self-inquiry'. However, rather than 'enquiry', the word *vichara* can be more accurately translated as 'investigation', 'examination' or 'scrutiny'. Therefore the term *atma-vichara* really means 'self-investigation', 'self-examination' or 'self-scrutiny', and denotes the simple practice of closely examining, inspecting or scrutinising our fundamental and essential consciousness of our own being, 'I am', with a keen and concentrated power of attention.

Sri Ramana also referred to this empirical practice of self-investigation, self-examination, self-inspection, self-scrutiny, self-attention or self-attentiveness as the *vichara* 'who am I?' However, when he described it thus, he did not mean that it is a process of questioning ourself 'who am I?' either verbally or mentally. What he intended us to understand by this term is that this practice is a keenly attentive examination or scrutiny of our basic consciousness of our own being, which we always experience as 'I am', in order to discover the true nature of this 'I', our essential being or 'am'-ness.

Happiness is experienced by us only to the extent to which our mind subsides, because the activity of our mind disturbs us from our natural state of peaceful happiness, distracting our attention away from our mere being. Therefore when our mind subsides partially or temporarily, we experience partial or temporary happiness, and if it subsides completely and permanently — that is, if it is destroyed or annihilated — we will experience complete and permanent happiness.

Our mind is a thought, the primal thought 'I', and it rises or becomes active only by

attending to other thoughts. Without attending thus to thoughts other than itself, it cannot stand. Therefore when it turns its attention away from all other thoughts towards itself, it subsides and disappears. Thus we can destroy our mind only by keenly vigilant self-attention. Therefore self-enquiry or self-scrutiny is the only means by which we can attain the experience of infinite and eternal happiness.

The simple practice of self-enquiry — investigating 'who am I?' by keenly scrutinising our own essential being-consciousness, 'I am' — is itself the essence of all the four *yogas*, the four traditional types of spiritual practice, namely *karma yoga* (the path of *nishkamya karma* or 'desireless action', that is, the practice of doing action without desire for any sort of personal benefit but only out of love for God), *bhakti yoga* (the path of love or devotion to God), *raja yoga* (the practice of a system of techniques that include specific forms of internal and external self-restraint, *pranayama* or breath-restraint, and various methods of meditation, the ultimate aim of which is to attain *yoga* or 'union' with God), and *jnana yoga* (the path of knowledge, the aim of which is to know God as he really is).

The practice of investigating 'who am I?' is not only the essence of all these four *yogas*, but is also the only effective means by which we can achieve the goal that each of them aims to attain. Though the traditional practices of these four *yogas* will gradually purify our mind and thereby ultimately lead us to the practice of self-enquiry, it is in fact not necessary for us to do any such traditional practices, because the simple practice of self-enquiry is itself the most effective means by which we can achieve the purity and strength of mind that we require in order to practise it perfectly.

Therefore if we practise self-enquiry from the outset, we will never need to practise any other form of *yoga*, as Sri Ramana makes very clear in verse 14 of *Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham* and verse 10 of [Upadesa Undiyar](#), in which he says: Scrutinising 'To whom are these [four defects], *karma* [action], *vibhakti* [non-devotion], *viyoga* [separation] and *ajnana* [ignorance]?' is itself *karma*, *bhakti*, *yoga* and *jnana*, [because] when [we] scrutinise [ourselves thus], [our ego or individual 'I' will be found to be non-existent, and] without [this finite] 'I' these [four defects] do not ever exist. Abiding [or being fixed permanently] as self is alone *unmai* [the truth, which is *sat-bhava*, our real state of being or 'am'-ness]. Being [firmly established as our real self] having subsided in [our] rising-place [our 'heart' or the core of our being, which is the source from which we had risen as our mind], that is *karma*

[desireless action] and *bhakti* [devotion], that is *yoga* [union with God] and *jnana* [true knowledge].

This practice of *atma-vichara* or self-attention is not an action or a state of thinking, but is our natural thought-free state of just being. Thinking is an action, because it is an active process of paying attention to things other than ourself, but self-attention is not an action, because it is a passive state of perfectly peaceful being in which our attention rests naturally in its source, which is our own essential being — our fundamental self-consciousness, 'I am'. (Source: www.happinessofbeing.com)

SRI RAMANA JYOTHI – 25 YEARS AGO

The following is from the Kendram's journal (editor Dr. K.S.) of January, 1983. The excerpts are from an article, reproduced in that issue, by renowned Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (1875-1961).

Sri Ramana, in a sense, a *hominum homo*, a true 'son of man' of the Indian earth. He is 'genuine' and on the top of that he is a 'phenomenon' which seen through European eyes, has claims to uniqueness. His thoughts are beautiful to read. What we find here is purest India, the breath of eternity, scorning and scorned by the world. It is the song of the ages, resounding, like the shrilling of crickets on a summer's night, from a million beings. This melody is built up on the one great theme, which veiling its monotony under a thousand colourful reflections, tirelessly and everlastingly rejuvenates itself in the Indian spirit, whose youngest incarnation is Sri Ramana himself.

It is the drama of *ahamkara*, the 'I-maker' or ego-consciousness, in opposition and indissoluble bondage to the *atman*, the self or non-ego. The Maharshi also calls the *atman* the 'ego-ego' – significantly enough, for the self is indeed experienced as the subject of the subject, as the true source and controller of the ego, whose (mistaken) strivings are continually directed towards appropriating the very autonomy which is intimated to it by the self.

The wisdom and mysticism of the East serve to remind us that we in our culture possess something similar, which we have already forgotten, and to direct our attention to the fate of the inner man, which we set aside as trifling. The life and teaching of Sri Ramana are of significance not only for India, but for the West too. They are more than a document humain: they are a warning message to a humanity which threatens to lose itself in unconsciousness and anarchy.

ATMA-VICHARA: The attempt to destroy the ego or the mind through *sadhanas* other than *atma-vichara*, is just like the thief turning the policeman to catch the thief, that is himself. *Atma-vichara* alone can reveal the truth that neither the ego nor the mind really exists, and enables one to realize the pure, undifferentiated Being of the Self. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

There is neither creation nor destruction, neither destiny nor free will, neither path nor achievement. This is the final truth. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Meditation is the dissolution of thoughts in eternal awareness or pure consciousness without objectification, knowing without thinking, merging finitude in infinity. – *Swami Sivananda*

A good rule for going through life is to keep the heart a little softer than the head. – *Vergillo Zoppi*

The Self (*Atman*) is like a pearl. To find it you must dive deep down into silence, deeper and ever deeper until it is reached. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

SRI RAMANA – ‘HELP OF THE HELPLESS’

Satyanarayana Rao, a school teacher in Vellore, and a well-known devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi, was suffering from cancer of the gullet and the doctors had no hope for him. He was given a room in the Ashram and the *sarvadhikari* was very kind to him. At about 9 a.m., when Bhagavan was reading the *tappals*, Rao’s brother appeared in the hall with an anxious look to tell Bhagavan about the patient who was gasping. The *sarvadhikari* also came to the hall on behalf of the sufferer. Bhagavan continued to read the *tappals*. In a few minutes when another devotee came to the hall for the same purpose, Bhagavan asked, “Did you call the doctor?” The devotee answered that the doctor was too busy in the hospital. Maharshi: What can I do? (After a short while) They will be pleased if I go there.

Soon Bhagavan left the hall and went to the patient’s side, massaged him gently and placed his hand on the heart and the other on his head. The patient, whose tongue was protruding, mouth open and eyes fixed, showed signs of relief and in about twenty minutes gently murmured, “Oh Help of the helpless, how I have troubled Thee! What return can I make for this kindness?” The people felt relieved. Bhagavan returned to the hall. Someone offered soap and water to Bhagavan to wash his hands. But he declined them and rubbed his hands over his body. A well-known devotee remarked, “Bhagavan appears so unconcerned under all circumstances. But he is all along so loving and gracious.” The patient passed away peacefully a few days later.

(Source: *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, entry no. 632, dated February 13, 1939.)

STORY OF AYYAPPA: The advent of Dharma Sasta, as Ayyappa is called, in an interesting and unique story. According to Puranas and some folk songs of Kerala, he was born out of the union of Vishnu and Siva. The story is that Siva was captivated by the charming Mohini in which form Vishnu appeared at the time of the churning of the ocean of milk in order to distract the *asuras* so that the *devas* could divide the nectar among themselves. Siva succumbed to the beauty of Mohini and Sasta is believed to have been born out of the union. Thus he is called Hariharaputra and is regarded as the third son of Siva. According to Kanchi Sankaracharya, “When the merciful charm of Narayana and the serene *jnana* of Siva combined, an effulgent light (*tejas*) was the outcome. Out of this *tejas* was born Ayyappa also known as Ayyanar, Sasta or Hariharaputra.” The word Ayyapa is derived from Aryan (one worthy of reverence) and appa or appan meaning ‘father’ in Malayalam. – *K.R.Vaidyanathan*

MARCH – 2008

A FRENCH DEVOTEE’S REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

A French lady, Pascaline Mallet, who went round India during December 1936 to September 1937, published her experiences in the book *Turn Eastwards*, published in London in 1938. The following excerpts relate to her visit to Sri Ramanasramam. Some of her experiences are also available in the Kendram’s publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* at pages 212-3.

We approached the Ashram and were led to the hall of the Maharshi. We slipped in quietly, after having saluted in Indian fashion, and seated ourselves on the ground amongst the crowd...A few Brahmins entered and chanted verses from the Vedas. At the end, they all stood for the final praise, and I had the impression of being as it were surrounded by a sea of fiery power, welding all present into a great flame rising heavenwards. Then all prostrated themselves and resumed their seats. Not once did that silent figure on the sofa turn or move, or show any sign of interest in the proceedings. It was as if he had been living in a sphere beyond the limitations of time and space.

The trend of our thoughts was broken by the metallic sound of a gong, after which people began to leave the hall. The Maharshi having come out of *samadhi* spoke for the first time and exchanged a few words with some of the *swamis*. Arrangements

for our stay were immediately made, and Mr. Paul Brunton, who was staying in town, very kindly offered us his hospitality, which was gratefully accepted. We were asked to join for supper... All waited till the Maharshi had begun before starting their own meal. We found ourselves beside a few Europeans: our host, a Pole, and a young Dutchman recently arrived. Our clumsy efforts at eating with hand created some amusement, and the Maharshi, whom we found possessed a strong sense of humour, smiled kindly at us.

In India the caste system is still very rigid and Brahmins will not usually sit with outcasts or be touched by them. But for the one who has reached the highest spiritual realization life is seen and known as one, and such distinctions have no longer any meaning or value. Thus, though the Maharshi is of a Brahmin family, he is now no longer subject to rules of caste. Indeed, his personal attendant was an outcast.

In the Maharshi's presence wild animals forget to fight or kill each other and do no harm to man. A cobra used to come into the hall without ever attacking anyone and even stayed beside its most bitter enemy, a peacock, another inmate of the Ashram... The little black-striped squirrels run in and out, birds build their nests under the rafters, and monkeys peep in occasionally to steal some food. One day the people were complaining to the Maharshi that if monkeys were not frightened away, there would be so many that nobody would be able to remain in the Ashram. The Maharshi then remarked with his usual humour that in that case the monkeys would have him all to themselves.

As we were sitting in the Ashram, we heard a noise outside, and to our amazement up the steps came Lakshmi, as if it was the most natural thing in the world for cow to enter a room, and went straight up to the Maharshi's couch. He at once greeted her most affectionately and ordered that she should be given some plantains to eat. Lakshmi, then quite satisfied, turned round and began to make her way through the crowd, heedless of the people seated on the floor; she was eventually guided out amid general laughter. She it is who gives the Maharshi a calf each year on his very birthday. Let science offer an explanation if it can... When an animal inmate of the Ashram is about to die, the Maharshi will attend to it in the same manner as he does to a human being.

Twice a day, in the morning and evening before the sunset the Maharshi goes out for a short walk by himself, up the sacred mountain of Arunachala. His tall, well-proportioned figure is seen climbing up the steep rocky path, like some mountain god returning to his heavenly abode.

Perfect freedom, we found, is maintained at the Ashram. All are allowed to come and go at any time and do whatever they feel like doing. The only strict rule we noticed is that of no smoking in the hall. There is never the slightest feeling of compulsion and no attempt is made to impose on the visitors any special religious belief. Some people

ask questions, and the Maharshi always answers in the most illuminating fashion, sometimes by questioning the questioner.

“Know thyself” is the fundamental note of the Maharshi’s teaching, and the quest of Self is continually stressed and described as the one essential prerequisite to spiritual attainment...Undoubtedly, merely to live in the presence of the Maharshi is the greatest help that one could possibly receive. It is a fact that no one who comes to the Ashram goes away empty-handed, and many people get spiritual experiences which have changed their whole lives.

Today we had Maharshi’s permission to visit various caves and *ashrams* on Arunachala. It is the custom always to ask leave before attempting the climb, as it is said that if he knows, nothing ill can befall one. It has happened, so we are told, that several times people asked to go up, but for some reason the Maharshi did not approve. Notwithstanding, they left with the firm intention of carrying out their plan. However, they never reached the top, they lost their way completely, wandered about all night and, tired out, were obliged to return... We took leave of the Maharshi, whose repeated injunction was not to hurry and to go slowly. After three hours of steady climbing, we at last near the summit where the dense fog hedged us from all sides. We did not talk, but stood apart from one another, while our companions who were very religious, meditated or chanted mantras. Then came a most startling experience – one of utter loneliness, the impression of being entirely cut off from the world below, alone as it were on an uninhabited planet. Suddenly, as if by magic, the cloud lifted and in a few minutes the whole country appeared in the glorious sun, and at our feet the great temple looking like a small insignificant toy.

It was incredible to think we had only been a month in India, and felt already so utterly at home, in spite of the difficulties of climate, language, and customs. In some inexplicable way, Europe seemed to recede into a remote past, like a dream which is forgotten on awakening.

A few days were spent at Adyar, after which we boarded a steamer from Madras to Pondicherry. Here lives a great Indian saint. He is undoubtedly a very remarkable personality. Unfortunately, he can only be seen three times a year, and only then after permission has been granted. Even the Mother, a French lady who runs the Ashram, is not easily approachable. This sort of exclusiveness is all the more noticeable after the freedom enjoyed at Tiruvannamalai, where at any time visitors are welcome to see and speak to the Maharshi. (Apparently, Mallet was attracted to Tiruvannamalai by Brunton’s *A Search in Secret India*. The book contains interesting descriptions of many other places like Benaras, Allhabad, Rishikesh, Almora, Srirangam, Madanapalli and Srinagar visited by Mallet.)

YOGI RAMAIAH AND THE MAGICIAN

T.R. Kanakammal records the following story as told by Ramaiah, a very well-known devotee of Sri Ramana. Some of Kanakammal's reminiscences of Bhagavan are also in the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* at pages 289-91.

One day Yogi Ramaiah came to the hall and sitting before Bhagavan told him the following story: "Bhagavan, recently while travelling, I saw a public performance of a magician. There was a big crowd gathered around him, each requesting that he materialise one or another item before them. No sooner had they declared their wish than the item appeared right before our eyes. Watching this and having doubts about what I was seeing, I wondered what the ruse could be. So I asked the performer to produce a packet of hot *pakkodas*. This, I thought, would not be such an easy feat if he were a charlatan.

"Immediately the magician waved his hand in the air and, to my utter amazement, in that instant, a packet of hot, freshly-fried *pakkodas* appeared in his hands. He passed the package to me and indeed, when I tasted them, I found that not only were they real *pakkodas* but they were among the best I had ever tasted. I was stunned and wondered how he could accomplish such feats.

"When the show was over, the magician extended a rusty, beat-up container and went around, asking for donations from each of those gathered around. We all responded by dropping a few coins into the can. Seeing that he truly had magical powers, I wondered why he had to resort to begging. After everyone had dispersed, I pulled him aside and inquired of him: 'You have the ability to produce whatever you want at the mere wave of a hand, including food, so why do you waste your time begging for money? Why don't you simply fulfil every need, food or otherwise, with your magic?'

"He then told me his sad story: 'I did penance in order to win the favour of a spirit that could perform whatever I desired. But my wish was granted with one stiff condition: I could never materialise anything for my family or myself. Therefore I have to beg for my survival.'

"I then asked him why he should agree to such terms, wasting his life as a beggar, when he could get no real benefit from his magic. He said that the spirit had made it clear to him that the karma of his penance was inexorable and would reap its 'reward'; if he opted out, the spirit would instantly kill him. 'So,' he said, 'I am destined to beg like this for the rest of my life.'"

When Bhagavan heard the story, he remarked: “The fate of all who run after *siddhis* is the same as that of this poor man.” (Source: *Mountain Path*, Jan.-Mar., 2008)

SRI RAMANA’S HEART-RENDING EARLY DAYS AT TIRUVANNAMALAI

The following piece is an abridgement from *Sri Ramana Leela* by Krishna Bhikshu’s. This is the only biography of the Maharshi which was seen and corrected by him. The translation from the Telugu original is by P. S. Sundaram, an outstanding devotee of our Kendram.

Venkataramana, after he reached Tiruvannamalai, came to be known as *Brahamana Paradesi*. In the Tamil region, Saivite non-Brahmins used to take to *sannyasa* and go about Arunachala in hundreds, whereas such wandering Brahmin *sannyasins* being few were known as *Brahmana Paradesi*.

The new Paradesi took his place in the thousand-pillared hall in the great Siva temple, for meditation. He had no clothes either to spread on the floor or to cover himself with. He never sought people’s company, and even if such a company came his way, he moved away. He sat silently with eyes closed and abided in the Self. Even while walking about he never spoke to anyone. However, though he left others alone, they would not leave him live in peace. Some school boys started throwing stones at him as they were intrigued to see someone not much older to them sitting like a statue. For them he was an object of curiosity or ridicule. To avoid the situation, the young Swami took shelter in the Patala Lingam, an underground small Siva shrine in the thousand-pillared hall.

Among those who visited the place during the *deepam* festival, was Ratnammal, wife of V. Chetty, who fetched him food occasionally, and moved by his condition, begged him to stay at her house. But the Swami scarcely heard what she said. She was disappointed. Yet she left a piece of cloth for his use – either to cover himself or to use on the floor. The Swami remained lost in meditation and the cloth stayed where it was kept.

How did Ramana get his food? On the day he reached Arunachala, he had no food at all. On the following day, Maunaswami of Subrahmanya shrine within the temple complex, visited the thousand-pillared hall and finding the boy utterly exhausted,

asked one of his followers to fetch him some food, which consisted of course rice, a little salt and pickle. Thereafter his requirements were taken care of by Maunaswami.

Once some boys tried to enter the Patala Lingam but fear held them back. So all that they could do was to throw things. At that moment Venkatachala Mudaliar passed that way. He got hold of a tree branch and rushed towards urchins, who took to their heels. Out of the cell emerged a dust-laden Sehadri Swami and told Mudaliar that Chinna Swami who needed attention was inside the cellar and went his way. Mudaliar went down and in the darkness could see nothing at first. Later, the outlines of the Swami – covered with dust – became visible faintly at first and a little better later. Mudaliar with the help of some persons lifted the Swami and brought him out and seated him. It was only then that the Swami regained his senses. However, at that point they thought that ‘It is impious and irreligious to disturb the *tapas* of such a one’ and left the place. Thereafter the Paradesi became Brahamana Swami and lived at Subrahmanya Shrine.. Here he was looked after by Maunaswami, who from day one took care to ensure that the ‘silent Brahmin young boy’ had food. Brahamana Swami had no preferences and gulped down whatever was offered. Thus two months passed by.

The Swami then moved to a nearby garden which had well-grown creepers of pink flowers known as *Kasturi patte*. He commenced his meditation under one bower and by the time he completed it he found himself under another. With the passage of time his codpiece tore and towards the end of 1896 he was unclothed for some time, to which the temple authorities took exception.

Vahana Mandapam was the next place chosen by the Swami for his *tapas*. Later he spent sometime near the Sivaganga tank. A Saivite sadhu named Uddandi Nayanar visited Arunachala in December 1896 and noticed the young *tapasvi*, lost to the world. He was deeply impressed and thought: “This is *tapas*. If such a one does not experience the Self, who else will? By serving him I may also experience the Self.” He firmly believed in this and decided to stay under another nearby tree in that chill weather and devote himself to the service of the young *tapasvi*

Except when Nayanar had to go out to cook his food, at all other time he stood guard over the Swami and prevented curious crowds from collecting there. Once, when no one was around and the Swami was unaware of his body, a vicious urchin passed urine on the back of the Swami and ran away. After regaining consciousness the Swami understood what had happened. The Swami was personification of tolerance

but Nayanar could not bear it and felt deeply hurt... Nayanar was the first attendant of the Swami.

A HINT FOR THE SADHAKA: Cultivating one's soul is like cultivating a garden, which requires hours of vigorous digging, planting, watering and weeding. There are times of intense movement. There are also times of quiet when life grows underground, in silence and darkness. The sowing of seed is followed by a period of waiting and nurturing. Pesticides are also needed to take care of insects and bugs. The flowers and fruits come as a result of back-breaking work, and only in due course of time. – *Janina Gomes*

VALLABHACHARYA: Vallabha Bhatta, well-known as Vallabhacharya, who is credited with the spread of Krishna *bhakti* in the north, was an Andhra Brahmin from Godavari area. A contemporary of Krishnadevaraya, he was inspired by the Telugu *Bhagavatam*. He wrote many books, including a commentary on *Srimad Bhagavata*, called *Subhodini Tika*. Most of the Hindi poets of the Krishna *bhakti* movement, including the famous Hindi poet Surdas, were initiated by him or by his disciples. – *Tattvaloka*

If anyone surrenders totally at his feet, the Master will see that everything is set right. – *Sri Sarada Devi*

Life takes on meaning when you become motivated, set goals and charge after them in an unstoppable manner. – *Les Brown*

The earth is upheld by the veracity of those who have subdued their passions, and following righteous practices, are never contaminated by desire, covetousness and wrath. – *Vishnu Purana*

BURDENS CAN HELP YOU TO SOAR HIGH: Drawing a lesson from the beautiful stones that are found on the California coast, Mrs Charles Cowman found that the pebbles turned beautiful only after they were caught in the arms of the pitiless waves, tossed and rolled, rubbed together and ground against the sharp grained cliffs. Day and night, the stones are subject to ceaseless attrition. The result is stones of such priceless beauty that people flock from far and near to collect them. It is the difficult and painful experiences of life that mould us the most... We could choose to make every failure an educative moment. We could choose to see a difficult moment as a style to climb over. We could view what seems a mountain too hard to climb as challenge to grow big and strong. We could see the darkness and the clouds as heralds of the daylight that inevitably follows. – *Jaina Gomes*

SRI RAMANA SHOWERS GRACE ON A NEW YORK DEVOTEE – A MIRACULOUS STORY

The following is from 'Ramana Maharshi – Stories and Teachings' as available at google.co.in

It was the first few weeks of my pregnancy when I was diagnosed with an internal haemorrhage. The prognosis was grave and surgery was an option only as a last resort at the risk of losing the foetus. I was ordered complete bed rest with absolutely no movement, so to give the wound a chance to heal itself. I lay in bed all day and night staring at the ceiling most of the time. The only welcome distraction to my eyes was the picture of Bhagavan and Sri Arunachala that I had asked to be glued on the door at the foot of my bed. I tried to concentrate on my prayers, repeating "Sri Arunachala Akshara Mana Malai" as much as possible. But the physical pain was immense, not to mention the agony of being bed ridden.

Though I was under excellent medical care and had full attention from my family, I felt my strength draining from my body with each passing day. One afternoon, I had an experience. I felt the heat dissipating from my body and a chillness setting in. My hearing began losing its sharpness, vision blurring and a cloud of darkness set in. I could not move my hands nor could I voice a single word, even though I was trying to scream from within. I felt suffocated, was aware of my consciousness slipping away and felt myself sinking into something that I have no words to describe. I panicked inside, gripped by the fear of death and thoughts of unfinished responsibilities. I experienced my life slipping away. At that moment, I cried inside to Bhagavan, begging Him, that if this was death, He should take me to Him.

Then, I had the vision of the holy Sri Arunachala Mountain zooming back and forth and Bhagavan standing at one side of the hill. There was an arc of light leaving my body, like what you see in children's fairy tale movies. Bhagavan raised his hand and pushed the light back into my body.

He then said, "This is not the time for you to go. You have a purpose in life. Do your duty." Then in the most gracious and affectionate way, He put his hand where I had been hurting and said, "Is this where you feel hurt?"

After this I became unconscious. I had no idea how long I was unconscious. All I knew was that this experience had transformed me, for when I became aware of the world, I had absolutely no pain. I immediately rose from my bed and walked briskly across the room. I felt and appeared perfectly healthy. The next visit to the doctor showed a completely healed wound.

Now I have been blessed with a beautiful, healthy baby. Bhagavan gave me a chance to bring a gift of life into my family. Every day I remind myself that I live by His grace alone.

SRI RAMANA'S VALUABLE ADVICE TO A SADHAKA

M.G. Shanmugam was one of the earliest devotees of Sri Ramana. His Tamil biography of the Maharshi ended with the early thirties. He writes:

During my 24 years of personal association with Bhagavan I found that he seldom preached elaborately. He would give hints which keen seekers had to absorb carefully. He once said categorically, for practicing *atma vichara* every day is auspicious. All other *sadhanas* require external objects and congenial environment, but for *atma vichara* nothing external to oneself is required. Turning the mind within is all that is necessary. While one is engaged in *atma vichara* one can attend to other activities also.

Some of Bhagavan's personal instructions to me were: (i) If you observe the breathing one-pointedly such attention will lead you into *kumbhaka* (retention). This is *jnana pranayama*. (ii) The more you humble yourself, the better it is for you. (iii) You should look upon the world only as a dream. (iv) Except attending to the duty-work in life, the rest of the time should be spent in *atma nishta*. (v) Do not cause slightest hindrance or disturbance to others. (vi) Do all your work yourself. (vii) Both likes and dislikes should be discarded and eschewed. (viii) With attention focused on the first person and on the heart within one should relentlessly practise Who am I? During such practice, the mind might suddenly spring up; so you have to vigilantly pursue the *vichara* Who am I? (Source: *The Moments Remembered* by V. Ganesan)

THE MAHARSHI'S TEACHING: When the grain is hidden inside the husk, it is called paddy; when it is de-husked, it is called rice. Similarly, so long as one is bound by *karma* one remains a *jiva*; when the bond of ignorance is broken, one shines as Siva. The *jiva* which is mind is in reality the pure Self; but forgetting this truth, it imagines itself to be an individual soul and gets bound in the shape of the mind. Source: Ramana Maharshi – Stories and Teachings, google.co.in

THE MAHARSHI'S CONCERN FOR THE PEACOCK

In 1947, the Maharani of Baroda presented a white peacock to the Ashram. It slept at night in the Old Hall, where it rested on a beam with the consequence that the floor underneath it became very dirty for the devotees to sit at the time of morning prayer. When the disgruntled attendants conveyed their feeling to Bhagavan, he said, "Why are you so disgusted? Why not get a cage made and keep the peacock in the Jubilee Hall?" The cage was made and placed in the Jubilee Hall next to the stone couch of Bhagavan. Till the day it was made, Bhagavan was sleeping in the Old Hall. Once the cage was shifted outside, Bhagavan insisted on getting his bed shifted there. But as it was very cold at night, it was feared that it would adversely affect Bhagavan's health. On the devotees expressing their fears, Bhagavan laughed and said, "The peacock came to us from somewhere. What respect is it to that guest if we make him sleep outside while we sleep inside? If a relative comes to your house, is it proper to make him sleep in the veranda while you sleep inside the house?" The attendants said, "Sleeping outside would be bad for Bhagavan's health. If necessary, one of us will sleep there to keep the peacock company." "Enough of this!" said Bhagavan, "Will that not affect your health." However much they pleaded, Bhagavan was adamant and slept out in the Jubilee Hall. (Source: *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, letter dated November 19, 1947.)

APRIL - 2008

FIROZA TALEYARKHAN – A WELL-KNOWN PARSİ DEVOTEE OF SRI RAMANA

Mrs. Taleyarkhan (1898-1984) was born in Hyderabad. Her father was in the service of the Nizam of Hyderabad. She belonged to an affluent Parsi family of Bombay, and had a spiritual inclination since her childhood. She writes:

I was in Buddha Gaya for doing *sadhana*. I had wonderful experiences, but my heart was itching to meet a person who could show me God. One day someone told me about Ramana Maharshi. The moment I opened the book given to me, I was struck by the beauty of his face.

I first visited Tiruvannamalai in 1937. At that time I was planning to open an *ashram* in Bombay to be called 'The Home of Devotion'. I thought that before embarking on

the venture I should have the blessings of the Maharshi. I stayed at the Ashram for four days and showed him the blueprint of my proposal. I left the Ashram thinking that I had his blessings, as it was not his way to say definitely ‘yes’ or ‘no’, when people told him about their schemes. But to my great surprise, I received a reply from the government refusing to rent us the place on Khandivli Hills, which they had promised us. I really lost my temper with Bhagavan. It was only much later that I understood that I had had his grace all along.

Meanwhile, a Polish lady who had come to the Ashram, told Bhagavan that she was working hard to collect money to help people in distress and asked him whether it was a good thing to do. Bhagavan took out a copy of *Kalayan Kalpataru* [a monthly journal of Gita Press, Gorakhpur] and showed her a passage to read. As I was sitting beside her, I could read it too, and it made me smile. Bhagavan looked at me and said, “It is for you too.” The passage stated: “A frail woman who knows how to find God’s peace through prayers can do more to help a country or mankind than all the intellectuals put together.”

That very moment something within told me that he was right. He knew that I was not ripe for the responsible work of helping others. I needed to cure myself before I cured others. For the first time I got up and prostrated before him and from that moment my life, mind, and heart changed and I felt his unbounded Grace flowing over me.

Once the *sarvadhikari* of the Ashram asked me to go to Madras and approach Minister Bhaktavatsalam about the possibility of getting railway connection to Tiruchuzi, Bhagavan’s birthplace. I went but was shocked to learn about the cost involved in the project. I decided to leave it to Bhagavan and thought no more about it. But imagine my joy, when years later Bhaktavatsalam became Chief Minister of Madras and the line was actually constructed. Bhagavan’s grace is sufficient to accomplish anything, big or small, if one’s life and soul are laid at his feet. He has brought about many seemingly impossible things for me.

I had his grace when T.H. Tarapore, a Parsi friend, took up my plan to renovate the Patala Linga, an underground cavern, where Bhagavan had sat performing austerities as youth, when he first came to Tiruvannamalai. This job was carried out beautifully, and Rajagopala Chari, the then Governor-General of India, performed the opening ceremony on May 14, 1949. [In this regard the following has been recorded by Taleyarkhan in her book: “That evening All India Radio broadcast a recording of the function. When it was over, Bhagavan said with a sigh of relief that for three or four

days he was moving in dread lest I should pick him up and take him to the function. What an opportunity I had missed, I shouted, but Bhagavan motioned me kindly to resume my seat and said, he was much relieved.”

For over a week after the *mahanirvana* I was quite desolate at missing the physical presence of Bhagavan. I did not know what to do. Between tears, thoughts of ending this life often came to my mind. One afternoon as I lay asleep, I saw Bhagavan coming down Arunachala with his stick and enter my house. He asked me, “Why are you weeping?” and bade me wipe my tears assuring me he was always with me. Then he went out by the opposite door. This dream is yet vivid in my memory and were I an artist I would have drawn a picture of the scene.

Some Muslim servants of mine who protested to the photo of Bhagavan in the house, have been granted the vision of Bhagavan. Now they not only do not protest, but also have themselves become his devotees.

(Source: *Mountain Path*, January 1965, and *Sages, Saints and Arunachala Ramana* by Bhagavan Priya Ma F. Taleyarkhan, Orient Longman, 1970.)

BHAGAWAT – FOUNDER OF SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI’S ASHRAMAS AT NEW YORK AND CANADA

Dennis Hartel, Head, Arunachala Ashrama, New York, says that Bhagawat was his intimate friend, mentor, and his bridge to Bhagavan. The following is based on the material provided by him.

Born in 1912, in a poor family, in a village unconnected by road, Bhagawat was brought up by his parents in the hope that he would be able to read and recite Ramayana of Tulsidas. This inspired them to name him Bhagawat (a devotee of the Lord). From his earliest childhood he was given to such contemplation and serious conversation that the villagers called him ‘an old man in child’s body’. Bhagawat was an incorrigible idealist right from his youth. His zeal for independence landed him in jail when he was seventeen years old.

After completing his B.A. from Patna University, he got job as a Hindi teacher in Darjeeling. Here in 1941 he read *Gupt Bharat ki Khoj*, the Hindi version of Brunton's *A Search in Secret India*, and moment his eyes fell on the Maharshi's photo he felt like flying to Arunachala. He also got instinctively drawn towards astrology and was much impressed by the chapter in the book 'Written in the Stars.' As it turned out, he went to Ujjain to learn astrology instead of going to Arunachala. He says, though I applied myself to astrology, my mind's eye always saw Bhagavan sitting in Arunachala looking at me and pouring His grace on me.

As an idealist, Bhagawat was always inspired by the American Independence movement of the 18th century. He somehow intuitively felt his future was linked to America. And he did go there in 1947 based on a fellowship from the University of Iowa. After two years with a Master's degree in journalism, he got appointment as Information Officer at the Indian Embassy in Washington D.C. His wife joined him in the US in 1952 and they had their first child in 1953. A year latter he experienced a dramatic surge in his inner life. In his words:

“ On 13th October 1954, I was in the guest cottage of a Quaker couple on their farm in Pennsylvania. The cottage was situated in a valley near their residence. On the second floor of the cottage my wife, our 15-month-old boy, and I were occupying the large wooden-framed bed that night. In the second half of the night I saw Bhagavan Ramana sitting on the bed near my head. Although this was a dream, I saw it as clearly as I see the sun during the day, and remember it vividly. His famous figure was near my head and His legs were dangling. Arunachala Siva Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi stayed near my head for quite a while so that I could drink deep in Him. Bhagavan simply kept on looking at me and I was filled with joy and happiness and could not turn my eyes away from Him. I do not know how long this lasted. But once I woke up I could not return to sleep and sat on the bed meditating on Him. All morning and day I kept on thinking of the *darshan* Bhagavan had given me in my dream...That dream enabled the sugar doll to be dissolved into the Divine Ocean of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Since then I have not been the same Bhagawat I used to be. The following night I had another stirring dream wherein I saw the Sanskrit word 'Upanishad' written on a loose leaf. Then the leaves of text began to turn one by one until I woke up.”

These experiences rekindled the fire of devotion to Guru Ramana that was first sparked in 1941 after he had read the Hindi version of *A Search in Secret India*. Though the Maharshi had left his body four years earlier, Bhagawat began writing letters to him at Sri Ramanasramam, as he was beginning to experience him as a living Presence.

On an invitation to teach in Iowa, he resigned from the Indian Embassy in 1957. The teaching position did not materialize and he looked elsewhere for employment. He thought he might teach in a US college, write books and travel. But no promising offers came. He inwardly felt that his Master was removing all worldly ambitions from his mind and was steadily pulling him deeper into his spiritual center for sustenance.

In 1959, he with his family returned to India where he was able to fulfill his long-cherished dream of visiting Sri Ramanasramam . He writes, "As soon as we caught the first glimpse of Sri Arunachala, I was swimming in the Bliss of Bhagavan. At the Ashram Arthur Osborne encouraged Bhagawat to start some regular meetings in the US, centered on the Maharshi. And this he did when he took up a position at the Indian Mission to the United Nations in New York in 1962.

In 1965, Bhagawat, wrote, "Bhagavan made it possible for me to find employment once again in the United States. But New York was the last place we wanted to live. In spite of my best efforts to get away from New York, Bhagavan held me here. He must have some purpose in not helping me find employment elsewhere."

The purpose soon revealed itself. On November 12th, 1965 he began weekly meetings in a room at the American Buddhist Society in Manhattan. In 1966, 'Arunachala Ashram, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center' was incorporated and registered as a charity with the state and federal governments. With the renting of a meeting room at 78 St. Marks Place in 1967, the weekly meetings became daily. In 1969, the Ashrama moved to a rented storefront on 342 East 6th Street, near First Avenue and remained there for the next seventeen years.

Bhagawat's dream for a country residential Ashrama was realized in 1972 when the Nova Scotia, Canada, Arunachala Ashrama was founded at the foot of the rolling hills of the Annapolis Valley.

All along Bhagawat would emphasize to all visitors the need for spiritual practice. He would say, "This is Arunachala Abhyasa Ashrama." Pointing to Sri Bhagavan's photo, we would often hear him repeat to new visitors, "He teaches and we practice. He has made me His servant, His doorman and doormat".

He was now consumed day and night, dedicating all his time and energy to the Ashrama and the constant remembrance, or "Self-abidance" as he would call it. He behaved like a man possessed, living from moment to moment, acting on whatever inspiration entered his heart. The intellect and self-will were losing their hold and his life began to take its commands from that inner voice spoken by the Lord of his Heart.

Bhagawat was a prolific writer. He would say, "Unless my mind sinks into the Heart, I cannot write." All his spare time would be occupied with worshipping at the altar of his typewriter. He would be seen absorbed typing thousands of pages of what he called "Prayer Manuscripts."

In 1970, he began writing a piece titled, "Bhagavan! Thou Art the Self". This went on for 3,500 pages. "From the top of my voice I declare to the world that Thou art the very breath for me and day and night I find myself immersed in the surging Ganga of the Silent Sage of the Holy Hill of the Beacon Light, Sri Arunachaleshwara Shiva Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi..." Thus he wrote on the last page in 1973, only to begin another piece titled, "Bhagavan! Thou Art My Breath."

Hartel says that in Bhagawat we found a devotee on whom the Maharshi had showered his grace in full measure. He provided us with an example of how to gain the Master's grace and attain the purpose of human existence in the light of the life and teachings of the Maharshi.

He was a man who could inspire and mold seekers into genuine devotees. He would keep silent most of the time, inwardly absorbed. The Heart was everything for him. He would often tell us, "Watch wherefrom the breath rises; it is the Heart. Watch wherefrom the sound rises; it is the Heart. Watch wherefrom the 'I' rises; it is the Heart."

There is no mind to control if you realize the Self (*Atman*). The mind having vanished, the Self shines forth. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Meditation is sticking to one thought. That single thought keeps away other thoughts; distraction of mind is a sign of its weakness; by constant meditation it gains strength. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

Silence is the hardest argument to refute. – *Josh Billings*

TAKE REFUGE IN PRAYER: Prayer is an entreaty. There is humility in prayer. It shows a keen awareness and acceptance of one's own limitations as well as an acceptance of the limitless source. In prayer there is trust and conviction that God is not only omnipotent but He is also benevolent. Prayer is also a way of examining ourselves and recognizing our vulnerability. God is omniscient and yet we are expected to do our part to receive His grace, which is there for the asking. Here effort comes into play...There is something within, which does not permit everybody to acknowledge a greater source and seek His help. Krishna says in the *Gita* that it is only virtuous and mature people who can reach out to Him...Regardless of whether

one seeks material or spiritual success, prayer is indispensable, for there are obstacles in any path. Also, prayer need not always be a demand; it could be a thanksgiving or expression of humility and gratitude... Great people of all times have experienced and confirmed that prayer is the most powerful resort available to us and there is no obstacle coming from within or without which can stand against it. – www.tattvatirtha.org

SRI RAMANA JYOTHI 25 YEARS AGO

The following piece from *Ramana Manjari*, a souvenir produced in aid of the building fund for Ramana Kendra, New Delhi, was reproduced by our journal of March 1983. The author J.C. Molony, ICS, a district collector, writes:

I was strolling with my dogs, when I stumbled upon an *ashram*, a hermitage set in a cleft of the rocks and overhung by trees. Water bubbled from a spring and gathered in a stone basin. I spied the hermit within, my dogs spied him too; and in a second three of them were all over him, while the fourth plunged with a splash into the coolness of his well. I looked for a tempest of anger; hurriedly I prepared the best apology that I could think of on the spur of the moment. There emerged a tall, lean ascetic, smiling on me and my yelping companions. “You like dogs?” he said. “I love them myself, but I have sent my own dogs away from the summer heat. Why should not a dog like clean, cool water? No harm is caused by the dog jumping in the well. Ten minutes after she is gone, the well will have emptied itself and filled itself afresh.”

So we sat together on the parapet of the *ashram* and looked down on the hot, dusty, town far below. When I reached my camp one of my dogs was missing. In the evening arrived the holy man leading the truant on a string. “He came back to me, and I should have liked to keep him,” he said, “but why should I steal him from you?”... As I write these lines, the fields before my eyes are white with frost; but my thoughts travel back to the kindly recluse on the sun-baked hill.

NON-VIOLENCE AND SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

The following is an abridgement of the paper presented by V. Krithivasan, a learned and staunch devotee of our Kendram, at a seminar on non-violence organised by Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Research and Social Action, Hyderabad.

Non-Violence and the Stilled Mind

The very existence of the active mind is the cause of violence, for, violence need not only be at the physical level. The thinking mind provides the potential for violent acts. The mind falsely thinks that the incompleteness felt through its ‘disconnection’ from the Universal Self can be overcome by acquisition of wealth, power, fame etc. It constantly finds itself in conflict with the rest of the world, because all other minds also are actively seeking the same thing! A ruthless approach to destroy whatever comes in the way of one’s own fulfillment starts the chain of violence. This violence could take the form of dominance, subjugation, discrimination, assertion of one’s own beliefs and intolerance towards others’ way of thinking and so on.

Sri Ramana Maharshi, a sage beyond compare and a contemporary of Mahatma Gandhi, propounded the *vichara marga*, that is, to assiduously ponder over the question of all questions, namely, Who am I? to realise our real nature, to eventually reach the state of ‘no-mind’ and get established in the Universal Self.

Non-resistance to Evil

The real test for non-violence comes when unprovoked violence is directed against us. The Maharshi used a remarkable technique in tackling evil – he did not recognize evil! He ignored evil in such a manner that the opportunity for conflict did not arise, at least from his side. After all, for conflict to develop, there must be two opposing sides. When one side offers no resistance whatsoever, the conflict never materializes, as illustrated below.

A *sadhu* who shared a cave with the Maharshi on the Arunachala hill, was enjoying a certain measure of prominence with the local people, till the Maharshi was recognised as a *gnani*. He started feeling jealous when crowds thronged to see the Maharshi immersed in glorious silence. He could not stand it and decided to do away with the Maharshi. One day when the latter was sitting in silence outside the cave, the *sadhu* climbed up the hill and started pushing down heavy stones with the intention of crushing him. When the Maharshi realised that the *sadhu* was playing a mischief, he quietly left his seat, went up the hill through a different route and caught the *sadhu* in his act. The Maharshi merely made the *sadhu* realize that he was exposed – that was all; no accusation, no anger, not even an admonition! The *sadhu* knew that his game was over. Eventually, he left the place and went elsewhere.

Once thieves entered the Ashram. They started roughing up the inmates including the Maharshi, who was all along appealing to them not to harm anyone but leave with whatever they can lay hands on. On seeing the Maharshi beaten up by the thieves, one

of the inmates became angry and wanted to pick up a fight with them. The Maharshi stopped him saying, “They are driven by their tendencies; we should not take to violence as we are *sadhus*. No violent act of ours, however justified, will be condoned. Leave them alone”. The thieves left in frustration after some time.

A person, very close to the Maharshi for many years and had served him as his personal attendant, turned against him when he found that he could not become the Ashram’s manager, a position on which he had set his heart. Nuisance created by him tested the tolerance of even the most soft-hearted in the Ashram. But the Maharshi always counseled, “Patience, more patience!” Eventually the person ran out of support, became a pauper, fell ill and was living a miserable life. In his last days, it was the Maharshi who came to his support. The Maharshi even recounted this person’s good qualities and the physical service rendered by him and requested the Ashram management to provide food and medicines to him!

While non-resistance can be a weapon at a personal level; to tackle the evil present in the society, a different approach was used by the Maharshi – exactly the same as what Mahatma Gandhi practiced – *non-cooperation with the evil*. The Maharshi would fight superstitions, harmful and discriminatory social practices with total non-cooperation. He would stand like a rock, unmoving, when repeatedly faced with age-old practices which claimed superiority in one sense or the other, with regard to the weak and the unfortunate, for example, women and untouchables.

Is Non-violence a Practical Approach?

But now arises a question: When one confronts rank evils like mindless violence and suppression, can one remain passive? Will these forces not wipe us out, if we practice non-violence? These questions were posed to the Mahatma as well as to the Maharshi. There can be no general or common remedy. Violence as response to violence will beget only more violence – as can be seen in today’s endless strife all over the world. A more sensible approach will be to sincerely find out the root cause of violence. While the immediate concern is to tackle the symptom, parallel efforts to trace the cause and eliminate it must be sincerely undertaken by the society at large. The path shown by the Mahatma, and at a deeper level by the Maharshi, are relevant at all times; when more and more individuals give up violence at a personal level, the atmosphere will indeed start clearing. In fact, the outside world is just a reflection of our minds; the only thing we have in our control is ourselves! Mankind is still sensible enough to pause in its stride and take a relook at its way, when presented with information that conclusively prove the imminence of self destruction. And, whenever the world has senselessly drowned itself in its destructive tendencies, someone like the Mahatma or the Maharshi comes along and pulls it back from the

brink. This is the blessing that gives hope to the striving aspirants of a non-violent and higher way of living.

THE CHEMISTRY OF ANGER: In one who dwells longingly on sense objects, an inclination towards them is generated. This inclination develops into desires, non-fulfillment of which begets anger. Anger generates delusion, and delusion results in loss of memory. Loss of memory brings about the destruction of discriminative intelligence, and loss of discriminative intelligence spells ruin to a man. – *The Gita*

STAY IN THE PRESENT: So many of us worry about the future, hold regrets about the past and completely ignore the present. When we give our full attention to the present, even routine tasks can take a aura of holiness. What does it mean to stay in the present? Let us use an example. Many of us walk for health or recreation. We can also walk for spiritual awareness. A walking meditation is a slow focused walk where you give your *full attention* to each step you take, the feel of your muscles' working, your breathing, and even your surroundings. The trick is not to let your mind wander; but stay focused on the present. It takes practice, but once you accomplish it, you will return from your walks fully refreshed and revitalized. – *Wendy Betterini*

IMPORTANCE OF BREATHING: If you breathe slowly and attentively you feel the touch of breath as you breathe in and out. You will experience a sense of peace. If you breathe with greater satisfaction, you will feel the grace of life. When you breathe selectively into each of your organs like kidneys, intestines, heart or head and feel the touch of breath, you will experience healing. How many times you breathe and how regularly and sincere you do it directly decides the proportion of well being you will feel. – *Linesh Sheth*

OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES: When we see a nail on the wall we cannot see the depth to which it is embedded. The effort to pull it out would to a great extent depend on its depth. We do not desist in our efforts simply because we are ignorant of the length of the nail or of the number and intensity of the strokes which drove it in. The nail in the wall represents the obstacles in life. Just as we persevere to pull out the nail, we should make persistent and sincere efforts to counteract the ill effects of past actions till we succeed. Sooner or later we are bound to overcome the obstacles faced by us, if we try hard enough. – *Sri Chandrasekara Bharati of Sringeri Peetham*

HAVE AN ABIDING URGE FOR SELF IMPROVEMENT: The well-known prayer “Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, and from stagnation to eternal life” (*Brihadaranyaka* 1:3, 28), presupposes the fair admission that one is yet distracted by illusions, that one is floundering and also that one is far from being truly dynamic. The starting point of the path to self-improvement through inner cleansing is this frank admission and acceptance and an abiding urge to improve matters. – K. Vijayaraghavan

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ENCHANTING REMINISCENCES OF THE MAHARSHI’S

ATTENDANT VENKATARATHNAM

Koduru Venkatarathnam (1921-76) belonged to Krishna Dist. in Andhra Pradesh. He had a religious bent of mind since childhood. After his thread ceremony at the age of seven, he never failed to repeat Gayatri mantra even for a day. He was advised by a religious teacher at Guntur to go to Tiruvannamalai and serve Sri Ramana. The following account as told by Venkatarathnam has been provided by Neal Rosner,* who had come to Ramanasramam in 1968 and had diligently served Venkatarathnam till his passing.

When Venkatarathnam came to Ramanasramam in 1944, he happened to meet Prof. Shiva Mohan Lal [Refer entry no. 156 in the Kendram’s publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*], whom he had known before. Lal brought him to the presence of the Maharshi and introduced him. He sat down to do his japa, but strangely he could not remember his mantra even though he had repeated it so many lakhs times before. Suddenly, he felt an infinite Expanse of Pure Consciousness, the Atma, which lasted for some time. He stayed for a few days and returned to his place, but all the way back in the train the same experience occurred again and again.

Later, when he came to the Ashram to serve Bhagavan, he worked at the book stall and the Ashram library. Bhagavan personally taught him how to bind books and also to read and write Tamil. In 1949, Prof. Lal asked Bhagavan if Venkatarathnam could join as one of his personal attendants. Bhagavan said he had no objection provided the office gives the permission, which was given.

One day Venkatarathnam came to the hall, quietly went behind the Maharshi and started fanning him, though Bhagavan had earlier made it clear that nobody should fan him. At this he exploded saying, “Oho, very good, very special, this fellow thinks he is doing a great service. Why doesn’t he go and fan all *bhaktas* and get the *punya* of fanning the devotees of the Guru. He thinks that by his *tapas* he can make me

bend to his will.” He spoke off and on like this to the devotees. Finally, when alone with the Maharshi, he broke down and asked Bhagavan to forgive him for having made Bhagavan exert himself so much to correct his fault. Bhagavan graciously said, “Never mind, everybody makes a mistake.”

Bhagavan had a number of attendants, who would serve him in shifts. Venkatarathnam chose to have 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. shift. It was the time when he got his heart’s desire fulfilled to be intimately close to Bhagavan. Many nights were spent in spiritual talk or simply gazing on the Divine face of the Maharshi.

At the sight of the blood while dressing the wound on Bhagavan’s hand, Venkatarathnam would feel faintness. Bhagavan rebuked him saying, “Don’t come near me. You people come here thinking that Bhagavan is sick and is dying. I don’t want you to come near me if you have such thoughts.” He asked Bhagavan that without thinking that such and such thing must be done to relieve the suffering, how could he serve Bhagavan. He was told that he should simply play his part as in a drama and do whatever is necessary with mental attitude of a witness attending to the work as the situation demands. Following Bhagavan’s instruction he began to feel that everything was *atma vilasa* (the Divine play) and that Bhagavan was simply playing a role as a sick person, although in reality he was the *Paramatma* Himself.

After the *mahanirvana* of the Maharshi he would feel sad when the thought of love and concern that the Maharshi had shown towards him and would sometime weep. After the 10th day following the *mahanirvana* he left for his native place but continued to visit and serve at the Ashram.

*Rosner, an American, got immersed into the spiritual heritage of India under the guidance of Venkarathnam. This gets elaborated in his book *On the Road to Freedom: A Pilgrimage in India*, Cassandra Press, P.O. Box 2044, Boulder, CO 80306. Rosner lived in Amritanandamayi’s Kerala Ashram as Swami Paramatamananda. (Source: *The Maharshi* (Journal of New York Ashram), Sep.-Oct., 2007)

COLLECTED WORKS OF KAVYAKANTHA GANAPATI MUNI : The Muni (1878-1936) was a rare phenomenon. His genius was recognized in his own times and his *tapasya* was admired by all those who came into contact with him. All his writings were in Sanskrit. It is only after his earnest disciple K. Natesan began to edit the Collected Works of Ganapati Muni that we have been able to get an idea of the

vast range of his writings. So far nine volumes have been published by Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni Project, I, 8th Cross, Tagore Nagar, Pondicherry – 605008. The ninth volume entitled *Bharatacharitramimansa* calls for patience and concentration but the work grows progressively easier to comprehend once we launch upon the chapters after reading the English introduction. We shall await the next volume which promises the Muni's Sanskrit novel *Poorna*. (Source: *New Swarantra Times*, Jan. 2008)

SIVA: GOD OF WELFARE: Siva means welfare. *Sivamastu* means the same as *Kalyanamastu* – May you be blessed. Siva is said to serve all life forms with five faces, two on the left as Vamadeva and Kalagni; two on the right as Daksineshvara and Ishana, and one in the centre as Kalyanasundaram. Siva is Daksineshvara because He is showering *daksina* or compassion upon all creation. Ishana is responsible for controlling all the *jivas*, individual beings, with meticulous care. And Kalyanasundaram, the face in the centre, plays the role of controlling all the faces. Kalyanasundaram's only purpose is to promote the greatest welfare of all living beings. As Vamadeva, Siva is terrible – He is Rudra – “one who teaches others by making them shed tears”. But the underlying purpose is to teach people, not to harm them. The other face, Kalagni, also subjects people to torture, but there also, the main purpose is to teach them, to promote their welfare. Now here also, the central face, Kalyanasundaram, controls the two roles of Vamadeva and Kalagi...Siva is both severe and tender. He is tender; so naturally people love Him. Although He is severe, people still adore Him, because underlying His apparent severity there is tenderness. Thus the role of Siva is predominatingly the role of promoter of welfare. – *spirituality.indiatimes.com*

THINKING AND UNDERSTANDING: When understanding arises thinking disappears. Understanding is like eyes; you see it, you don't grope. Thinking is groping, guessing. Understanding, unlike thinking, has no questions, but only answers. Thinking is borrowed. All your thoughts are given to you by others. The mind functions like a computer, but before the computer gives you any answer it has to be fed. You have to supply all the information; then only it will give you the answer. Understanding is pure intelligence. Nobody can give you intelligence. Knowledge can be given to you, but not intelligence. Through deep meditation one sharpens one's being, drops borrowed thoughts, reclaims one's own being, reclaims one's originality, innocence and freshness. – *Osho*

Inhale, and God approaches you. Hold the inhalation, and God remains with you. Exhale, and you approach God. Hold the exhalation, and surrender to God.
– *Krishnamacharya*

Lust, anger and greed are the soul-destroying gates of hell. – *The Gita*

A well-ordered mind will do greater good to a man than a father or a mother or anyone from outside. – *The Buddha*

God is always with us. But we are not always with God. That is why we suffer. –
Swami Atmachaithanya

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM BALARAMA REDDY

N. Balarama Reddy (1908-1995) was one of the most intimate devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He was a benefactor of our Kendram. The Kendram library owes its existence to him.

1. No spiritual life is possible without impeccable [in accordance with the highest standards] ethical life.
2. Practice *sadhana* as if you have to attain salvation in this very life. But have the patience to take any number of births to reach the goal.
3. The only thing new Sri Bhagavan said as compared to Adi Sankara was that the heart is on the right side.
4. Sri Ramana is also an *avatar* like Rama and Krishna. Only thing is he is a *Jnanavatar*. The purpose of *avatars* is the upholding of *dharma* and granting of *moksha*. Bhagavan did both. He is a combination of both the *avatars*.
5. Bhagavan can be felt in your own heart. The Ashramam is not needed. The Ashramam may or may not be there. But Bhagavan will be there eternally.
6. If a blind man has to cross a road, somebody has to help him across. The person who helps is the *siddha*. In the same situation, a *jnani* will provide the gift of vision to the blind person, thus rendering him free from all troubles and bondages.
7. Veda Vyasa, Adi Sankara were *Jagadacharyas*. Afterwards, it is only Sri Bhagavan.
8. If somebody is in deep distress, do not breach Vedanta to him. If possible, share his grief.
9. The longer the body is kept in a fit condition, the greater will be scope for *sadhana*.
10. Total devotion is knowledge (*jnana*).

(Source: *Sri Nidimusali Balarama Reddy: His Life and Times with Sri Ramana Maharshi* – A 1996 publication of our Kendram.)

SRI RAMANA SHOWERS GRACE ON AN AMERICAN DEVOTEE

Elizabeth Lok, an American devotee, writes:

I was thinking still of Arthur Osborne's book, and particularly recalling the beautiful experience of the disciple who felt the pressure of Bhagavan's hand on his heart, in blessing, while far from the Ashram and Bhagavan. Again a swift little pang of envy, and again a self-scolding: he to whom it happened had made himself ready for the reception of such Grace, and it could happen only to the heart which was ripe for it.

The darkness of the night around me became utterly black, and in my mind's eye I caught a fleeting glimpse of Maharshi's wonderful face. At the same moment I felt a sharp pressure in the chest, just to the right of the breastbone. Everything merged into unutterable peace. I was able to dwell in that peace for several days, during which time errors, disharmonies, misunderstandings, impatience and fatigue became impossible, and my family, who knew nothing of what had happened, responded radiantly in an unbroken harmonious and loving glow. The peace gradually receded, of course, but from that time conscious effort is opening my heart to Bhagavan and I could almost always restore it.

Around this time my mother was taken to a hospital, where she lived for her last three remaining years. Having small children, no household help, and the vagaries of public transportation made it difficult for me to visit her regularly. I have always been deeply fond of this loving mother, and grateful to her for her warmth and enthusiasm. As her body weakened she was much in my thoughts. I was concerned that for years she had feared death, and while my grasp of spiritual things was tentative, I felt that somehow perhaps one might help.

So often at nights or in quiet moments I would think of her, wishing her, willing her peace and love and courage with all the strength of my heart. And while I didn't speak of it, I found that she felt and responded to this. In sending love to her this way the ordinary small surface rumpling of disagreement and awareness of each other's small failings completely disappeared, and we felt ourselves very closely united by love in a very real sense.

One afternoon on a hospital visit, my mother, who had been rather ill, drifted in and out of sleep while I was with her. I sat very close by, cradling her head in my arms, and while she drifted out, wishing her love and peace with all my heart. I nearly

trembled with the intensity of effort. At one point she opened her eyes. As I looked at her it was not my mother's hazel eyes into which mine looked, but Bhagavan's deep brown ones. And from them flooded peace and love without measure, unfathomable wisdom and bliss, until everything disappeared into a vastness of love and peace. There was no mother, no daughter, no hospital room – only that profound peace which passeth all understanding.

It has not been my privilege to have known Bhagavan while he was among us as a man, nor yet to visit the Ashram or to walk on Arunachala. But Bhagavan, the Ashram and Arunachala are eternally ready to fill me whenever I truly turn my heart and open it to them. (Source: Ramana Maharshi – Stories and Teachings, google.co.in)

A GERMAN LADY'S TRIBUTE TO SRI RAMANA

Mrs. Lucy Cornelissen, one of the finest writers of Germany, learnt Tamil in order to read Bhagavan's teachings in original. Having translated the Sage's works into German, she came to India to verify her translations.

As I was already familiar with Indian philosophy, I was neither surprised nor overwhelmed as if by something extremely new, when the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi appeared in that little cottage in a remote German forest, where I had found refuge after the disaster of World War II. And there in that cottage was the photograph of the Maharshi on my writing table, looking at me with those powerful eyes, that unique smile of the real sage.

The few original teachings of the Maharshi were available in the German language in the book *The Path to the Self*, by well-known German indologist, Prof. Heinrich Zimmer, a work written with deep understanding and a high spiritual sensitiveness. So there was no need for any other version.

The secret process by which I was prompted to begin a new translation myself, I cannot explain better than by quoting verse 97 of *The Marital Garland of Letters*: From my home Thou didst entice me, then stealing into my heart didst draw me gently into thee... Thus Sri Ramana stole into my heart.

There was a German-Tamil grammar and there were the writings of the sage in the original. It took me two years to grasp the intricacies of Tamil grammar, the language

being as flexible as the thinking of the East. Then I was ready at least to cope with the English translations, most of them made under the supervision of the sage.

Indian reader may ask why the Maharshi is so highly admired in the West: with the background of utter truth that Bhagavan realised, his keen intellect worked with ruthless logic, and so always brought home the point by the shortest way. It is the special trait of the Maharshi's intellect which fascinates the Western reader, particularly the German.

Though the Maharshi is a most brilliant interpreter of Advaita Vedanta, he was not a philosopher in the usual sense of the term, criticizing predecessors or comparing one system or one school with another. He knew from his own experience that truth cannot be either taught or learnt; it can only be experienced, that is, realised. To realise truth, the sages of India, and Sri Ramana too, had to go beyond thinking. How to do it? Inquire after that which is nearest to you. 'Who am I' or more precisely, 'Whence does this feeling of "I" arise?' If we inquire thus in the proper manner, our individual 'I' will disappear, or rather will be transformed into that impersonal I, the Self that we always really are.

I confess myself confess frankly – though not having been blessed with his *darshan* – that I have had ample evidence of the living influence of that Power that manifested Itself here as the Maharshi.

Strange to say, in India the Sage of Arunachala is not as well-known as he should be. But greatness is not easily realised by those standing too near. The strongest influence is not that which works openly and with noise, but that which is hidden and moves in silence.

Germany has always been a great admirer and true friend of the spirit of ancient India. I have tried my best to continue this tradition by my humble attempt to see and speak the truth as embodied in the Sage of Arunachala. (Abridgement of an article in *The Sunday Standard*, Madras, April, 1958.)

EVERY LETTER OF SRI R A M A N A's NAME INSPIRES A DEVOTEE

The following is an abridgement from a piece by Berzin M. Lahevala, a Parsi devotee of Mumbai. He was inspired by Bhagavan's photo printed along with an article in the *Indian Express*. Later he got completely immersed in Sri Ramana after reading books like *A Search in Secret India* by Brunton and *Sages, Saints and Arunachala Ramana* by Mrs. Taleyarkhan. He spent most of his time during 1975-82 at Sri Ramanasramam. He believes in total anonymity, lest it may inflate the ego.

R

Resurrector of the long-buried truth, namely, 'I am not the body, or mind, or ego, but I am the Self.

Refuge – the one and only one – of devotees who have full faith and trust in Him and depend upon Him completely.

Reviver of the profound path of *atma-jnana*, the Supreme Knowledge.

Reminder of the long-forgotten secret that the source of all happiness is within, and the happiness appearing to be gained from worldly things and people is actually derived from within only.

Revealer of the *sadhana* supreme – the *vichara marga* – the shortest, simplest, and most direct means to self-realisation.

A

Absolute Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, Love-Compassion-Grace incarnate as Ramana.

Ardhanareswara appearing as Ramana with His feminine aspect hidden within, but seen at times in His easily touched tears, heartfelt tenderness-caring more than any mother's deep feeling-sympathy-empathy usually alien to ordinary masculine nature.

Arunachala, the Mountain-Magnet, in human form with irresistible magnetic attracting power.

Atma immanent in every heart, the Self Absolute, the Ultimate, Transcendent Reality, wearing human garb.

Always ever-present and ever-living Guru, even after the dissolution of his physical form.

M

Matchless Master granting the priceless gift of Self-knowledge.

Mahadev, Bholanath – the ocean of compassion, the Great Destroyer, in mortal guise, came to destroy the ego-ignorance of His devotees.

Master of mystic mysteries beyond the mind, explaining the deepest of spiritual truths from direct first-hand experience.

Master of miracles most marvelous, yet never claiming any credit for them.

Miracles happen quite spontaneously and naturally by His mere presence, not by any will of His own.

Master Magician who breaks the enslaving spell of *maya* and restores to His devotees the experience of their own inherent Divine nature.

A

Always radiating abundant and endless Grace-Auspiciousness, Peace-Happiness to all around, like a huge banyan tree giving cool shade to all comers, not by choice but by nature.

Always free of the ignorant ego-notion ('I am the doer') even though functioning in a body of flesh and blood, and performing all day-to-day actions of normal everyday life.

Always perceiving with an eye of equality everyone and everything around,

treating all alike with the same courtesy and kindness.

Always dwelling all alone on the plane of the Absolute in the transcendental fourth state (*Turiya*) and yet freely mingling with everyone as easily and naturally as one of the common folk.

N

No name has He in truth, the Supreme Self is He, beyond all relativity, beyond all names and forms.

No form has He in truth, the formless, unborn-immortal Self is He, beyond birth and death, time and space. And yet the photographs of His mortal frame are charged with such a great magnetic power that His devotees experience His presence and boundless Grace through them. And sincere seekers, who have never even heard of Him, are irresistibly drawn to Him like moths to a candle-flame, just by one look at His picture in some publication or the other.

Not the ordinary ego-bound kind of Guru is He. The average Guru sees himself as a Master or exalted person receiving the homage and adoration of disciples to whom he gives spiritual guidance. But since Ramana is egoless, He never sees Himself as a Guru. He says, “Guru is within. Guru is the Self.”

Not restricted is He to one particular form only. In every heart does He dwell and in every form is He hidden. He once said, “Ramana is not this six feet body.”

Not just a dry, intellectual *jnani* is He. Even though enlightened via the Path of Knowledge, He is not all head and no heart. *Jnana* and *Bhakti* are inseparable and in Him we see the perfect manifestation of both the highest Knowledge-Love.

A

Allergic to ego is He. That’s why the humble and simple devotees get His

unreserved Grace unasked, but the shrewd and the scholarly burdened with the ego of learning find him rather cold and remote.

At all times abiding in the Supreme State of *Sahaja Samadhi*.

Always aware of the profound truth that like the dream state, the waking state too is illusionary.

Always very simple and unassuming because of His absolute egolessness. It is the ego which creates the illusion of separative individuality and thus makes a man feel vain and also apart from everyone and everything around him.

Always emphasizing to the mature seekers the ultimate truth that our real nature is Pure Self and hence we are always Self-realized or Free. We appear to be in bondage only because of our mistaken identification with the illusionary body-mind and its activities. (Source: Based on the article sent by him to the editor)

CONNECT WITH YOUR SOURCE: The single most important thing you can do in your life is to connect with your source. Greater than anything you desire, connecting with source allows you to develop a relationship with the infinite wisdom of the universe. Consciously attach yourself to your source. Start your day by giving thanks to everything in your life, both the wanted and unwanted. Write a list of five things you are grateful for every day and watch your life change! Give thanks for what you can see, taste, touch, smell, hear, or sense, for without your source you would not exist. Look at the sun or the clouds, the moon and stars, and notice everything which is not made by man. This, in its simplest form, is the divine expression of the source. And then realise that the same energy that made the stars made you. The same energy that powers the universe powers you. Are you any less than any one of these? – *Laurie J Brenner*

As the dream world is known to be unreal for the reason that it vanishes upon waking, so this waking world is also proved to be unreal by its vanishing in the light of the real self. The only reality is that peaceful Self which shines by the light of its own nature as pure consciousness in the supreme state wherein the world is lost. – Sri Ramana Paravidyaopanishad

KNOW YOUR MIND: Sit in a comfortable position and start watching your breath. Keep your focus on the breath when you inhale and exhale. This would give you a glimpse of a state where there are no thoughts in your mind. Slowly you would be able to watch the activities of your mind and the journey of thoughts from one subject to another. Soon you would know the system that operates your senses and in turn your mind – *spirituality.indiatimes.com* [Caution: Much practice, patience, persistence and sincerity is needed to secure results.]

JUNE- 2008

SIVA: The Supreme is worshipped in oval or egg-shaped form of the Sivalinga. Siva's representation as *linga* is to show His incorporeal nature. The twelve renowned Siva temples in India are also known as Jyotirlinga Mutts, signifying His form of Light Incorporeal. Three lines marked on the Sivalinga symbolize His triple characteristics: *Trinetri* – the one with the third eye of wisdom, *Trikaldarshi* – the one who sees the three aspects of time, and *Trilokinath* – the lord of three worlds. Siva is also known as Shambhu or Swayambhu and Sadasiva meaning that Siva is the eternal Soul who has no creator above Him. In south India, Lingayats believe that Siva is the Supreme God. The Ishtalinga worn by the Veerashaivas on their body is technically a miniature of Linga and is considered to be an amorphous representation of Siva. – *Prafulla Pant*

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SAGE: He who is above hope and expectations, controlled in heart and soul and has given up all sense of possession. He whose undertakings are all free from desire and thoughts of the world. He, who, having totally given up attachment to actions and their fruits, has got over the dependence on the world, and is ever satisfied, does nothing at all, though he may be ever engaged in action. He who has given up all objects of enjoyment and has no craving. – *The Gita*

GOD IS A VERB NOT ANOUN: For too many of us, God is somewhere out there, watching and judging us as we struggle through our imperfect lives. When we perceive God as a noun, we envision Him as the creator, the architect of and, therefore, separate from His creation. Identifying ourselves as part of that creation, we see ourselves not only separate from our source but also separate from each other and all other manifest things as well. Once I viewed God as a verb instead of a noun my perception of life shifted. Everything around and its manifestation became God. There was only God. When someone spoke to me, it is with God's voice. When I

listened to, it was with God's heart. I invite you to try it. The small shift from noun to verb would make all the difference. As you begin to view God not as a creator but constantly changing dance of creation itself, you will discover Him in everything you see – including yourself. – *Jean Claude Koven*

RAJAMANI'S REMINESCENCES OF SRI RAMANA

C.R. Rajamani, associated with the printing business at Madras, first visited Sri Ramana in early 1940s.

I was in my early twenties when I first *darshan* of the Maharshi. He was seated on a couch. A cast-iron charcoal brazier was radiating a comfortable warmth, and a pleasing aroma of the incense thrown into it at regular intervals was pervading the entire hall. About thirty people were seated on the floor facing the Maharshi. None spoke or even whispered. What struck me was that no one seem to show even an inclination to talk. Some were meditating with closed eyes.

Sri Ramana's body was luminous like burnished gold. He was clad in his usual *kaupinam*, with a small towel across his chest. He appeared to be occasionally dozing off and had to steady his head often. He frequently stretched his palms over the fire and massaged his long fingers. In spite of his apparent dozing, his eyes did not look drowsy. On the contrary, they were extraordinarily bright and alert. He was not looking at anybody in particular. I felt I was in the presence of an extremely affable person with a lot of natural grace, at perfect ease and without any pretension whatsoever.

I saw a white-skinned boy of about ten years sitting a couple of feet to my left. Next to him was a white man, presumably his father. Further to my left, was a white woman, whom I thought was the boy's mother. I then saw Sri Bhagavan's eyes alight on the boy for a brief minute. I thought it was just a casual look. The boy was all the time looking at Sri Bhagavan with a sort of fixation, as if on the verge of asking a question. But, no! He broke into tears. A cascade of tears came gushing out of his eyes. They were not tears of pain, for his face was radiant with joy. I could see that Sri Bhagavan's glance, though only resting on him for a brief moment, had opened in the boy's heart a veritable reservoir of pure joy.

Whenever I recall this incident, it creates a feeling of being very near to something truly Divine. Of course, I have had my own share of Sri Bhagavan's grace in my later

years. I have also had some ever-fresh visions which I dare not devalue as creations of a fevered imagination for they have strengthened my faith in Sri Bhagavan. Some of them occurred decades after Sri Bhagavan's *mahanirvana*. They have been firm confirmations of his continued Presence and reassurances of his immortal words: "They say I am going! Where can I go? I am always here!"

I learned that the boy had come along with his parents, who have come to attend the Theosophical Society's world convention, which is usually held at Adyar, Madras. The boy's parents arranged a trip to Tiruvannamalai, but he stoutly refused. However, he changed his mind at the last moment and did make the trip. Within an hour of his face-to-face meeting with Sri Bhagavan, his mental barriers were reduced to nothingness. He shed tears for quite some time and later said to his mother, "I am so happy. I don't want to leave his presence. I want to be always with him!" His mother was most upset. She pleaded with Sri Bhagavan, "Swami, please release my son! He is our only child. We will be miserable without him." Sri Bhagavan smiled at her and said, "Release him? I am not keeping him tied up. He is a mature soul. A mere spark has ignited his spiritual fire." Turning to the boy, the Maharshi said, "Go with your parents. I will always be with you." He spoke in Tamil throughout, but the boy understood him fully. He bowed to Sri Bhagavan and reluctantly left with his parents. (Source: google.co.in < Ramana Maharshi – Stories and Teachings, Collection 3 >)

Book Review

YEARS IN THE PRESENCE OF RAMANA MY MASTER

By Maha Krishna Swami

The author, an inmate of Sri Ramanasramam between 1938 and 1940, records the guidance given by the Maharshi to the devotees over these years. The dialogues cover a part of the period in which there is a gap between the 'Talks' and 'Day to Day'. Krishna Swami went to Brazil and established 'Bhagavan Sri Ramanasramam' there, to fulfill the Master's direction to him. How it happened makes an interesting reading. In the author's words:

"Sri Ramana used to gaze at Arunachala. He said that the mountain's energy centre is so powerful that there was certainly a corresponding place on the other side of the globe, capable of polarizing as much spiritual energy as Arunachala. He asked a

disciple to find an atlas and verify his affirmation. In the world map, his finger landed on India and with his other finger, he indicated a country on another continent. The form of the country indicated by him was similar to that of India, and one of the disciples read aloud 'Brazil'. He faced me, and looked once more to the map and affirmed that I would go to Brazil. My Master has just pointed out my destiny. This would be fulfilled inevitably. For me, very young at that time, all this appeared mysterious, remote.”

The book in 'question-answer' form provides Sri Ramana's responses to topics like Happiness, Karma, Mental Powers, Silence, The World, The Ego, The Oppressive Mind, Renunciation and Meditation.

Sri Ramana's horoscope with reference to twelve zodiac signs discussed in Appendix would be of interest to those who understand astrology.

The book was originally published in Brazil. We are grateful to A.R. Natarajan who made it available to Indian devotees.

[Published by Ramana Centre for Learning, Post Office Road, Bangalore – 560 094. e-mail ramanabangalore@sancharnet.in pp. 156+vi, price Rs. 150]

Note: Some of the experiences of Maha Krishna Swami are recorded at pp. 343-4 in our Kendram's publication **Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi**.

If I have made one human being happier, one creature more comfortable, one heart more hopeful, my day has not been wasted. – J.P. Vaswani

A BLIND PROFESSOR'S ENCOUNTER WITH SRI RAMANA

Dr. Roy, M.A., B.L., Ph. D. (USA), a blind professor from Bombay visited Sri Ramana in 1946. The Maharshi evinced keen interest in the Braille script which he had brought with him. He showed before the Maharshi as to how he writes and reads. The following is recorded in *Day to Day with Bhagavan*:

In reply to Roy's question that in case of persons not capable of long meditation, will it not be enough if they engage themselves in doing good to other? Bhagavan replied, "Yes, it will do. The idea of good will for all at the heart is enough. Good, God, and

Love are the same thing. If a person keeps continuously thinking of any of these, it will be enough. All meditation is for the purpose of keeping out all other thoughts.” After some pause, Bhagavan said, “When one realizes the truth and knows that there is neither the seer nor the seen, but only the Self that transcends both, that the Self alone is the screen or the substratum on which shadows both of the ego and all that it sees, come and go, the feeling that one has not got eyesight, and that therefore one misses the sight of various things, will vanish. The realized being, though he has normal eyesight, does not see all these things.”

During the course of discussion with Roy, Bhagavan added, “There is nothing wrong in seeing anything, this body or the world. The mistake lies in thinking you are the body. There is no harm in thinking the body is in you. The body, the world, all must be in the Self; or rather nothing can exist apart from the Self, as no pictures can be seen without the screen on which the shadows can be cast.” In answer to the question as to what is the best way to the goal, Bhagavan said, “There is no goal to be reached. There is nothing to be attained. You are the Self. You exist always. Nothing more can be stated about the Self than that it exists. Seeing God or the Self is only being the Self or yourself. Seeing is being. You, being the Self, want to know how to know, how to attain the Self. It is something like a man being at Ramanasramam asking how many ways are there to reach Ramanasramam, and which is the best way for him. All that is required of you is to give up the thought you are this body and to give up all thoughts of the external things or the non-Self. As often as the mind goes towards outward objects, prevent it, and fix it in the Self or ‘I’.”

“That is all the effort required on your part. The different methods prescribed by different thinkers are all agreed on this. The *advaita*, *dvaita*, *visishtadvaita* schools and other schools all agree that the mind must give up attention to external matters and must think of the Self, God, as they may call it. That is called meditation. But meditation being our nature, you will find when you realize the Self that what was once the means is now the goal, that while once you had to make an effort, now you cannot get away from the Self even if you want.” (*Day by Day*, entry dated October 17, 1946.)

RAJALAKSHMI REMEMBERS HER CHILDHOOD DAYS WITH BHAGAVAN

Rajalakshmi was the granddaughter of Venu Ammal, the younger sister of Echammal, who had served food to Bhagavan for about forty years. (Refer serial

no. 60 in the Kendram's *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* . Venu Ammal was a committed devotee and did service to Bhagavan beginning with the time he was at Virupaksha cave. The following is based on her video interview and an article contributed by her son, with whom she lives at Chennai. She says:

On the death of my mother, my grandmother was completely devastated, unable to bear the loss of her only daughter. She walked all the way from Tiruvannamalai town to then distant Ramanasramam at 11 p.m. on a dark, lonely night. She cried uncontrollably and fell at Bhagavan's feet. Chinnaswami, Bhagavan's younger brother, objected to her falling at the feet of Bhagavan for a worldly reason. To this Bhagavan countered by asking Chinnaswami if he would have objected to his sister Alumelu doing the same thing in a similar circumstance. Bhagavan shared her grief in his inimitable way and consoled her.

I first saw Bhagavan in 1923 when I was three years old. My grandmother, who was serving at the Ashram, took me along with her every morning returning home in the evening. Once, I was playing 'cooking' game by offering small pieces of stones as cooked rice to Bhagavan and I asked him to eat them. Bhagavan readily put those stones into his mouth and pretended to eat. When my grandmother objected to it, Bhagavan replied that the child was happily offering him the stones as food and he did not want to disappoint her.

On another occasion, when seated next to Bhagavan in the dining hall, I asked my grandmother to serve me more of a particular preparation. She declined. When she was about to serve more of the same preparation to Bhagavan, he refused to have it on the ground that what was applicable to the child was also applicable to him.

Bhagavan taught me Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit, starting from the alphabets. He also taught me arithmetic. The first Sanskrit *sloka* he taught me was from *Upadesa*

Saram. Eventually I learnt all the thirty *slokas* and recited them before Bhagavan, who was very pleased. Bhagavan presented to me a copy of the book *Ramana Vijayam* by Suddhananda Bharati (see entry no. 101 of the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*) after writing my name on it. The book also tells the story of Bhagavan's stay at Pathala lingam. Being curious, I visited the place in the Arunachaleswara temple. But I could not go inside due to bats flying around and the stinking smell coming from inside. I told Bhagavan about my experience and asked how he could stay inside such a place for such a long time His reply was that

he was not aware of his stay there and that he came to know of it from others. This shows he was completely oblivious of time and space while inside Patala lingam.

In my school, children used to play *kolattam* (a game using two wooden sticks). I did not have the sticks to play. My grandmother was not willing to spend one and a half paisa for the sticks. [One rupee was equal to 64 paisa in those days]. When I told Bhagavan of my problem, he asked his attendant Madhava Swami, to get two wooden sticks out of which he made two beautiful *kolattam* sticks and presented them to me.

Somebody told me not to address Bhagavan as 'Thatha' (grandfather). Bhagavan replied that since I was at the Ashram since childhood, there was nothing wrong in calling him 'Thatha'.

In the early months of 1950, when Bhagavan was very ill, I was at Lucknow. My grandmother, who was working at the Ashram, asked his permission to visit me and then go to Kasi. Bhagavan told her that when she took a dip in the Ganges at Kasi, she could perform the ceremony on his behalf too. After a few days with me, she went to Kasi and while taking a dip in the evening, thinking of Ramana, somebody told her to look up. She saw a large star trailing its light across the sky. And this happened at the exact time of Bhagavan's *mahanirvana*. (Source: *Mountain Path*, April-June, 2008.)

UNDERSTANDING NA KARMANA

The recitation at the end of satsang every Sunday at the Kendram, is from section 12 of Mahanarayanopnishad () mantras 14 to 17. These mantras are also contained under the heading *Dahar vidya* () in Narayanavalli () of Taittiriyaopnishad (). *Dahar* () means small or subtle. It also means 'the cavity of the heart' or the heart itself.

- by work, - not, - by progeny, - not, - by wealth,
- not, - some, - by giving up (all these), -Immortality,

The central theme of this verse is that the knowledge of Self- realization is attained through inner purity gained by taking to *sannyasa* and yoga. *Sannyasa* implies renouncing worldly and religious work, and preferring to remain forever steadfastly in the consciousness of Brahman. This is also yoga. Those who perpetually strive to keep the spiritual state are called *yati*-s. The last moment of life is called *antakala*

(), end time. Souls fated to rebirth confront *antakala* repeatedly, but the soul that is illuminated by the wisdom of Vedanta takes his last birth, and consequently meets his *parantkala* (), final end time. The word *paramirtah* () denotes the attainment of Immortality, while one is living on the earth, and the word *parimucyanti* () implies the merging of the individual Self then and there, at the time of death, into the Supreme Self without leaving a trace of separate individuality – just as the birds flying across the sky do not leave any footprints, or the fish moving in the water leave no trail of path.

With the attainment of illumination the aspirant becomes *paramirta* () and at the fall of the body he becomes *parimukta* (), no more to be born again.

Though *jnana* is the sole cause of liberation, *sannyasa*, that is, dedicating of fruit of action to God, is necessary along with it

Jnana dispels ignorance by revealing the Truth, but *tyaga*() and yoga, that is, the practice for getting into *samadhi* (), are necessary to generate the undistracted and pure state of mind in which alone knowledge could shine unintermittently.

Brahmaloka () here does not imply any locality but Brahman itself.

- small, sinless, pure, - the residence of the Supreme,
 - situated in the centre of the citadel (of human body),
 - that, which, the lotus (of the heart), - in it, - further,
 - in that, - small space (of the heart), - inside, - sorrow less,
 - which, - space, - there is, - that, - must be meditated upon.

In the citadel of the body there is the small sinless and pure lotus of the heart, which is the residence of the Supreme. Further, in the interior of the small area there is the sorrowless empty space. That is to be meditated upon continually.

This *sloka* gives the object and the place for unbroken meditation of the Supreme Divine. It tells us that although *Parabrahman* () is infinite, He can be approached in the cavity of the heart through unbroken meditation. The heart is the mansion of the Supreme. The *Paramataman* () residing in the heart is referred to as *visoka* () sorrowless, and an aspirant who enters into his own heart by continuous contemplation of the Supreme becomes sorrowless.

[Brahma sutras () chapter one, *pada* 3, contains eight *sutras* under the heading *Daharadhikaran* () which provide some details about worshipping the Supreme in the heart.]

- that, - sound, - at the commencement of (the recital of) the Vedas, - uttered, - in the Upanisad, - and, - firmly established, - dissolved in the matter, - his, - beyond
- who, - he, - the Supreme Lord.

He is the Supreme Lord who transcends the syllable OM, which is uttered at the commencement of the recital of the Vedas, which is well established in the Upanisads, and which is dissolved in the primal cause during contemplation.

The *sloka* describes the Reality mentioned in the previous *sloka* as the sorrowless space in the heart. The *pranava* () is the symbol and representation of the Supreme and so the source and substance of the Vedas and the Upanisads. The aspirant is advised to meditate on the three elements of *pranava*, namely, **a, u, and m**. The Supreme corresponds to the *nada* () or the intangible reverberation which continues for ever when the three syllable of the *pranava* are uttered in succession and their physical sound has subsided.

The term *maheshwara* () containing the element of *mahan* () indicates the idea of the highest worship.

(Source: *Mahanarayanopanisad* by Swami Vimalananda, Ramakrishna Math, Madras.)

DEATH: When we die we see that we must leave behind all the things we possess. We have no clue as to what will happen next. We are afraid and the element of uncertainty only intensifies our fear. Death is woven into the very fabric of life. In our own bodies countless cells continuously die and are replaced. In our mind we experience the constant birth and death of myriad thoughts and ideas. Dying is a reality that we can learn to accept. Fear of death is largely linked to the ego. We are afraid of losing what we are most attached to. The larger the influence of ego, the greater the fear of death. – *Christopher Mendonca*

THE MIND AND MATTER: The mind is a subtle form of matter and the body is the gross form of mind. Mind and matter are not different from one another. A quantum physicist would say that matter and energy are not two different entities. The source of matter is energy alone and matter keeps moving between matter and energy. The mind is invisible but the body is visible. Hence our identification and association with the body is so deep that we tend to see ourselves as body alone. What is reality? Reality is that Self isn't just the sum total of body, mind, feelings, thoughts and consciousness. The 'i' we are associated with is the illusionary 'i'. The 'i' we know has more to do with mind or body, but our real 'I' remains obscure. What an irony that the 'i' does not know the 'I'. – *Anandmurti Gurumaa*

July- 2008

REMINISCENCES OF A COLLEGE STUDENT

This anonymous chronicler was in B.Sc. final year, when he met Sri Ramana in 1946. The following is based on his letter written to Sri Ramanasramam after the visit.

I bowed down and sat in the hall before the Maharshi. There were many people present but the hall was quiet. I was unable to continue sitting in a quiet manner, but did not know what to speak to the Maharshi. There were a few books near the Maharshi. I picked up one of them and began to read. The book had concepts such as, "Being is one," "The world is unreal." I could not understand them as my knowledge was confined to science. I could not help feeling confused in the following line of thoughts: "Why should God create me? Where was I? Where will I be? Is all that I see is false? I do know the presence of objects before me. Don't I see the Maharshi sitting before me?"

I could not read the book any more and fell into a contemplative mood. Just at that time the Maharshi addressed me thus: “What is the doubt?” I raised my head and said, “There is a human figure on the sofa. There is one on the floor. With my eyes I perceive these two very clearly. But you say that in reality there is only One. How can that be true?”

The Maharshi smiled and kept quiet for a little while. After a few minutes he said, “You must be used to performing experiments in your laboratory. If you are examining an object, the amount of details would depend upon the quality of the instrument you use to examine the object. Now, even if your instrument is fine, if your eyesight is poor you will know little about the object. If the eyesight is good but the brain is not normal, the object’s true nature will not be known to you. Again, if your brain is fine but if your mind does not pay attention to what you are observing, the less you will know about the object. In brief, the amount you know about an object is dependent on an entity called mind.

What is mind? It is thoughts. All the thoughts spring up from a single thought. This thought is ‘I am-the-body thought’. It has two components. One is the body and the other is I. The body being of transient nature, is subject to change; and it depends on external factors for its existence, such as food. But the nature of ‘I’ is different from that of the body. What exists in truth should be existing always. The body does not exist all the time, so it is not the truth. The ‘I’ exists in all states including waking, dream sleep, and deep sleep. Hence ‘I’ is the truth; body is untrue. Both of these combined can not exist as one entity. How can night and day, light and darkness co-exist? Similarly, there is no entity that has as its basis the co-existence of ‘I’ and body. So ‘I am-the-body’ thought has no basis in truth. If we examine the world with this untrue thought as the basis, how can we learn the Truth?”

At that moment, I felt the foundation of my knowledge being shaken up, and my conviction in scientific pursuit providing the ultimate fulfillment suddenly disappeared. Further, the Maharshi said that one can realize the truth about the world, after knowing the Truth about oneself. The *upadesha* I received changed my mental attitude and, subsequently my daily activities. I pursued life in the same environment I had before. But I looked for life’s fulfillment in the spiritual path, blessed by the Maharshi. I felt that the grace of the Maharshi allowed me to lead a harmonious life. (Source: *Arunachala Ramana*, vol. v, Sri Ramanasramam)

TIRUPATI OF VENKATAGIRI: When Shree-Lakshmi disappeared from Vaikuntha after a disagreement with her Lord, Vishnu descended on earth looking for

her. He found her in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, but she was too angry to return. So the Lord decided to stay on earth until she had calmed down. He made the seven hills of Vyankata, in Andhra Pradesh, his home because the hill-tops reminded him of the seven hoods of the serpent Ananta-Sesha.. The Lord married a local princess, the beautiful Padmavati, whose shrine is located nearby at Tiruchanur. Kubera helped the Lord meet his marriage expenses. Tirupati is still repaying the debt using money offered by the devotees. The wedding ceremony of the Lord and his consort is celebrated each year during Brahmotsavam festival... The eyes of the idol at Tirupati are so beautiful that they have to be covered with *tilaka*, otherwise his devotees would never leave the shrine and all worldly duties would be left unattended. (Source: *Vishnu* by Devdutt Pattanaik)

THE MIND AND THE WORLD: This world is a mere play of thoughts. Just as the spider emits the thread of its web out of its own mouth and again withdraws it back, so the mind projects the world out from itself and again absorbs it back within. When the mind passes through the brain and the five senses, the names and forms of this world are projected out from within. When the mind abides in the Heart, they return and lie buried there. – *Guru Vachaka Kovai* by Murugunar

FACE TO FACE WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

**Extracts from review of the above publication of our Kendram in
Prabuddha Bharata, April, 2008.**

Sri Ramana Maharshi was the ambrosia of spiritual consciousness personified in human form, a glimpse of which would be caught by every single visitor who was fortunate to approach him... As such, to be face to face with Sri Ramana Maharshi, as one of the visitors has remarked, was to be face to face with God's gracious power working in his person.

As recorded in the book, what his admirers see in him are the wonderful traits of a true *sthitaprajna* and *jivanmukta*, as described in the Hindu scriptures. Though his easy accessibility, utterly normal behaviour, perfect sense of equality, overflowing compassion, and undisturbed silence are captivating, it is his loving and penetrating look that shakes the depths of one's heart and reveals answers to countless troubling questions... Realization is no longer a distant dream, but an immediate reality, the flow of which can be felt in the person of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

The intimate accounts given in the book are invaluable, for they depict Ramana as a complete man, in all dimensions and forms. These recollections form a beautiful blending of Ramana's life, teachings, and influence on people from diverse strata of society. All the writers agree, based on their own experiences, that an intense power to transform others was latent in him. Every one of the writers, in his presence, found an inexpressible change taking place in their minds and personalities... **The book is like a bouquet of beautiful flowers offered at Sri Ramana's feet.** (Reviewed by Swami Vireshananda, editor, *Viveka Prabha*, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore.)

GANESHA – THE LORD OF GANAS

Parvati wanted Siva to father a child. But he refused. An exasperated Parvati created a child on her own, using the turmeric paste with which she anointed herself. The child was Vinayaka because he was born without the intervention of a man. Parvati asked her son to guard the entrance of her bath, and not let any one in. Vinayaka obeyed, blocking even Siva's entry. Siva lost his cool, raised his trident and beheaded the stubborn lad. Parvati was inconsolable in her grief and threatened to transform from Gauri, the life-giving goddess, to Kali, the life-taking goddess, if her son was not resurrected. Siva therefore ordered his followers, the ganas, to fetch him the head of the first living being they encountered. They brought back the head of an elephant, which Siva placed on the severed neck of Parvati's son and restored him to life. By giving him life, Siva became the boy's father. He acknowledged his fatherhood by naming the lad Ganapati, lord of ganas.

That the upper part of his body is created by Siva and the lower part by Sakti makes Ganesha a deity who brings together God and Goddess, soul and substance, spiritual bliss and material delights.

The choice of an elephant's head for Ganesha is interesting. In Hindu symbolism, the elephant is the symbol of material abundance. Indra, king of gods, rides an elephant. Elephants flank Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Siva, who rejects material pleasures, is described as Gajantka – he who flays the elephant and uses its thick skin as his garment.

In some scriptures, Riddhi and Siddhi – wealth and wisdom, are Ganesh's wives. Subha and Labha – auspiciousness and profit, are his sons. Santoshi – satisfaction, is

his daughter. His rat represents the unmanageable stubborn problems of life that he keeps at bay.

If Kartikeya is the warrior son of Siva, Ganesha is the scholar son. Kartikeya is born of Siva's seed, while Ganesha is born of Parvati's body. Kartikeya is associated with fire, Ganesha with water. Kartikeya is *tapa*, Ganesha is *rasa*. Kartikeya is commander of the Devas, Ganesha is scribe of Rishis. Kartikeya is muscular and virile, Ganesha is fat and fertile. (Source: *myth= mithya, a handbook of Hindu Mythology* by Devdutt Pattanaik, Penguin)

REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMANA'S CLASSMATE – SAB JAN

The following account has been provided by M. Abdul Wahab, who was closely associated with Sri Ramana as his classmate in 4th, 5th and 6th forms at school in Madurai. Sri Ramana was very fond of this Muslim boy and addressed him as Sab Jan.

Venkataramana was very learned in Tamil and stood first in the class. He was particularly well-versed in aphorisms of Tamil grammar. Our Tamil Pandit John Balakrishana was very fond of him. He was not very good in English. In other subjects he was above average. In general, he was not much interested in his school books. He was very fond of playing games, particularly football.

Even as a student he was very religious, and would go round the Subramania Swamy temple with fervent religious ecstasy. He used to take me with him several times and make me go round the temple saying, "God's creation is alike. God is the same, the apparent differences in God are created by man." Because of such universal outlook implanted in me by him in those days, I could become an ardent devotee of Sri Varadaraja Perumal of Kancheepuram. For 12 year I partook actively in the *Garuda seva* by giving a shoulder to lift the deity of Perumal, while going in procession in the streets of Kancheepuram.

When Venkataraman disappeared it was a shock to me that he did not tell me about his running away from his home.

I got enlisted in the police department. In 1903, in one of the shops at Uttaramerur, I was surprised to see a portrait of Venkataraman, but completely different in appearance. I was anxious to know how the shop man happened to possess the photo. Then I was told that this was 'Brahamana Swami' living in Tiruvannamalai and that

the Swami was in *mounam* then. I was eager to meet my old friend and went to his abode. He was pleased to receive me although he did not speak. He simply nodded his head with a radiant face. I was thrilled to meet my classmate, who was all the more beautiful and resplendent with a mark of saintliness.

Again I went there when I was Inspector of Police at Tirupathur. I was very sad then, since my father had passed away. Sri Ramana showed me his mother's tomb, which consoled me. I understood from his action that death is inevitable as far as the body is concerned. After that I went to see him many times and all occasions he gave special attention to me and introduced me to whoever present on the occasion. He used to make me sit by his side while taking food in the dining hall, which later I came to know, was quite unusual with him.

I was transformed into being a devotee of Bhagavan from being his friend. This inward change brought about by him is the greatest boon he has showered on me. He showed his greatness once through a dream in which he showed signs of my dear wife's passing away and in a mysterious way consoled me and prepared me for the shocking event. It did take place very soon, and my wife passed away as predicted. By the grace of Sri Maharshi it did not affect me very much. (Source: *Silent Power*, Sri Ramanasramam)

If you judge people, you have no time to love them. – Mother Teresa

A man is but the products of his thoughts; what he thinks, he becomes. – Mahatma Gandhi

The mountain remains unmoved at seeming defeat by the mist. – Rabinranath Tagore

BHAJA GOVINDAM OF ADI SANKARA

***Bhaja Govindam* by Adi Sankara consists of 31 verses. The first stanza given below is a refrain to be chanted at the end of each of the 30 verses. In *Bhaja Govindam*, Sankara bluntly criticizes the life-long mad pursuit of acquiring knowledge and material objects, completely oblivious of death, which can overtake us any time. We present below a few verses of this immortal classic.**

Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam Moodhamate

Samprapte Sannihite Kale, Na Hi Na Hi Rakshati Dukringkarane.

Seek Govind, Serve Govind. Take refuge in Govind alone. Oh fool! When the destined moment of death catches up, surely the knowledge of grammar rules will not save you.

The last word of the sloka (*dukringkarane*) refers to a grammatical formula from Dhatoopad of Pannani's *Siddhanta Koumudi*. In the context of the verse, the term denotes a repetitive recitation of grammar rules with a view to mastering them. Here Sankara is not merely indicating *vyakarana sastra*, he is using the word in a wider sense to embrace all types of knowledge. One may master various sciences, arts and literature, may command fame, wealth, covetable social status and deceive himself into a foolish thinking that he is in a fortress of complete security against uncertainties, unhappiness, fears and tears. Sankara seeks to shake up and wake up all such persons from their false sense of security and exhorts everyone to face the ground reality that nothing is permanent and is subject to change and death, which is around the corner to pounce upon us at the appointed moment.

Death is an unpreventable fact of human life. When does it visit, when and how it will overtake us, no one knows. In its awesome presence, the human might, with all its efficiency and excellence of any kind whether physical, mental or intellectual is reduced to naught. Man knows all this and yet due to delusion caused by *maya*, loses his focus of awareness. In his distorted perspective of life he continuously sees a false promise of power in his accomplishments, a wrong sense of security in his acquisitions and possessions, and a fake feeling of happiness in the objects of pleasure. In view of all this, Sankara asks us, especially the learned, in ridicule: Oh man! Will you recite grammar rules when you are faced with death?"

Man has come to believe all along in his living years that all things mundane and material are for ever his. But when the final moment of reckoning arrives all these suddenly seem to slip away from his grasp and he feels cheated and mystified. The *Kathopanishad* describes Death as Lord and a Teacher par excellence of the Science of Brahman. It is at the hands of Death that the young boy Nachiketa learns the secrets of life and finally attains the highest knowledge of the Spirit. In the case of Sri Ranama Maharshi, the death experience became the forerunner of Self-realization. Hence, Sankara in this verse, rightly exploits the fear of death to shake us from the stupor of ignorance, and draws our attention to Govinda.

The word *moodha* or fool points to a state of mind lacking in *viveka* or discriminative awareness. It is a mind clouded by ignorance and confusion and blinded by passion and pleasure. So when Sankara addresses man as ‘Oh fool’, it is only meant to jolt him from the hypnotic spell of delusion. In so doing he is emphasizing the urgency with which man should wake up from the slumber of ignorance. The seeking or the enquiry into the highest Truth must start now and here, from this moment itself, if one is really serious. The spiritual adventure is possible only when the body, the mind and the intellect are healthy and vigorous, exuding energy and vitality.

The term *bhaja* means worshiping God by constantly repeating His name. But true worship is profoundly inward. The external paraphernalia is to create a conducive atmosphere within and without, to ward off mundane distractions.

By choosing the word ‘Govind’ Sankara covered both *saguna* and *nirguna* aspects of the Reality. What is more, he offered his devotional respect to his own teacher Govindapada. According to the Puranas, ‘Govind’ is the protector of the cows and played the part of Gopala in Gokul. Hence He is the Lord of cattle. At the philosophical level, the animal instincts and impulses in the individual constitute the cattle which are controlled by the Self. Hence, the indwelling Self is Lord Govind.

Maa Kuru Dhanajana Youvanagarvam, Harati Nimeshatkaalah Sarvam;

Maayamayamidamakhilam Buddhwa, Brahmaadam Twam Pravisha Vidittwa.

Take no pride in your wealth (and possessions), in the people (at your command). Do not be proud of your health and youth. Time loots away all these in a moment. Understanding their illusionary nature put them aside. Realize the state of Brahman and enter into It or abide in It. (Seek Govind, Serve Govind...)

Wealth is indispensable to a limited extent in so far as it is necessary for our physical survival and security. Beyond that possession of wealth is accompanied by fears and difficulties. One must not also take pride in one’s acquisitions, as the time lies in wait to devour everything in a trice – *Harati nimeshatkaalah sarvam*. If this is so, should one be proud and possessive? Is it not foolishness? There are men who take pride in their youth, health and vigour, forgetting that the health is not the same all through the life. With the passage of time health suffers many set-backs.

Pride in any form stifles all virtues, especially the quality of humility, which is so essential for a spiritual aspirant. False attachment to material acquisitions and intellectual ideas give rise to false pride which results in bondage. Sankara wants us

to remember that – *Maayamayam idam akhilam buddhwa*, that is, know that everything in the world, including the world itself, is an illusory appearance having no reality in essence.

Disengaging oneself from the false identification with the matter, one must realize one's true nature to be the Infinite Self. Sankara says – *Brahmapadam twam pravisha viditawa* – Realize the self and enter the domain of Brahman.

Kastwan Koham Kuta Aayaatah, Kaa Me Jananee Kaa Me Taatah

Iti Paribhavaya Sarvamasaaram, Viswam Tyaktwaa Swaapna Vicharam.

Who are you? Who am I ? From where did I come? Who is my mother? Who is my father? Thus enquire, and leave aside the entire world-of-experience as essenceless and a mere dreamland born of imagination – *Swaapna vicharam*). (Seek Govind, Serve Govind...)

The teacher in this verse suggests an introspective, critical enquiry into the nature of illusory relationships. Such an enquiry reveals the illusoriness of the world of experience. In the dream one experiences many things. They are all real to the dreamer as long as the dream lasts. But on waking up one realizes that the dream world, the dream life and the experiences were mere illusory projections upon the waker's mind. Similarly, when one awakes to the higher Consciousness in oneself through an in-depth enquiry and intense meditation, one discovers that the present waking state is also nothing but a long and big dream projected on the Infinite Self. Knowing all this, one must be prudent to renounce the ephemeral and seek the Eternal, the inner Reality (Govind).

Kaamam Krodham Lobham Moham, Tyaktwaa-(a)tmaanam Pashyati Soham

Atma Jnana Viheena Moodah, Te Pachyante Narakanigoodaah.

Abandoning desire, anger, greed and delusion, the seeker beholds in the Self, “He am I”. They are fools who fail to gain Self-knowledge and consequently become captives in hell and suffer torture (even here). (Seek Govind, Serve Govind...)

According to the Acharya, the lower nature of the seeker ever tries to manifest itself in the form of animalistic propensities and passions, such as desire, anger, greed and delusion. Their preponderance and upsurge agitate and disturb the mind. When the mind is constantly set in the pursuit of sense-objects it dwells upon them day in and day out. Such seeking creates attachment to those objects of sense, and from that

attachment desire is born. The desire brought about by the mind is actually an illusion. Desire needs to be enquired into for its complete resolution.

The desire for wealth, women, knowledge, popularity, position, power and domination are mischievous machinations of the mind for own survival. Under the pressure of desire when the mind runs after gratification in the objects of its attachment, should there arise any obstacle threatening its non-fulfillment, the force behind the desire breaks into an ugly mode of emotion marked by agitation and intolerance. That reactionary and riotous emotion directed at the obstacle is called 'anger'. Desires are whetted more and more as they are gratified. Consequently, one longs more and more for sense-objects and more and more indulgence and gratification. This 'more and more' syndrome of the mind is called 'greed'. As greed thrives on selfishness, it is often unfair to other people.

When the mind is under the grip of the trio of desire, anger and greed, the faculty of *viveka* or discrimination goes into banishment. The spiritual aspirants should take care of these inner enemies.

Those who have no inclination for Self-knowledge are considered as fools (*moodhahs*) because they are not unaware of the wretchedness of the worldly existence, with all its limitations and misery, but do not somehow choose to move away from all that. They feel contented to wallow in their own mire of ignorance. Self-condemned to a self-made hell, they suffer as though captives there in –*Te pachyante narakanigoodaah*.

Hell is not a geographical location in some unknown region, but it is here and now contrived by our own unintelligent ways of living, built with the bricks and mortar of selfish thoughts and unrighteous actions. Therefore, fools suffer endless anguish assuming that it is their natural lot having been born as human beings.

Artham anartham Bhaavaya Nityam, Naasti Tatah Sukhalesah Satyam,

Putradapi Dhanabhajaam Bheetih, Sarvatraisha Vihitaa Reetih.

Reflect constantly, day after day, that wealth is calamitous; the truth is, there is not even an iota of real happiness that can be derived from wealth and possessions. The rich fear even their own sons and the like. This is the way of wealth everywhere. (Seek Govind, Serve Govind...)

Man relies more and more on the magic power of wealth for his happiness. But in his longing for wealth, man gradually loses his intellectual sanity. He begins to feel that

wealth is the be-all and end-all of human life. The mind gets in a state of agitations, anxieties and worries. One is plagued by great anxiety in trying to preserve what is procured. Fear starts haunting the possible loss of what has been acquired with great struggle. One gets suspicious of everyone.

It is necessary to remove the false belief that wealth alone is the source of all happiness. True happiness is within and is independent of wealth and objects. Wealth is certainly a necessary means of improving the standard of living of people. However, in order to enjoy the outer **standard of living** we must have the **standard of life** also within us. The standard of life is the science of life as well as the art of living. It is because of an imbalance between these two aspects of life, even amidst plenty of outer comforts and economic prosperity, man continues to be unhappy. The correction of this imbalance is sought to be achieved when we come to see the implication of – *Artham anartham bhaavaya nityam*.

This verse emphasizes the need to cultivate right relationship with the objective wealth, so that **we rule over wealth and not allow ourselves to be possessed and ruled by wealth**. (Source: *Reflections on Bhaja Govindam* by M. Bhimasen Rao)

Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed. – *Benjamin Franklin*

Knowledge and ignorance are of the mind. They are born of duality. But the Self is beyond knowledge and ignorance. It is light itself. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

If you want to reach a state of bliss, then go beyond your ego and the internal dialogue. Make a decision to relinquish the need to control, the need to be approved, and the need to judge. – *Deepak Chopra*

AUGUST - 2008

MANY DIMENSIONS OF LORD SIVA

Siva, the transcendent: Siva means the auspicious one. Yet everything about him seems inauspicious: he dances amidst funeral pyres, smears himself with ash, wears

animal hide, carries skulls, smokes narcotics, enjoys the company of ghosts, and demands worship during the dark half of the lunar month. Siva thus transcends the duality of good-bad, right-wrong, holy-unholy, auspicious-inauspicious. He stands above all, loving all.

Siva, the approachable: Despite his awesome cosmic status, Siva presents himself as a uncomplicated god – unassuming, guileless, free. His domestic life reflects an earthliness that makes him endearing. In his celestial abode he lives just like his devotees: loving his wife, sometimes quarreling with her, playing with his children, singing and dancing with his *ganas*. He is thus very close to the people, their caretaker, their friend and father, a divine answer to human questions.

Siva, the ascetic: Siva refuses to be a part of this world. He refuses to marry and have children. He sits in caves or on mountain peaks and watches the world: changing, transforming, repeating itself, unstable like a mirage, repetitive and predictable like a play, *lila*. He restrains his senses, rejects all temptations. He is in a state of eternal equanimity.

Siva, the benefactor: Siva is a god who is easily pleased; a *bel* leaf or a *datura* flower dropped on his *linga*, even accidentally, can win his eternal affection. He is bestower of happiness, generous with boons and blessings. He guides his devotees towards eternal bliss.

Siva, the teacher: Siva is the fountainhead of all wisdom. He is the lord of the performing arts, fine arts, martial arts, literature, science, and philosophy.

Siva, the destroyer: Brahma creates the world. Vishnu sustains it and Siva destroys it. Together the holy trinity ensures the rotation of the cycle of life. Siva also destroys pride by his simplicity. He destroys all prejudices by his unorthodox lifestyle. At a more subtle level, Siva is the destroyer of ego and attachment that traps man in *samsara*. (Source: *Shiva* by Devdutt Pattanaik.)

SRI RAMANA'S UNUSUAL VISION TO A DEVOTEE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, WHO HAD NEVER MET HIM

Dr. Robert Fuchsberger wrote the following letter to Sri Ramana on 5th August, 1946, from Czechoslovakia.

“Bodily far away from Arunachala, but spiritually at Bhagavan Sri Ramana’s feet, I am just thinking with reverence that half a century has passed by since the young Venkataraman came to Tiruvannamalai. O Maharshi! I take the liberty of celebrating this date as Sri Bhagavan’s real birthday. I celebrate it by throwing myself in the dust at Sri Bhagavan’s feet with more reverence, awe and humility, and by trying to listen to Maharshi’s voice in my own heart.”

He records as follows after sending the letter: “I continued my routine life filled with professional work, followed by sound dreamless sleep during the night. In the morning and evening I always devoted some time to meditation. This normal flow of events was interrupted one night in the middle of August by a mysterious event. Suddenly Sri Bhagavan appeared before me in my sleep. It was a very vivid dream in which I saw Sri Bhagavan’s figure, which was familiar to me from a picture that I had received from the ashramam. The whole head was surrounded by a halo of silver light which illuminated not only Sri Bhagavan’s face, but also the whole space around. But the most fascinating were Sri Bhagavan’s eyes: dark, motionless and deep, like the mysterious depth of the fathomless ocean, full of wisdom yet at the same time full of love and understanding.

“I do not know how long the dream lasted but it was so vivid and thrilling that I woke. Nevertheless the vision continued in the same form and intensity as during sleep. I sat up in my bed still gazing at the vision. I opened my eyes but there was no change; still those piercing eyes, that motionless look. The bedroom was lit up by the light emanating from Sri Bhagavan’s head. My academically trained mind began slowly to exercise control; I closed and opened my eyes alternately. I looked at my wrist watch – it was half past twelve – and looked again at Sri Bhagavan. The vision still remained unchanged. Then I lighted my night lamp; now I saw Sri Bhagavan with open eyes only vaguely, but with closed eyes as well as before in the darkness. I again turned out the light and sat in bed gazing at Sri Bhagavan, until after some time the vision began slowly to fade away. Then I lay down and immediately fell asleep. The next morning peace and bliss that passes understanding filled my heart; this state continued in spite of daily work and trouble.”

The letter (first paragraph above) was read out in the hall. Bhagavan made the following comments in this regard, as recorded in *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, entry dated 16th August, 1946.

“While all of us were expressing our delight on hearing the contents of the letter, Bhagavan said with a face radiant with benevolence. ‘We do not know who he is. He

never came here. How has he managed to know that it is full fifty ears since I came here? He has written a letter full of devotion. From what he has written it looks as if he has read about my life and understood it. The letter has come unexpectedly. Where is Czechoslovakia and where is Tiruvannamalai? What are we to say when a person who has never seen me has written thus?"

Later, the devotee recorded:

“On 23rd August, 1946, I received a letter from Sri Ramanasramam which was posted on 15th. This letter had an invitation to the Golden Jubilee celebrations and a few lines by the *sarvadhikari* who acknowledged receipt of my letter and informed that it would find a place in a volume which would be published on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Bhagavan’s arrival at Sri Arunachala. The Golden Jubilee Souvenir was received by me two years later. I found my letter in it under the title: ‘At Sri Bhagavan’s Feet’. What happened to my letter when it was received at the Ashram and placed before Bhagavan, I came to know 18 years later through the book *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*

“The kindness with which Sri Bhagavan received my letter I take to be a confirmation about the vision in August 1946. I consider it to be the Guru’s *moun diksha* or initiation by silence, though I experienced it like initiation by look. Certainly it was a manifestation of Sri Bhagavan’s Grace.” (Source: *Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. V)

KAPALI SASTRI’S REMINISCENCES OF THE MAHARSHI

T.V. Kapali Sastri (1886-1953), a born scholar, belonged to Chennai. His family was known for their Sanskrit scholarship. He mastered four languages – Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and English. He received inspiration from Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana, and Ganapati Muni, who was his guru. At the instance of the Muni he first met Sri Ramana in 1911-2. He says:

What a meeting it was! The very first day wrought a remarkable change in my being and no amount of *tapas* or *japa* would have given me an indubitable knowledge of spiritual consciousness and a correct appreciation of the truth of spiritual life that the Maharshi gave me.

The personal attraction of the Maharshi was irresistible. But I found his teaching too direct, *immediate*, seemingly simple, having no step in between, i.e., the starting point

and the goal, at any rate not practicable to people circumstanced like myself. It was only after I started reading the *Arya* – a magazine of Aurobindo Ashram, I found what I wanted. I saw Aurobindo in 1917. Thereafter, a series of far reaching experiences in my inner life commenced and they took me to him. It was an ordeal to come away to Pondicherry cutting through my loyalty to the Muni and attachment to the Maharshi. But I was compelled from within.

As one who has come under the Maharshi's influence and known him for more than a quarter of a century, I may refer to his central teaching which can always bear repetition: Go deep to find thy Self that is the real 'I'; everything else can wait. Other problems can be solved afterwards, if they arise.

When the Maharshi was on the hill, he used to take a few of us with him for the *giripradakshina*. This used to last from 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. Once, while I was going with him he pointed his face towards the sky and said, "Look, there perhaps are the *siddhas*. They (people) say they are *nakshatras* and pass them by." As we walked on, he observed that the very stars were beneath his feet. During one such round in May 1922, we got word that supervisor Ramaswamy Iyer was taken ill suddenly and was dying. The Maharshi went to the place on the Hill where Ramaswamy was lying, with violent palpitations of the heart. The Maharshi sat near him, placing his hand on his head. Within five minutes, Ramaswamy got up and was quiet normal.

In 1930, when I went to the Ashram with Sunder (S.P. Pandit), the Maharshi asked me to have a look at the Sanskrit rendering of a Tamil work by Lakshmana Sarma. It was very imperfect, and after hours of struggle I could finalize only a couple of verses. How to complete the remaining 38 verses or so within the limited time haunted me. In the evening as soon as the Maharshi came to his seat, he asked me to take up the work. I took it and it was amazing that within two to three hours I finished almost all the verses. Later, Sunder told me what a magnificent and inspiring sight it was to see the Maharshi sitting with his blazing eyes transfixed on me all the while. He added that the Maharshi's face and head looked inordinately big during the time.

When I came to the last portion, I looked up and the Maharshi asked me, with an exclamation of joy, "So, it is finished?" I answered in surprise, "Yes, but the last verse does not come off in this particular metre." "Does not come in that metre?" queried the Sage and sank into silence. Within a moment a strong upward movement gushed up from beneath the navel, somewhere from the root of the spine, and involuntarily a verse came out like a cry from my mouth. It was verse in the required metre!

The Maharshi was very particular about the food requirement of the visitors to the Ashram. On the *jayanti* day, he did not take his meal till the last man had had his food. When I asked him about this, he said in effect, that when as a boy he set out from the house to Tiruvannamalai, he had actually to starve for days together. And so he has been very particular that nobody should suffer the pangs of hunger as he did.

When a visitor observed that devotees described him an avatar of Lord Skanda, the Maharshi replied, “Who am I to object or assent to what people may say?”

Once when a hunter was about to kill a peacock on the hill and the Maharshi forbade him to do so, he brushed aside his words saying, “Go Swami, who is asking you?” The next day, it would appear, the man had an accident and his very arm had to be cut off. “I felt sorry for him,” said the Maharshi speaking of it, “but what is to be done? People have to go through these things before they would learn.” (Source: *Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vols. I & IV)

MINDFUL MEDITATION: Sit in a comfortable position, eyes closed, preferably with the back upright and unsupported. Relax and take note of body sensations, sounds and moods. Notice them without judgment. Let the mind settle into the rhythm of breathing. If it wanders (and it will), gently redirect attention to the breath. Stay with it for at least 10 minutes. After mastering control of attention, a person can face a threatening or troubling thought or learn to endure the anger or sadness and let it pass. – Excerpted from the *New York Times*

KNOW YOURSELF: In order to gain liberation one should render the mind quiescent. Once this has been understood there is no need for endless reading. In order to quieten the mind one has only to inquire within oneself what one’s Self is. One should know one’s Self with one’s own eye of wisdom. It is futile to search for it in books. There will come a time when one will have to forget all that one has learned. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

ACCEPT LIFE AS IT IS: Life is a challenge. It is the beginning of a struggle that continues until we breathe our last. Fighting against life’s realities and adopting a stance of negativism only creates unnecessary pain and difficulties. You have heard people say, “I go with the flow.” What they are saying is this: I accept in life what I cannot change. I deal with it as comes, within the framework of my own knowledge and capabilities and spirit. Fundamental to accepting life is to give recognition to the supreme life-giver. Life is a force so complex that it can not be duplicated. And, most

amazing and thrilling of all, He has given us minds! It is through our minds, the thoughts we think with it, and the impressions we store in it, that we are conscious of living. In short, our life becomes just what our mind makes it for us and just what it tells us life is. Don't forget that God is a living energy to quicken and guide our own energy. The Infinite Power Source is a living elixir to lift up, sustain, and establish our own spirit. Being negative takes the spirit out of us. If we refuse God's gift of an abundant life, then we must do without it. Our minds which think so ceaselessly and insistently is the most marvelous instrument imaginable; but it is up to us control it and to choose the kind of thoughts we think, to train ourselves in appreciating all flowers that come into our life, and deal with the weeds. We must come to terms with the silent and perennial truth that the field of human life will always consist of the good, the bad and the ugly coexisting together. When we are able to appreciate life and accept it on its own terms, we harmonise our mind with God's mind: with the universal intelligence, power and glory. Everyday, give praise to the author of life, and take pleasure in its wonders. – *Saundra L. Washington*

KEERAI PATTI – THE FIRST LADY TO SUPPLY FOOD TO SRI RAMANA ON A REGULAR BASIS

Regarding Keerai Patti*, Sri Ramana says, “Even when I was in Arunachaleswara Temple, she was staying on the hill [in the *mantapam* of Guhai Namasivaya Temple] and was visiting me now and then. After I went to Virupaksha Cave [in 1899] she began coming to me frequently.

“She used to go out before sunrise, wander about the hill and bring back leaves useful for cooking vegetables. She used to cook them tastefully, bring me a handful and persuade me to eat. She never failed to do so even once. Sometimes I used to help her in cooking by going to her place and cutting the vegetables. She had great confidence in me. She used to go to the town daily, obtain rice, floor, *dhal* and the like by begging at various houses. Once in a while she used to prepare gruel with flour and *dhal* and bring it with the vegetable curry, saying, ‘*Sami, Sami*, yesterday one good lady gave me a little flour. I have made some gruel *Sami*.’

“When she would not find any vegetable she used to sit depressed. On such occasions I used to climb the tamarind tree, pluck some tender leaves and give them to her. She was thus somehow supplying me food every day. She had great devotion and attention. Even at eighty years of age she used to wander about all over the hill.

“Once, at midnight a thief got into her place and was trying to get away her things when she woke up and cried out, ‘Thief, Thief.’ On hearing her cries I shouted back

saying ‘Here I am. I am coming. Who is that?’ So saying I ran down in hot haste. Hearing my shouting the thief ran away.’”

It was believed that she was born later as the cow Lakshmi. (See annexure –IV, entitled The Cow Lakshmi, *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi.*)

*In Tamil *Keerai* means green leaves and *Patti* means grandmother.

(Source: *Arunachala’s Ramana*, Vol. 1)

WORDS OF WISDOM: To know is the first step towards transformation. To know and not act on what we know is equal to not knowing. So, action is the next step. To deeply reflect and see the hidden meaning is *mananam* or reflection. To be at peace with what is and to be a witness to it is meditation... The essence of life is change. Our ignorance does not accept this fact. It prefers to remain in illusion. The body is constantly changing. See the beauty in change. See the surprise in change. Don’t resist change, but learn to be in harmony with it... The mind is nothing but thoughts. Thoughts are like clouds. You are just like the sky, which is a witness. Being a witness is the essence of mediation. Even if it is not easy, enjoy and play by practicing being a witness. You find it not easy because you get identified. Identification becomes a pattern or habit. Change this habit to not being identified. – *Swami Sukhabodhananda*

GO TO THE SOURCE: The single most important thing you can do in your life is to connect with your source. You come from source, you exist because of source and someday you return in source. Greater than anything you desire, connecting with source allows you to develop a relationship with the infinite wisdom of the Universe. By staying connected you will be in the flow and everything comes easily and quickly to you. As you develop your own relationship with your source you will find what form of communication works for you. There are no set rules. Connecting with your source is a step you must make on your own. This is a very personal journey; no one can come between you and your source. – *Laurie Brenner*

SRI RAMANA EXPLAINS A VERSE FROM THE *GITA*

Once a devotee wanted to know the import of the following verse:

Paritranaya sadhunam vinasayacha dushkrutam

Dharmasamstapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge.

Bhagavan with a smile on his face said: It means for the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers and for establishing *dharma*, I am born from age to age.

D. This is not my point, Bhagavan. Lord Krishna says, ‘I will be born; I will protect’. Does it mean He will be born again and again?

B. When *mahatmas* talk of ‘I , I’ they do not speak of the body. That ‘I’ means I along with *ahamkarna* which becomes *ahankara* (*ahankarana* means mind, *buddhi*, *chitha* and *ahankara*). That which is freed from the *ahankarana* is *atma*. When that I becomes *bahirmukha*, i.e., outer-directed it becomes worldly and when it is inner-directed , that is, *antarmukha* – it becomes *aham-sphurana* and becomes all-pervading.

D. If that is so, *sastras* say that without *prarabdha* no one is born into this world. Where is the question of *prarabdha* or *paramatma*?

B. There is no need to doubt the *sastras*. *Paramatma* is *niskriya* (without action). How he can have *prarabdha*, you say. The reply to your doubt is in the verse itself which says, ‘ When the evil-doer hurt the virtuous, the latter prays to God by doing *puja*, *japam* *tapas*, *yagna* and other good deeds to relieve them of the tortures inflicted on them by the evil-doers. The bad deeds of the evil-doers and the good deeds of the virtuous result in *prarabdha* and God comes down to the earth assuming a form – an avatar – that is *pareccha prarabhada*. (Source: *Letters from and Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam* by Suri Nagamma.)

HAPPINESS: True happiness cannot be sought outside of ourself. But we continue to seek happiness from the outside because since our birth we survive in this world in dependence on others. Whether we like it or not, there is hardly a moment when we do not get affected from others’ activities, and most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationship with others. However, placing all your happiness in the hands of others will lead to a lot of pain and disappointment. You have certain expectations of others and when they are not met, you may feel hurt, betrayed, confused, misunderstood, taken for granted, invalidated and so on. When someone else’s actions don’t live up to your expectations, you feel let down. Often the other

persons won't even realise they've done something to cause you pain, because they don't know your expectations, unless you have explicitly shared them. Often we don't even realise our own expectations until someone has hurt or disappointed us. It is unrealistic to expect another person to know what's in your head – your values, beliefs and expectations... By making your happiness conditional upon another person, you hand your power over to them. You feel a 'victim' whenever things don't go as you want or expect. The key is not to expect a particular outcome... You can choose to wallow in negative feelings which may further damage a relationship, or you can try to place a positive spin on the situation. There are always choices and different ways of looking at the same thing...All seasons are beautiful for a person who carries happiness within. – *Donna Thomson*

SRI RAMANA'S PHILOSOPHY – POINTS TO PONDER

1. The divine principle runs through all creation; it is the Self. This Self and the cosmic Self are one and the same.
2. Universe or creation is a projection of God. It is an extension and not different from God.
3. This world is man's celestial city. There are no other worlds; man need not escape from here.
4. The Vedas and Upanishads affirm life but prescribe moderation in everything while living it.
5. The world is at peace if man is at peace within himself. He need not reform it. Self-reformation will take care of the world's reformation.
6. Service to mankind purifies life and helps to know your Self, if done without the sense of doership.
7. Self-enquiry begins within the seeker with one question, 'Who am I?'. The seeker's body-consciousness, materialism and time sense are all lost in the seeking of the **One Doer Who** is behind everything he does.
8. Self-enquiry leading to Self-realization, does not conflict with the day-to-day business of the seeker. He need not give up his traditional *pooja*, chanting of mantras, duties as a householder and as a member of society.
9. Miracles are not intended to be performed by the saintly performer, who has no will of his own. It is the power of his Self (the indweller Spirit) which performs them.
10. *Sahajasamadhi*, everyone is in, without knowing it. The self that enjoys it in the deep sleep, attests to this bliss on waking up.
11. Pure consciousness of the Self which everyone is in without being aware of it, has to be consciously realized as independent of body-consciousness or egocentricity. It is eternal.

12. 'Aham' is *I'ness* – pure, simple, still, Being; only when it chooses to dance, to act, to do, etc. it becomes egoism. *I'ness* is Being, ego is becoming.
13. Immortality or *Ananda* or *Amrita* or heaven, is here and now, when one lives as one is, active but not involved in the fruits of one's actions.
14. Rebirth is here and now when the ego retreats into Self.
15. Take refuge in God through complete self-surrender.
- 16.

(Source: *I'ness* by Dr. C. Krishna Murthy. The booklet can be obtained from Smt. M. Varanana, 509, Temple View Residency, 6-2-10, Lakdikapul, Hyderabad – 500 004. Phone: 5516 1981.)

ASHTANGA YOGA: Yoga is not limited to just performing *asana*. Yoga is an approach and way of life. The term yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word, *yuj*, which literally means to join. This, therefore, is the process of uniting or joining or narrowing the gap between our limited existence and the unbounded divinity and power. In his *Yoga Sutra*, Patanjali prescribes eight sequential and progressive stages in the journey towards ultimate yoga. These progress from the very basics, namely, *yama* (self-restraints) and *niyama* (observances). The five elements each of the two steps, respectively, are: 1. (i) non-killing, (ii) truthfulness, (iii) non-stealing, (iv) continence, and (v) non-receiving of gifts. 2. (i) cleanliness, (ii) contentment, (iii) austerity, (iv) study, and (v) self-surrender to God. When the first two steps are observed, the aspirant becomes fit for the third stage, namely, *asana* (postures), for all round development of the body and the mind. The subsequent finer and subtler stages are *pranayama* (breath regulation), *partyahara* (sense withdrawal), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (ultimate oneness with the Divine). – *K. Vijayaraghavan*

Good habits result from resisting temptations. – Anonymous

You are creating your own reality, moment by moment, with the thoughts you choose to think and say. – Jim Donovan

When a man forgets himself he usually does something that everyone else remembers. – Walter Scot

SEPTEMBER – 2008

DATTATREYA, THE MYSTIC: Anasuya, the wife of sage Atri, was renowned for her virtue. Vishnu arrived at her door step disguised as a sage and asked her to feed him unclothed. Anasuya bound by the rule of hospitality, agreed to the strange request. But such was the power of her chastity that when she brought the food, Vishnu turned into an infant whom Anasuya fed as a mother, her virtue uncompromised. When Vishnu recovered his original form, he blessed Anasuya, “You will bear a son who will be the embodiment of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.” Thus was born Datta, the son of Anasuya. He was also known as Dattatreya, after his father, the sage Atri. Datta observed Nature carefully, and gained an insight into the nature of the world. Inspired, he went on to compose the *Avadhuta Gita* – the song of the recluse – that explains the doctrine of detachment, *vairaga*. He went around the world as a mendicant with his cow. – *Vishnu* by Devdutt Pattanaik

MEDITATION: It is an awakening into a new level or dimension of reality. A little awakening gives tremendous satisfaction, but it can also boost the ego, which has to be avoided. The awakening has to go on to deeper and deeper levels. If we can feel there is something created by a power that we can really understand and look at it with great wonder, with no other feeling intervening in the mind, the spirit of wonder wipes away other thoughts. One can look with wonder at even simple things like growing of a plant and its flowering and so on. – *The Theosophist*

BE PLAYFUL; Society has sown the myth that it is the prerogative of children to be playful. As we grow up, there exists an accomplishment need in an individual. Society perceives that in the fulfillment of the accomplishment need, playfulness is an obstacle. Hence, one needs to be serious. Therefore, playfulness is impressed upon us as something bad. The wise approach is in being committed and still being playful. Do not be serious but be sincere. You will experience lightness in life. Your life will have more spiritual light. When you are serious, you are in tension. When you are playful, you are relaxed. Relaxation is a part of being spiritual. Being playful is an important door to spirituality. In India it is called *Leela* – Krishna *Leela*. – www.prasannatrust.org

THE SOLE REALITY: It is very difficult to understand the nature of the Supreme Being. It cannot be conceived by the mind like sense objects. It can only be known by

the wise souls who realize it in state of *samadhi* when there are practically no mental concepts. The Supreme Brahman, the sole reality, can not be described either as being or non-being, it can be realized within ourselves. – *Vivekachudamani*

GO BEYOND THE FINITE TO ENJOY INFINITE BLISS: The Infinite alone is bliss; there is no bliss in the finite. The finite reveals itself through the senses, mind and intellect, and is the source of misery. True bliss lies beyond the senses, mind and intellect. As there is no subsisting and true joy in objects, the great sages have adopted the path of renunciation and taught the life of detachment and humility... Deafened by the clamour of the senses, one does not hear the melodious music of the Soul, though it is ever ringing right within our own heart. Aspirants are often puzzled about how a serene and detached mind can be acquired and maintained while living in the world. How can the finite be given up for the infinite when one continues to work with the finite?...Discipline and integration of mind are achieved by practising *vairagya* (dispassion) towards the objects of the world and *abhyasa* (repeated effort) in reflecting over the immortality of the Soul and its identity with the Absolute. Such reflection, combined with *persistent practice* of concentration and meditation, brings about control of mind and the removal of the impressions of *raga* (attachment) and *dvesha* (hatred).

QUOTES FROM SRI SRI RAVISANKAR

1. Desire is the fever of the head. Longing is the cry of the heart.
2. Just as sweets stimulate the tongue, music stimulates the ears, the sight stimulates the eyes, *sadhana* and *satsang* stimulate the soul.
3. Meditation is seeing God in yourself. Love is seeing God in the person next to you. Knowledge is seeing God everywhere.
4. To the question ‘Who am I’, the only relevant answer is silence. You need to discard all answers in words, including, ‘I am nothing’ or ‘I am the cosmic self’. Just remain with the question ‘Who am I?’
5. Truth is hidden by the golden veil of the mundane. Pierce through this thin glittering sheath and know you are the sun.
6. Depression happens when you lose the will to fight. Arjuna was depressed; he did not want to fight. Krishna urged him to fight. The decision to fight can take away your depression.
7. There is no problem that cannot be solved. When you have a problem that you think cannot be solved and you have accepted it, then it is no longer a problem, but a fact.

8. In science, knowledge comes first, and then faith follows. In spirituality, faith comes first and then knowledge follows.

9. Some questions can only be answered in silence. Silence is the goal of all answers.

10. The soul is solidified silence.

(Source: *Celebrating Silence*, Jaico Publishing House)

VALUABLE ADVICE TO *SADHAKAS*

Just as the stems, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit of a tree will continue sprouting so long as its root survives, so our *vasanas*, desires and thoughts will continue rising and distracting us away from our self-attentiveness so long as their root, our mind, survives. As and when thoughts arise, then and there it is necessary for us to annihilate them all by self-investigation or keen and vigilant self-attentiveness in the very place from which they arise.

Until we achieve by our persistent practice of self-investigation or self-attentiveness — sufficient maturity to be willing and able to surrender our mind entirely, we will continue to be distracted by our thoughts. Thus, the struggle between our *svatma-bhakti* — our love to know our own real self — and our *vasanas* or outward-going desires will continue in us until the mind is completely destroyed by the clear light of self-knowledge.

Though we should always aim to maintain an unbroken continuity of self-attentiveness and thereby sink deep into our own self-conscious being, ‘I am’, in practice our attempts to do so will often fail, and we will therefore repeatedly succumb to the powerful attraction of our desires and consequent thoughts. But we should not be disheartened by our repeated failure to be constantly self-attentive, and should just calmly persevere in our efforts to restore our self-attentiveness whenever we find that we have lost our hold on it.

However many times and however frequently we may fall from our natural state of serene self-conscious being, we should rise again and try our best to stand firm in it.

In this long inner warfare we are never alone, because the grace of our *sadguru*, Sri Ramana, is always shining peacefully in our heart as ‘I am’, giving us all the subtle help and support that we need in our earnest efforts. As we strive to turn wholly

selfwards, the powerful attraction of his grace is always drawing us inwards, waiting to consume us entirely whenever we are ready to yield ourself completely to him. (Source: <http://arunachala-ramana.blogspot.com/>)

TRIPURA RAHASYA – The Mystery Beyond The Trinity

In his foreword to this book, published by Sri Ramanasramam, Major Chadwick writes: “*Tripura Rahasya* was considered by Bhagavan as one of the greatest works that expounded Advaita philosophy. He often quoted from it and regretted that it was not available in English. As a consequence, Sri Munagala Venkataramaiah took up the work of translation in 1936...”

Mahadeva originally taught the Highest Truth to Vishnu, who in turn taught it to Brahma. Later Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Dattatreya, the Lord of the *avadhutas* (the naked sages), and taught it to Parasurama. The latter communicated it to Haritayana, who narrated it to Narada. As the work was written by Haritayana, it is also called *Haritayana Samhita*. The book is said to consist of 12,000 *slokas* in three sections – The *Mahatmya Khanda*, section on greatness of Sri Devi (6687 *slokas*), *Jnana Khanda*, section on Supreme wisdom (2,163 *slokas*), and *Charya Khanda*, section on Conduct, which is not traceable.

Tripura is a term which refers to the Goddess of Supreme Power, who is worshipped in the *Srividya* tradition of the *Saktas* as Lalita Paramesvari, Tripura Sundari, Raja Rajeswari and so on. The term Tripura is applied to the Divine Mother who is not different from the Self. The text which deals with the nature of the Self and the *sadhanas* leading to the ultimate state of *samadhi* where *atman* stands revealed in its own light, has been called ‘The Secrets of Tripura’ – *Tripura Rahasyam*.

The book’s emphasis is that the method of dualism, starting from worship of one’s favourite deity, like the Divine Mother, Vishnu or Siva, is necessary, as that alone will lead to Self-enquiry or *atma-vichara* leading one to *sahaja samadhi* or being established in the non-dual Reality – *Atman*. The text enjoins that worship of Mother Tripura or any deity and subsequent *sadhanas* stem from *satsanga* and a deep, all-consuming desire for and devotion to the goal of Self-realisation.

(The book from which some of the above material has been obtained is *Sadhanas according to Tripura Rahasyam* by Swami Shantananda Puri. It can be obtained from Parvathamma C.P. Subbaraju Setty Charitable Trust, 13/8, Pampa Mahakavi Road, Shankarapuram, Bangalore – 560 004. e-mail: omkaraoffset@hotmail.com)

AN AMERICAN DEVOTEE TALKS ABOUT SRI RAMANA'S PHILOSOPHY

Search for the Self is a roller coaster of insights, imaginings, dead ends, highs, lows and then the slightest glimpse of that Fair Country makes us buckle down and march ever onward toward the glimmer we perceive on the horizon. Ramana never had a guru nor did he want to be one, but that's one of the most important factors in his appeal to us. Ramana is my guy too. There is no end to what could be said on these matters but when I'm pressed to boil it all down I can do no better than to share this quote from our beloved Ramana: "Distracted as we are by various thoughts, if we would continually contemplate on the Self, which is itself God, this single thought would in due course replace all distractions and would itself ultimately vanish. The pure consciousness that alone finally remains is God. To be constantly centered on one's own all-perfect pure Self is the acme of yoga, wisdom, and all other forms of spiritual practices. Even though the mind wanders restlessly, involved in external matters, and so is forgetful of its own Self, one should remain alert and remember: 'the body is not I,' 'Who am I?' enquire in this way, turning the mind backward to its primal state. The enquiry, 'Who am I?' is the only method of putting an end to all misery and ushering in Supreme Beatitude. Whatever may be said and however phrased, this is the whole truth in a nutshell." Orva Schrock – email: otsclu@msn.com

THE STORY OF THE OLD HALL AT SRI RAMANASRAMAM

The first building to be constructed at Sri Ramanasramam in 1926-7 was Bhagavan's hall. A police officer, father of M.G.Shanmukam (whose reminiscences appear in this issue) and the Swami of the Ishan Mutt, Tiruvannamalai, were involved in this work. The hall is considered by many devotees as most sanctified: it was Sri Bhagavan's sole abode for over two decades.

This structure was constructed with bricks and mud in a place infested by termites. Over a period of time, the structure deteriorated badly with the white ants impregnating the walls and damaging the roof to such an extent that there was heavy leaking and flooding of the floor. There was no alternative to renovate the entire structure. The complicated renovation work, using modern technology to render the structure long-lasting while retaining the original features, was done under

the supervision of two eminent engineers and staunch devotees, namely, K. K. Nambiar and K. Padmanabhan.

Dismantling of the old hall commenced in May 1986 and the renovated hall was reopened on December 5, 1986. To the extent possible, materials from the old hall (major portion of Cuddappah slab flooring, doors, windows, wooden trusses and rafters) were reused in the new restructure. Many old devotees felt that the interior décor and the outside appearance look ‘absolutely the same’.

Of the total amount of Rs. 1,50,000 spent on the renovation work, the largest single contribution of Rs. 40,000 came from V. Dwarakanath Reddy, an industrialist, and now resident of Ramanagar. (Main source: *Mountain Path*, January-March, 1987)

A DEVOTEE RECALLS HIS 24 YEARS OF ASSOCIATION WITH BHAGAVAN

M.G. Shanmukam’s Tamil biography *Ramana Maharshi – Life and Teachings* was published in 1937. His father, a police officer, along with the Swami of Ishan Mutt, Tiruvannamalai, was instrumental for construction of the old hall during 1926-7.

During my 24 years of personal association with Bhagavan I found that he seldom preached elaborately. He would give hints which keen seekers had to absorb carefully. He once said categorically, for practicing *atma vichara* every day is auspicious. All other *sadhanas* require external objects and congenial environment, but for *atma vichara* nothing external to one self is required. Turning the mind within is all that is necessary. While one is engaged in *atma vichara* one can attend to other activities also.

Some of Bhagavan’s personal instructions to me were: (i) If you observe the breathing one-pointedly such attention will lead you into *kumbhaka* (retention). This is *jnana pranayama*. (ii) The more you humble yourself, the better it is for you. (iii) You should look upon the world only as a dream. (iv) Except attending to the duty-work in life, the rest of the time should be spent in *atma nishta* (absorption in the Self). (v) Do not cause slightest hindrance or disturbance to others. (vi) Do all your work yourself. (vii) Both likes and dislikes should be discarded and eschewed. (viii) With attention focused on the first person and on the heart within one should

relentlessly practice ‘Who am I?’ During such practice, the mind might suddenly spring up; so you have to vigilantly pursue the *vichara* ‘Who am I?’

Traditional upbringing gradually involved me in the study of the *sastras*, doing *japa*, *bhajan*, and regular *puja* three times a day. I came to the conviction that the highest human attainment was the state of *jivanmukti* (full enlightenment whilst still in the body). During 1921-25, as a college student, I fervently prayed that I should meet a *jivanmukta* and receive his blessings.

My prayers were soon answered! My father was transferred to Tiruvannamalai. I came to know of Bhagavan Ramana living there. I rushed to Arunachala. At Katpadi, while traveling in the train towards Tiruvannamalai, I had a remarkable vision of Bhagavan. Thus my *sadguru* came to me and absorbed me even before I could have His physical *darshan*!

When I arrived at the Ashram, Bhagavan gave me a warm welcome with a benign smile. As He was seeing me for the first time, His two spontaneous utterances surprised me. Like an affectionate mother, He asked me, "When did you come?" and "How is your right hand?" My right hand was badly fractured when I was 14-years-old and though it healed up the hand remained bent and short. I used to cover it up with full sleeves and even my friends did not know of this serious deformity. How did Bhagavan know about it? And what affectionate concern He showed! After Bhagavan inquired about it, my sense of inferiority because of the defect totally disappeared. More than all this, He asked me to be seated in front of Him. Gazing at Him I sat down and I do not know what happened to me then. When I got up two hours had elapsed. This was an experience I had never had before and I have always cherished it as the first and foremost *prasad* and blessing received from my *sadguru*. That day I understood the purport of the statement, ‘The *sadguru* ever gives unasked!’ That moment I knew I had been accepted into His Fold. This strong bond He allowed me to enjoy until His *mahasamadhi*, and even after.

Daily I would go to Him by two in the afternoon and return home only at 8 p.m. Bhagavan would quote from *Ribhu Gita*, *Kaivalya Navaneetam*, *Jnana Vasishtam* and other *advaitic* texts and explain to me their greatness. All the while I was aware I was in the blissful presence of a *brahmajnani* (one who has realised Self), so highly extolled in all our scriptures.

Once sitting before Him, the following thoughts rose in my mind with great force and were running repeatedly for a long time: 'Do not argue on controversial points of philosophy or read too much of philosophical books.' 'Silently practice either vichara or *dhyanam*' (meditation). 'Do not do any thing which you know to be wrong.'

He was a *sarvajnani* (all-knower). I got many proofs of it. Daily pocket-money of three *annas* was given to me by my father. I bought for that amount *sambrani* (incense) which was burnt in the presence of Bhagavan. One day I did not get the three *annas*, so I could not buy the *sambrani*. I therefore refrained from going to Bhagavan that day. The next day when I went, Bhagavan graciously remarked: "Yesterday you did not come because you could not get *sambrani*. Veneration in the heart is enough."

"My father was suddenly transferred to Vellore. None of us, particularly myself, wanted to leave Tiruvannamalai since *darshan* of Bhagavan would then be denied. We ventilated our grievance to Bhagavan. He gave me a benign smile. A few days after, strangely, the transfer order was cancelled!

I noticed the strange way in which the doubts in one's mind got answered through someone else present in the hall. The doubt you had would be expressed by somebody in the hall to Bhagavan, and He would not only give the answer but look at you with a smile as if to say 'Has your doubt been cleared?' Bhagavan would be seated like a rock with eyes open for hours together and silence would pervade the hall; and everyone's heart would be filled with peace and stillness. This silence was His real teaching!

(Source: *Moments Remembered*, and *Arunachala's Ramana* vol. II.)

MONICA BOSE RECORDS HER MOTHER'S VISIT TO BHAGAVAN IN 1936

Suzanne Alexandra, born in Paris in 1896, had quest for Truth at an early age. When only 18, she joined the Theosophical Society. She was a talented dancer and a doctor. She came to India in 1925 to attend the annual Theosophical convention at Adyar, where she met a Buddhist swami and became a Buddhist nun. Based on a newspaper article she visited Sri Ramana in 1936. After

marriage she changed her name to Sujata Sen and ran a free clinic for the poor in Tiruvannamalai for several years.

She was guided to the Maharshi by Raja Iyer, the postmaster of the Ashram. She found the hall decorated and furnished in a simple way. A frieze of blue flowers ran along the walls. A clock hung on the wall facing the devotees. Below it, on a shelf, were a few tin containers. She saw Maharshi take some nuts out of a container for the squirrel that had run to him. Next to the couch was a revolving bookcase and further down two cupboards holding more books and a small store of stationery. Little attempt had been made to create a mystical or spiritual background for the Maharshi. Yet the setting could not detract from the grandeur of the sage. He was exceptional first of all in just being himself. In every action he made, whether he was correcting a manuscript or reading a letter, there was complete naturalness and absence of pose. This is very rarely seen elsewhere.

The Maharshi ate very frugally. He asked Suzanne whether the food was not too pungent for them. These words of solicitude were the first words he spoke to her...The Maharshi did not give any discourses. He replied to questions put to him, usually very succinctly, as if to let the one word or the few words he said make their way directly into the understanding of the questioner. On the other hand, when a young man struggled to grasp what the Self was, the Maharshi with great patience guided him through his reasoning until at last he got some glimmering of what the Maharshi meant. Apart from these exceptions to silence, there were long quiet moments when the Maharshi said and did nothing, but which were more effective in conveying transcendent Truth than any lecture or sermon would have been.

The evening session in the hall began with recitation from the Vedas. As the powerful Sanskrit syllables vibrated in the hall, the Maharshi's appearance underwent a remarkable change. His expression became austere, his gaze inwards. His face appeared translucent as if lit by inner illumination, whilst the constant slight trembling of the body had now stopped completely. Yet even in this state it was evident that he was not oblivious of his surroundings, and he had an awareness of both the inner and outer reality...**The Maharshi is an adept of the highest order, a king of yogis. The splendour of his Realization radiates like a sun. He lifts you far above the world.**

When ladies had to leave the Ashram at the sun set, Suzanne refused to do so, considering it an act of discrimination, and to register her protest she declared that since she could not stay at the Ashram, she would go and spend the night at the Hill.

She climbed the Hill somewhat afraid of the wild animals and found a small cave for her stay. Her anger drove all other thoughts from her mind. It was then that she had a vision of Arunachala as a Hill of Fire, and she saw many worlds existing within the Hill. Some time afterwards she confided this to Lucia Osborne, who did not think it was important. But a few years later when another person reported a similar experience, Lucia asked the Maharshi about it. She wrote in the editorial of the *Mountain Path* [She was the editor after her husband's death, who had founded the journal] of January 1974, that when she asked the Maharshi about it, he replied, "Yes, the Hill is the Heart."

To safeguard Suzanne from the wild animals, the Maharshi asked Cohen, who knew her when at Adyar, to persuade her to come down. Without further protests she agreed to spend the rest of the night in a hotel room in town.

Suzanne was for long associated with the idea of a Master and disciple relationship through formal initiation, which was never done by the Maharshi. In 1945, she decided to go to Swami Ramdas, with a view to be his *shishya* in a formal way. She sorrowfully told the Maharshi that she was going away. The Maharshi did not reply. But then something strange and wonderful happened, for she saw the Maharshi as Dakshinamurthi, the great silent guru. As she would write, "When I was talking to him, his appearance changed and I thought that Dakshinamurthi was sitting before me. In the silence I heard, 'There is no separation, all gurus are one. They are the indwelling self of everyone. I shall ever remain as the Jewel shining in the lotus of your heart.'" [In a group photo with the Maharshi, Suzanne can be seen, clad as a Buddhist monk, in *Mountain Path*, Aradhana, 2003.]

(Source: *Hill of Fire* by Monica Bose, Orchid Press, P.O. Box No. 19, Yuttitham Post Office, Bangkok- 10907.)

The *jnani* weeps with the weeping, laughs with the laughing, plays with the playful, sing with those who sing, keeping times to the songs. What does he lose? His presence is like a pure, transparent mirror. It reflects our image exactly as we are. – Sri Ramana Maharshi

Science without religion is lame and religion without science is blind. – Einstein

To attain knowledge, add things everyday. To attain wisdom, remove things everyday. – Lao Tzo

Without a spiritual belief in a Divine Being, in the knowledge of whom, and in obedience to whom, mortal welfare alone consists, the human race must degenerate. – *Thomas Carlyle* (1795-1881), famous British writer.

Know Ye, the kingdom of Heaven is within you...Enter your closet, shut the door and pray to your Father in secret. – *The Bible*

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STORY OF JAYA AND VIJAYA: There are seven gates around *Vaikuntha*. Those who renounce lust, anger, greed, pride, attachment and envy can cross the first six. At the seventh stand the doorkeepers Jaya and Vijaya permitting entry to only those who have transcended the fear of death and the passion for life. Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana and Sanatkumar, renounced the world as soon as they were born and decided to go to *Vaikuntha*. But they were stopped at the gates by Jaya and Vijaya who said, “How can we let you enter, you who have no taste of life or death?” Three times did they try to enter *Vaikuntha*, three times they were stopped by Jaya and Vijaya. Piqued, the four kumaras cursed the divine doorkeepers, “You have, like demons, blocked our spiritual journey into the abode of the Lord. May you become *asuras* three times over. The two were reborn as the lustful Hiranyaksha, the wrathful Hiranyakashipu, the greedy Kartaviryarjuna, the proud Ravana, the obsessive Kamsa and the jealous Sishupala who were killed by the Lord in his incarnations as Varaha, Narasimha, Parashurama, Rama and Krishana. – *Vishnu* by Devdutt Pattanaik

MINDFULNESS AS PRELUDE TO MEDITATION: Mindfulness has four important constituents. First, clarity of mind. A mind deluded with anger and greed, etc. is toxic and therefore it is unclear. Clarity comes when the mind is free of agitation. Second, staying calm. When we are agitated, craved and excited, the mind experiences instability and unease. We need to bring to settle the mind into a calmness and serenity. Third, alertness of the mind. It means that the mind is sensitized but not adversely, to surroundings. We are completely aware of what is going on, but it does not bother or worry us. Lastly, the mind should remain engaged in current events. We have to be ever watchful of this because the mind wanders, creates its own concepts and conditions and distorts proceedings... The breathing is to be set to a rhythm, focusing, preferably, on the point of release of the breath, so that the mind does not wander. The advantage of this practice of meditation is that it can be done while sitting idle, walking, and doing daily chores. The mind should, however, constantly endeavour to remember all the four states required for effective meditation. – *Girish Deshpande*

BHARADWAJ: He was one of the most famous *rishis* of yore. It is stated that he was a disciple of Valmiki. When Sri Rama, Laxmana and Sita were in exile, they visited the *ashram* of Bharadwaj in Chitrakuta to seek his blessings. His fame rests mainly on his mastery of Vedas. In *Rig Veda* Bharadwaj appears in several *suktas*. In *Sama Veda* there is one *sama* which bears his name. In *Yajur Veda* his name occurs at the very outset. The word consists of two expressions. *Bharad* 'one who bears a burden', *waja* means weight. Bharadwaj thus means one who bears the weight of knowledge. Bharadwaj's great heritage is in the form of treaties such as *Bharadwaj Shiksha*, *Bharadwaj Samhita* and *Bharadwaj Smriti*. (Adapted from *Mystics and Seers of India* by V. Gaurishanker)

REMINISCENCES OF MADHAVPEDDI

Ramakrishna Madhavpeddi, a Telugu, was an attorney at the Madras High Court. He had visited Sri Ramana in April 1948.

I was 24 years when I first visited Sri Ramanasramam. At that time I was very much depressed owing to sudden death at the age of twenty of my closest relative. My father was urging me to visit the Maharshi. He had already visited him twice, with a list of doubts all of which were cleared, without a single word being spoken by him. He had also experienced complete peace in the Maharshi's presence.

It was about 9 a.m. when I reached the Ashram. I was asked to stay in the Guest House for Gents. I entered the guest house and placed down my bedding. As fate would have it, N. Balarama Reddy was occupying the space next to me. In addition to my work in the courts, I also wrote articles for various journals on Telugu literature and dabbled in poetry. This helped in striking a conversation with him. He took me to the hall where Sri Ramana was reclining on a sofa and asked me to sit with eyes closed. Although there was absolute silence in the hall I could not sit with eyes closed. I was restless and felt as if the time was dragging. Slowly, my mind began to reflect on all my miseries, one after another. Every day, for three days, I accompanied Reddy *garu* to the hall, and every time as I sat down my thoughts would take off at high speed and my misery increased. So, on the evening of the third day, I told Reddy *garu* that I had come to the Maharshi for peace but I was only experiencing an increase of pain and misery. He asked me to stay on for one more day.

On the morning of the fourth day I was sitting in the hall with eyes closed. At one

point I happened to open my eyes and saw the Maharshi looking at me intently. Suddenly, all thoughts vanished from my mind and I experienced a delightful blank or void. Then a resplendent light enveloped me fully. I was empty of thoughts but full of immense happiness. I was one with some indefinable peace and resplendent glory. After some time, I again became aware of my body. This experience made me believe in God for the first time. In spite of all my theories of Marxism, dialectic materialism and atheism I could not deny the truth of this wonderful experience.

This condition continued for three days. I witnessed my body go through its daily activities but I remained fixed in that immense peace. The Maharshi's look pierced into me when I sat before him and even when I was not before him. **The eyes of the Maharshi are the kindest and most powerful energy of the universe.** Remembering those days with the Maharshi brings ecstasy to me even today.

I left the Ashram after six days, but even after leaving I would suddenly go into meditation. Such was the effect of being in the Sage's presence. (Source: The Internet – 'Ramana Maharshi – Stories and Teachings')

ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

By Paul Brunton

Brunton (1898-1981), a British journalist, attracted by Indian mysticism, first visited India in 1930. His evergreen classic *A Search in Secret India*, which made Sri Ramana famous the world over, was first published in 1934. The following excerpts are from his second book *The Secret Path* (1936).

It is the hardest task to realize one's own littleness, ignorance and vanity. Yet it is the greatest of attainments for it leads directly to finding of the divine life which is promised to all who would lose the personal life.

People are complicated, intellects are complicated, not life. Therefore I say: Treasure in your heart and carry in your mind the memorable saying of Jesus that "Except ye become as a little child ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Within every single of us lies well upon well of spiritual peace untapped, of spiritual intelligence untouched. From time to time whispers come to us from this second self, whispers that urge us onto practice self-control, to take the higher path and to transcend selfishness. We must heed those whispers and exploit those rare moments.

There is an unknown and unnoticed gap between every two thoughts, between every two breaths, wherein man pauses momentarily for the flimsiest fraction of a second. During that pause, which fleshes by with such immeasurable rapidity, he returns to his primal self and rests anew in his real being. If this were not so, if this did not happen thousands of times everyday, man could not continue to exist and his body

would fall dead to the ground. The Overself is the hidden source of man's life. These constant returns to the Overself enable man to "pick-up" the life power which he needs for living. These tiny fragments of time are experienced by everyone but recognized at their true value by very few.

To obtain access to one's own soul is not such a rare feat as it may seem. The artist, when he abstracts his mind from external surroundings in the rapt absorption of his art, does it. He touches ecstasy in a minor measure, forgets himself in his work. It is in this state that geniuses have achieved their finest creations, their best work.

The writer who gets lost in reverie over his theme, his mind sunk so deeply in a single train of ideas that he fails to recognize things, persons or events that are about him. Similarly, the musician rapt in the ardour of musical composition is unconsciously practicing meditation. But you who follow the path of self-enquiry, are to do it **consciously**.

"Silence is God", says a French writer. Yes, but silence of body, of thoughts, of desires – not merely aural [relating to ear or sense of hearing] silence. In this sublime moment God is beginning to take possession of your soul; all you have to do is to practice the utmost self-surrender.

We have covered our divine nature with thoughts and desires; therefore we must proceed to uncover it if we want to know it. Thinking is a heavy veil flung over the beautiful face of the divinity within us. Raise the veil a little by letting the mind come to rest and you will perceive somewhat of a beauty you can never forget.

We must experience ourselves, as we really are – not as prisoners in the body, as captives in the cage of thought or fettered by fleeting passions.

The whole art of meditation and concentration consists of unlocking our chains and arising as free spirits enter the kingdom of heaven which is very much within us all.

SRI RAMANA'S INSTRUCTIONS TO HUMPHREYS

F.H. Humphreys came to India in 1911 to join the police department. He was the first European to meet Bhagavan. For this he was helped by S. Narasimham, (uncle of President S. Radhakrishnan) who was appointed to teach him Telugu.

Do not fix your attention on all changing things. This will seem nearly impossible at first, but by degrees the result will be felt. It takes years of steady, daily practice. Give a quarter of an hour a day for this practice. Try to keep the mind unshakenly fixed on That which Sees. It is inside yourself. Do not expect to find that 'That' is something DEFINITE on which the mind can be fixed easily: it will not be so. Though it takes years to find that 'That', the result of this concentration will be seen in four or five months' time – in all sorts of unconscious clairvoyance, in peace of mind, in power to deal with troubles, in power all round, yet always unconscious of

power. Let your whole thought in meditation be not on the act of seeing, nor on what you see, but immovably on That which sees. One gets no reward of Attainment. Then one understands that one does not want a reward.

God is everything. And everything is God. One has to cease calling these ‘things’ and must call them God; and instead of thinking them to be things, must know them to be God. We must take away the world, which causes our doubts, which clouds our minds and the light of God will shine clearly through. How is the world taken away? When, for example, instead of seeing a man you see and say, “This is God animating a body.”... You can best worship God by not trying to worship Him but by giving up your Whole Self to Him and showing that every thought, every action, is only a working of that one Life (God).

It is hard to be comprehensive when talking of God. True knowledge comes from within and not from without. And true knowledge is not ‘knowing’ but ‘seeing’. (Excerpted from *Self Realization* by B.V. Narasimha Swami)

A DEVOTEE FROM KOVVUR (A.P.) REMEMBERS SRI RAMANA

P. Ramalingeshwar Rao met Sri Ramana in 1935. He writes:

Nearly quarter of a century has rolled by since I had the unique fortune of Bhagavan Sri Ramana’s *darshan*, and of sitting at His Lotus Feet and conversing with Him and receiving His Grace. The moment I had His first *darshan* I felt that I met an old Master after many years of separation. Such a thought ran in me, presumably I must be His disciple in the last birth also.

A moment spent in the company of a God-realized saint is equal to hundred years of penance. I can never forget that memorable day in my life when for the first time I visited Sri Ramana Ashram. I must only candidly say that India has given birth to gentleness personified, which manifested itself as the greatest spiritual power on earth in the person of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, the God in human form. Saint and sinner alike found a seat near Bhagavan. Even the worst sinner can be transmuted to a saint with a glance of Sri Bhagavan.

Bhagavan is the teacher ideal, king of yoga, the wish-yielding celestial tree, Master omnipotent, *sadguru*, the ocean of Divine Grace, and outstanding spiritual luminary of this Age. His personality looms intensely on spiritual India’s horizon, awaking thousands of persons in their struggle for self-realization.

The very thought of Bhagavan is most elevating and sweet. To say Bhagavan’s blessed name and follow His teachings will be as though one has escaped from pitched darkness into powerful and radiant light. His teachings guide and comfort us by giving real peace. His books and teachings are real Divine treasures. (Source: *Call Divine*, January, 1962)

RAMASWAMY VISITS THE ASHRAM ALONG WITH FRYDMAN

K. Ramaswamy graduated as a civil engineer in 1933. It was the same year when Maurice Frydman had come to Bangalore from France at the behest of the Diwan of Mysore to set up the Government Electric Factory. Frydman's residence was a short walk away from the hostel where Ramaswamy lived. That probably accounts for way the two met and soon became thick friends. It was during this period that Frydman, already influenced by J.Krishnamurti, invited the latter to Bangalore. JK thus spent two weeks in Frydman's house and Ramaswamy too was there participating daily in the discussions. Frydman was in those days a regular visitor to the Ashram, going there almost every weekend. (Frydman's write-up on Bhagavan appears on pp. 75-77 in the Kendram's publication *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.)

So on a Saturday, in 1935, Ramaswamy along with Frydman visited the Ashram, and stayed for a week. He recalls that he had informed Bhagavan one evening that he was planning to climb the hill the following morning. After breakfast the next day as he was leaving, Bhagavan signaled to him to wait, then he went into the kitchen and returned with some *iddlis* which he had himself packed in a leaf. Ramaswamy protested that the breakfast had been rather heavy and that he would really have no need for the *iddlis*. Bhagavan said in Tamil, with motherly concern, "You do not understand. After a climb to the top one would feel very hungry." And it did happen. He felt famished by the time he reached the top.

Ramaswamy recalls that sometimes one or the other among the people who were seated in front of Bhagavan would suddenly begin to sob with tears flowing in profusion and then become quiet and calm. All the while Bhagavan would remain unmoved, gazing on as usual.

Ramaswamy, an intellectual of high caliber, says, "Don't ask me what convinced me of Bhagavan's supremacy. There is no answer possible as it is an inner certainty, an inescapable inner compulsion that draws me helplessly to him. He is the most perfect embodiment possible of all that is divine."

When asked which photographic pose of Bhagavan held his attention most, he replied even before the question was completed, "Do you know, I do not regard Bhagavan as having any particular form at all. He is the inner presence, guiding every thought, word and deed." (Source: *Mountain Path*, Jan.-March, 1987)

[A Rose-Petal A Day at Thy Blessed Feet](#)

Daily I'll scatter rose-petals before
Thy blessed Feet;
Each petal just a thought. I have no more
To render Thee in homage. It is mete
That it should be like this, for all's already Thine,

There's nothing more is mine.

And as these petals one by one do drop,
Whose perfume-sweetness lasts but for a day,
I will not stop
Asking myself repeatedly this way:
"Who thinks that he now acts?" and "Who am I?"
And so like this I'll try
To plumb the depths of Being, diving deep
Beyond the realms of thought to waking-sleep,
Where naught is and yet All.

My giving is a gain,
It will not be in vain.
For every thought I one by one discard
Will grow another feather in the wings
That carry me to Freedom. Tho' 'tis hard
What I would not accomplish, 'tis of things
That must be done, it seems, in spite of me;
My will I have surrendered unto Thee.

Bound ever to Thy Feet how can I fail?
O Ramana, my Guru, hail, all hail!

~ Sadhu Arunachala (Major A.W. Chadwick)

JNANA AND PREM MARGA: *The way of knowledge and the way of love are interwoven close. Don't tear asunder those inseparables. But practice both together holding in the heart the two as one. ~ Guru Vachaka Kovai*

(The collection of Guru's sayings) by Muruganar

BE IN THE PRESENT AND REALISE THE SELF

By Michael James

Past and future are both only thoughts that occur in the present. So any thought about any moment or period of time other than the precise present moment will distract our attention away from our own ever-present self-conscious being, 'I am'. Therefore ignoring all thought of the past or future, we should concentrate only on being – uninterruptedly and unforgettingly – self-attentive now, at this present moment.

The experience of absolutely clear self-knowledge will dawn in just a single moment – that is, a single moment of completely uninterrupted self-attentiveness – and that single moment is available to us at each and every moment. Therefore our aim at any moment should not be to be uninterruptedly self-attentive for a certain period of time, or even for all time to come, but should only be to be uninterruptedly self-attentive – wholly and exclusively self-conscious – now, at this very moment.

This present moment is the only moment that is now available for us to experience ourself as we really are. Therefore, forgetting every other moment, let us just be wholly and uninterruptedly self-attentive now. Just be vigilant at this very moment to concentrate our entire attention on our present self-consciousness, thereby preventing it from being interrupted now by even the least momentary *pramada* or self-negligence. (www.happinessofbeing.com)

More injurious to a man is his own mind than the harm done to him by foes. A mind ever poised yields greater good to man than anything that comes to him from his mother, father or friends. – *The Buddha*

Self-watchfulness is never more necessary than when a personal wish to lead, and wounded vanity, dress themselves in peacocks' feathers of devotion and altruistic work. – *Madame Blavatsky*

I count him braver who overcomes his desires than one who conquers his enemies, for the hardest victory is over self. – *Aristotle*

The wise man in the storm prays to God, not for safety from danger, but for deliverance from fear. – *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

SOME MEMOIRS OF BHAGAVAN'S SIMPLICITY AND FRUGALITY

1. In 1941-42, a devotee brought an electric fan to for Bhagavan's use, who refused saying, "Why this fan? The ordinary fan is there. We have hands. I will fan myself with it whenever necessary. If the ordinary fan is used we get just as much breeze as we want. The electric fan blows too much breeze and with a whizzing noise. If this fan is used there will be a bill for the electricity consumed. Why should we make the office bear that expense on our account?" The fan was sent back to the office.

2. The Maharani of Baroda sent a velvet cloth embroidered with silk and gold thread for Bhagavan's use. But Bhagavan did not permit it to be spread on the sofa. When it was placed under Bhagavan's feet he withdrew his feet and sat with folded legs. Thereupon it was placed on the pillow on which Bhagavan reclined. He immediately stopped leaning on it and moved to the middle of the sofa. Eventually, when the cloth was folded and sent back to the office, Bhagavan said that if I have to sit on it I feel like sitting on prickly pears. This towel itself is my silk shawl. I am a poor man. For my status even what I have is too much. This sofa, these mattresses, these pillows – why all these? You people do not agree, but how happy would it be if I could spread out this towel and sit on the floor!

3. Upon the Hill, when we did not have sufficient rice, we used to go and collect different kinds of greens. When we were cleaning them, Bhagavan would talk about the characteristics of each one of them, how one produced heat in the body, another cold, etc. After cleaning them we used to put them all in a big vessel and cook them the way as suggested by Bhagavan. He used to ask us to eat the greens as the main dish and rice as the side dish! It used to taste like nectar!

4. Both at Skandashram and for a few years at Sri Ramanasramam, Bhagavan used to use *panchakal pam* for his bath. Later we used to take oil out of copra and Bhagavan used to take a little of it in his palm and rub it on his head. From the hot water provided for him, he would take a little and rub his head with it and apply that oily water to his body. He would do it so well and so carefully that his entire body used to be covered with oil. He was frugal in the use of everything. With him frugality was an art. (Source: *Mountain Path*, April-June, 1987)

RIGHT BREATHING: Become aware of your breath this instant. Are you taking deep, smooth breaths, with nice big pauses between inhalation and exhalation? The state of your breathing can often be correlated with the state of your mind... Sit comfortably; close your eyes and **consciously relax your muscles**. Now breathe deeply. To make sure that you are doing it right, keep one of your hands on your tummy and the other on your chest: breathe in slowly through your nose, and as you do so, you should feel your tummy rise. Now exhale slowly. Try to focus on your action as you let out the breath. Adding a meditative element – silently repeating words such as 'so' when you inhale and 'hum', as you exhale – may help you better in refreshing your mind. Do not get agitated if thoughts intrude. Just don't dwell on them. Allow them pass on and gently return to focusing on your breathing. Then there

is the cleansing breath technique advocated by San Diego psychologist Robert Epstein: Take a huge breath in. Hold it for three to four seconds. Then let it go out v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y. As you blow out, blow out all the tension in the body. – *Vithal Nadkarni*

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It is not the wealth and power that enslave men, but the clinging to them. – *The Buddha*

Men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own mind. – *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

Who looks outside – dreams. Who looks inside – awakes. – *Prof. C.G. Jung*

The most difficult thing in life is to know yourself. – *Thales*

Failure is only the opportunity to begin again, more intelligently. – *Henry Ford*

VEDA-VYASA: This great *rishi* is also known as Krishna Dwaipayana, that is, one of dark colour born in an island. His another name is Baadraayana, that is, one born in a forest of *badri* trees. He was born to sage Parasara and Matsyagandi or Satyavati. He classified the Vedas into four and taught them to four sages, namely, Jaimini – *Sama Veda*; Vaisampayana – *Yajur Veda*; Sumantu – *Rig Veda*; and Paila – *Atharva Veda*. He is the author of the Vedanta classic *Brahma Sutra* and of the truly great epic the *Mahabharata*. He was born on the *pu rnima* of *Asadh* month of Hindu calendar, which is known as *Guru pu rnima* or *Vyasa pu rnima*. He is revered as the first guru and many spiritual teachers bow to him before taking their seats. (Source: *Mystics and Seers of India* by V. Gaurishanker and *Times of India*)

PEACE THROUGH MEDITATION: To attain peace, spend some real quality time by going within and you will find the sense of peace that lies within. Focus your mind away from the clutter of day-to-day living and turn your attention inwards to the peaceful core of your inner being. In meditation practices, affirmations are often used to focus the mind. By simply repeating the words ‘I am’ you affirm your true nature as consciousness. The affirmation ‘I am infinite being’ is the most powerful affirmation possible. It may require courage to begin with, but the results are more than worth the effort. If you find thoughts arising, just let them go, and gently bring

your mind back into focus upon the affirmation. Every time you make the affirmation, you become more connected with the infinite being. Find a quiet place to sit down for a few minutes, close your eyes, and start looking for the space within. To keep your brain occupied with the task in hand, focus your attention on the even flow of your breath as it passes in and out of your nostrils. To induce calming effect, allow each out-breath to take longer than each in-breath. – *Owen Waters*

GANAPATI MUNI: A COLOSSUS OF LEARNING AND *TAPAS*

By K. Natesan

Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni (1878-1936), who was unique in being at once a scholar, poet, patriot, political thinker and *tapasvi*, was one of the most esteemed figures of his times. Various branches of Sanskrit learning – the Vedas, Upanishads, *itihasas*, *puranas*, *mantra*, *sastra*, *alankara*, *ayurveda*, philosophy, grammar, poetry and astrology – were all mastered by him quite early in life. He could speak fluently in Sanskrit and compose poems extempore. An assembly of *pandits* held in the year 1900 at Naida (Bengal) were so impressed by his poetic powers and in particular his skill in the special literary exercise of completing a verse begun by another poet, that they conferred on him the title of Kavyakantha (one from whose throat poetry gushed spontaneously).

A Sanskrit poet at the age of twelve, the Muni had also drunk deep at the fount of religious literature and was well set for a rigorous spiritual life before he was eighteen. After his marriage he engaged himself in serious spiritual practice, visiting various holy centers for the purpose. He was a firm believer in *mantra japa* and in its power to solve all problems, including that of Indian Independence. *Siva panchakshari* was his favourite mantra and he recited it a crore of times. In 1903 he came to Arunachala to perform *tapas*. He visited Sri Ramana, who was then known as Brhamana Swami on the hill twice, before he accepted a teacher's job at Vellore in 1904.

With his organizing ability, he gathered a group of students whose *mantra japa* was to generate enough spiritual energy to cure the ills of the nation and promote its welfare. In fact, it was his strong conviction, like Vivekananda, that national welfare should be placed above individual salvation. He resigned his job at Vellore and returned to Arunachala in 1907. An intellectual and spiritual giant who had high achievement to his credit and a host of followers as well, the Muni still felt that his life's purpose was

not fulfilled. He remembered Brahmana Swami, whom he had met before and went to him again. The meeting was of profound significance not only for the Muni but for the world at large which could learn from such a high authority about the real stature of Sri Ramana.

The Muni approached the Virupaksha cave where Sri Ramana was staying, and prostrating himself before him, said in a trembling voice, “All that has to be read I have read. Even Vedanta I have fully understood. I have performed *japa* to my heart’s content. Yet I have not up to this time understood what *tapas* is. Hence I seek refuge at thy feet. Pray, enlighten me about the nature of *tapas*.” For fifteen minutes Sri Ramana silently gazed at the Muni. He then spoke: “If one watches whence this notion of ‘I’ springs, the mind will be absorbed into that. That is *tapas*. If a mantra is repeated and attention is directed to the source whence the mantra sound is produced, the mind will be absorbed in that. That is *tapas*.”

The Muni was filled with joy and gratitude and announced that Brahmana Swami was a Maharshi and should be so called thereafter. He gave his full name as ‘Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.’ The Muni was now the foremost disciple of Sri Ramana. A number of his disciples also came to Sri Ramana to seek clarifications of their doubts. Ganapati Muni’s *Ramana Gita* recording these questions and answers (between 1913-17) is divided into 18 chapters like the *Bhagavad Gita* and is a great source of inspiration. The Muni’s *Ramana Chatvarimsat* is a hymn well-known to the devotees and is recited daily at Bhagavan’s shrine at Tiruvannamalai.

The Muni finally settled down near Kharagpur in Bengal and passed away in 1936. His works numbering over a hundred, fall under numerous categories. These are hymns, *sutras*, commentaries, researches relating to the *Rig Veda*, a model constitution for India, and even fiction. (Source: *Ramana Smrti*, Ramanasramam, 1980)

SRI RAMANA SHEDS GRACE ON A DEVOTEE

By Ursulla Muller

In the night of December 21-22, 1964, I was told by the Lord Himself: 'Within you I fulfill my word / Behold I am creating all anew.' These words arose out of the boundless depth of blissful silence and faded away again, leaving an unlimited expanse. Throughout the night these words were repeated at long intervals until the day break. At that time I was meditating already for about six years in accordance with Sri Ramana's teaching. During my *sadhana* there was always Bhagavan's guidance. He had, for instance, advised me to stop reading unnecessary things, as can be seen from the following incident.

Once, after meditation late in the evening, I had gone to bed. In order to improve my English, I picked up Readers' Digest which helped me learning new words. However, being tired, I was not able to read but was staring at some other text in the book. Suddenly, I felt Bhagavan looking in smiling surprise over my shoulder at the text I was reading. Only now I cognized the heading of the article, which was *Famous Recipes of German Housewives*, a topic I would not have selected consciously from the table of contents. It was now my turn to laugh silently at myself and to end the mistaken enterprise by switching off the light.

One early morning, while sitting on the carpet to start my exercises, yet feeling tired, I suddenly found myself kneeling at the feet of Sri Ramana touching them with my forehead in utter devotion. Immediately I knew in my heart that I was to continue my regular exercises without considering my body's condition. I have been following Bhagavan's advice strictly until this day and am much better now.

I had another experience of Sri Ramana's unceasing grace when I had to stay at home on account of a sudden, serious cold and felt miserable. Two or three days later, still in bed, I happened to take in hand an old copy of *The Mountain path* and open it on page 117 where my eyes fell exactly on the passage, "Bhagavan's feet are ever over your head." A wave of bliss ran through my mind and body. May Sri Ramana's grace be with all of us! (Source: *Ramana Smrti*)

SUPREME SILENCE: *Jnana* is given neither from outside nor from any other person. It can be realised by each and everyone in his own Heart. The divine *upadesa* is always going on in everyone. So long as one is seeking the self from outside, Self-realization cannot be attained. Since you are yourself the reality that is shining in the Heart as Being Consciousness, abide in it. The firm abidance in the experience of the Self is described as Supreme Silence. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

THE PERFECT GOD AND AN IMPERFECT WORLD!

The following conversation with the Maharshi is relevant in this regard:

D.: God is perfect. Why did He create the world imperfect? The work shares the nature of the author. But here it is not so.

M.: Who is it that raises the question?

D.: I - the individual.

M.: Are you apart from God that you ask this question? So long as you consider yourself the body you see the world as external. The imperfections appear to you. God is perfection. His work also is perfection. But you see it as imperfection because of your wrong identification.

D.: Why did the Self manifest as this miserable world?

B.: In order that you might seek it. Your eyes cannot see themselves. Place a mirror before them and they see themselves. Similarly with the creation. "See yourself first and then see the whole world as the Self."

D.: So it amounts to this – that I should always look within.

M.: Yes.

D.: Should I not see the world at all?

M.: You are not instructed to shut your eyes from the world. You are only to "see yourself first and then see the whole world as the Self". If you consider yourself as the body the world appears to be external. If you are the Self the world appears as Brahman. (*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi – No. 272*)

A RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SWAMI'S TRIBUTE TO SRI RAMANA

Swami Tapasyananda, (1904-91), pre-monistic Balakrishna Menon, was a post-graduate and an erudite scholar. His translations include the *Gita*, *Adhyatma Ramayana*, *Saundarya Lahari* and many more. He was head of Ramakrishna Mission, Madras, for two decades.

The Maharshi impressed me as a rare type of man. He simply seems to exist, without waiting for anything, without being anxious about anything.[This reminded the writer of the *Gita* where the Lord says about Himself, “Nor do these actions bind me. Like one unconcerned, I remain unattached to these actions.” 9.9]

The only activity of the Ashram in which he seems to take interest is cooking. He cuts vegetables and prepares some of the dishes for the day. Spicing and other processes of the culinary art are performed under his directions.

Another point that struck me is his silence. When I asked him to tell me something of spirituality, the first thing he said was that silence is the highest teaching! His idea is that the ‘*Advaitin* has no position to state, no *siddhanata* to propound.’ He regrets that these days even *advaita* has become a *siddhanata*, whereas it is really not meant to be so. When I asked regarding a book that I purchased in the depot there, how far the ideas stated therein are his teachings, he told that it is very difficult to say that, as he had no definite teaching. [Refer *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, no 107]

He told me that he has absolutely no inclination to write a book; but due to the entreaties of some people he has written some verses, and also added that he is often troubled by men who take a fancy to translate them into this language and that, and ask him about the faithfulness of the translation,

Mostly, the Maharshi remains silent. People come, make prostrations, sit before him for some minutes or hours and then go away, perhaps without exchanging even a single word! I have got my own doubt whether people benefit by this teaching through silence. But yet people come from long distances to hear this dumb eloquence and go back *satisfied*.

Though he speaks but little, it is very instructive to watch his face and eyes. There is nothing very prepossessing about his personality, but there is a beam of intelligence and unruffled calmness in his eyes that are unique. His body is almost motionless except when he occasionally changes his position or wipes his sweat in that hot place. I was carefully observing his face; I found him seldom winking and never yawning. I

say this to show that I am sufficiently satisfied that the absence of activity in him is *not due to inertness*.

I stayed at the ashram for three days. The Maharshi talked with me very kindly and quite freely on the several questions I asked him. Although his manner of replying was not so impressive as I expected, *his thoughts are always clear, concise and free from all ideas of narrowness*. I am convinced that **he is a sweet and lovable person who is indifferent to all things about him, who has no end of his own to gain, who is always alert even when he seems to be most deeply absorbed, and who may be said to be perfectly free from greed and vanity**. In seeing him I do believe I have seen a unique personage – a *jnani*, a perfect sage. (Source: *Maha Yoga* by WHO, Ramanasramam, 2006.)

SARASVATI: wife of Brahma, is the goddess of learning. Seated on a white lotus, she is also known as Vani, the goddess of music and all performing arts. She is the goddess of speech. She invented the Sanskrit language. Her other names are: Bharati, Brahmi, Sharada, and Vageesvari. (Source: *Tattvaloka*)

PAUL BRUNTON – A BRIEF LIFE SKETCH

Paul Brunton (1898-1981) was adopted name of Raphael Hurst. He was a British journalist, who, attracted by Indian mysticism, first visited India in 1930. He is generally considered as having introduced meditation to the West. PB had the Maharshi's grace in full measure and he was fully devoted to the him till his end. He once wrote, "I have travelled in many lands but always my thoughts turned towards Tiruvannamalai as the Muhammedan turns his face during prayer towards Mecca. I knew that somewhere in the wilderness of this world there was a sacred place for me." He also wrote, "Sri Ramana was a spiritual torch carried to the waiting souls in the West. I was only the unimportant 'link-boy', the humble carrier."

During his first visit, among many saints and yogis, PB also met Sri Ramana. He stayed for a few weeks in an improvised shelter very close to the Maharshi's Ashram. The number of full-time devotees being limited at that time, he had ample opportunity of observing the Maharshi at close quarters and interacting with him. His account of the total transformation and spiritual upliftment he secured in the presence of the Maharshi as described at great length in his book *A Search in Secret India* (London, 1934), has drawn a large number of foreign and Indian devotees to the Ashram.

His next book *The Secret Path*, which he says, was written at the behest of the Maharshi, was meant to carry his message to the world at large. His nine other books include the twin monumental works, *The Hidden Teaching Beyond Yoga* and *The Wisdom of the Overself*. The Paul Brunton Foundation, established by his son Kenneth Hurst, who retired as president of Prentice-Hall (a global publishing house), has posthumously published his post-1952 writings (the year in which his last book *The Spiritual Crisis of Man* was published), in 16 volumes. These are based on thousands of pages of notes left behind by him.

PB was born in London. His mother died while he was young, and his father died soon after he remarried. He supported his step-mother for the rest of her life till 1966. PB married Karen in 1922. She was a spiritually sensitive person and an active member of the Theosophical Society in London. She gave birth to a son after one year, and divorced PB when the boy was three years old. She was somewhat psychic, and married a member of a spiritual group called Bohemian, to which PB belonged. Interestingly, PB maintained close contact with his son, and visited their house from time to time. He interacted with his former wife's family regularly and took a lot of interest in his son's education, and groomed him throughout his life. When the son was seven years, he obtained permission from his former wife to take him away for a holiday.

Even at the age of 16, PB spent considerable time in meditation. He underwent a series of mystical experiences. He discovered that he has attained certain occult and clairvoyant powers. But later he left the occult in preference to his spiritual development. He meditated three times a day and went to a country retreat at the week-ends for constant meditation.

Three persons who influenced PB spiritually were: (i) a Buddhist monk of high achievements who initiated him into Buddhist methods of meditation, (ii) the Rajah, an Indian, about whom he has written at length in *A Search in Secret India* in the chapter 'A Prelude to the Quest', and who had prophesied that he would visit India one day and seek out the remarkable holy men, and (iii) an American expatriate living in Europe, who was a painter, a phenomenally gifted clairvoyant and an advanced mystic.

Three major influences on PB's professional writing were those of : (i) Arnold Bennett, a prolific British novelist, (ii) Ralf Waldo Emerson, whose essays are regarded as landmarks in the development of American thought and literary expression, and (iii) American author Elbert Hubbard, whose style and pungent

comments upon life set a benchmark for PB. In late-1920's he himself wrote and published a magazine called *Success*, which could not go beyond six issues. As a writer, PB was a true professional and went at great length to sharpen his literary skills. His magazine was full of his lively style of writing and show how he strongly believed in positive thinking.

PB was a very private person. He did not permit any one to write his biography till his transition in 1981. He was a confirmed vegetarian right from his youth and had deep conviction about its efficacy and benefits in molding and building up ones character and temperament. He would mention many convincing reasons in support of his being a vegetarian. He had great faith in fasting for curing ailments, and would go on fast even for five to ten days for effectively curing a disease. He was outstanding in preparing delicious vegetarian meals and curries. He had deep knowledge of astrology and drew up his son's horoscope at the time of his birth, which proved remarkably accurate in all its details. He had a strong belief in *karma* and used to advise people that *karma* is not a punishment but an educative process.

PB's final illumination happened in 1963. As told to his son, this took place during the night in a state between sleeping and waking, and led to a deepening of the stillness. There was bomb-like explosion of consciousness, as if the head had split open. It came of itself and I realised that the Divine had always with me and in me.

PB told his son that the word 'Goodbye' means 'God be with you'. He also told him, "Whenever I am out walking and find a woman approaching me in the opposite direction, I deliberately look away from her for I do not want her to feel, 'Oh dear, here is another one of those men ogling me and looking at my breasts.'"

PB lived in Switzerland for the last twenty years of his life. He played an important role in lives of many. His spirituality shone forth like a beacon, but he discouraged attempts to form a cult around him. "You must find your own PB within yourselves," he would say.

(Source: *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Kendram's publication), pp. 13-23, and *Paul Brunton – A Personal View* by Kenneth Hurst, New York, 1989. I am thankful to CRP Setty, former general manager, Nuclear Fuel Complex, Hyderabad for his help.)

ACHIEVING SUCCESS: Most people live their lives like they watch the television. The remote control is in their hands and they have the power to change the channel to any show they can possibly imagine. But they don't. There is an opportunity to

experience anything they can dream. But they don't do anything. They are content to simply watch whatever is on, rather than choose what they really want... Every person comes with the built-in ability to choose their actions and reactions for any given set of circumstances. How we use this ability will ultimately determine all of the outcomes we will experience in our lives... The definition of success is different for every individual, and only you can define your view of success. Understand that success is a journey and not a destination. Success is a matter of finding appropriate balance while you are in motion rather than finding a comfortable resting place to stagnate... Lasting success is found in balancing four independent variables, namely, 1. Feeling about wealth. Do you have enough to meet your obligations? To live the life you choose? There are many people who are extremely rich, but not wealthy. 2. Feelings about health. Success has very little to do with quantity of a given thing. It has everything to do with the feelings relating to it. There are many who suffer from disease, disability and challenge but feel successful. 3. Feelings about relationship. No success can compensate for failure in the home. Everything starts in the home, but the relationships also include everyone you interact with. 4. Feelings about self-achievement, dreams and spirituality. In some ways this area is slightly more important than the others. It's really more of a foundation than a pillar. When you know who you are and you are confident, you are heading in the right direction, magical things happen to you. – *Douglas Vermeeren*

SPIRITUALITY: It lies beyond the material world of proof, beyond what can be measured and counted. It brings purpose and meaning to life, and as we develop it we grow in wisdom and love. We begin to experience a sense of connection to all of life, and deep reverence for the Divine... A person may experience spirituality without being a member of any specific religious affiliation, and even the most religious person may be spiritually bereft. Religion serves us best as a vehicle to nourish and develop our spirituality. It is possible, however, to get caught up in the vehicle, the religious practices, while losing sight of the destination, spirituality which is communion with the Divine and compassion for all. – *Alan Shelton*

NO PATH TO THE TRUTH: Truth has no path and that is the beauty of Truth. Here you can not depend upon anybody. There is no guide, no teacher, no authority. There is only you. All ideologies are utterly idiotic. If I were foolish enough to give you a system and if you were foolish enough to follow it, you would merely be copying, imitating, conforming, accepting, and when you do that you have set up in yourself the authority of another and hence there is conflict between you and that authority. In trying to conform to the ideology you suppress yourself. If you try to study yourself according to another, you will always remain a second-hand human being. – *Jiddu Krishnamurthi*

LEARN UNIVERSAL LOVE FROM NATURE: To feel love and compassion for all, observe nature with totality of mind without getting affected by previously constructed images, opinions or past knowledge. Look around to observe things as if you are seeing them for the first time. Become one with the object of observation. The sun provides light and warmth irrespective of who benefits from it. Clouds, rivers, mountains and jungles follow the same example of universal love. Trees provide the shade, fruits and flowers with the same unattached benevolence for all. They do not demand favours in return. The earth matures seeds into plants irrespective of who planted the seeds or who will benefit from them. This truly is like a mother's love for her children. A mother loves all her children and is forgiving even when some are the cause of hurt. If one learns to appreciate nature, the world would be a much better place to live in. Most of our problems have arisen because we have stopped learning from nature. (*Spirituality indiatimes.com*)

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STORY OF SHREEDEVI AND BHOODEVI: Vishnu's chief consort Shree-Lakshmi, goddess of power, fortune and splendour was fickle and demanding. In contrast, Vishnu's other consort, Bhoodevi, the earth-goddess, was faithful and submissive. Both vied for Vishnu's attention. When Indra gifted the *parijata* tree to Vishnu, both wanted it to be planted in their respective gardens, separated by a high wall. Bhoodevi, proud of her generative powers, argued that as she was the earth-goddess only she had the right to nurture the plant. Vishnu gave her the celestial tree, but decreed that its flowers would always fall on the other side of the wall in Shreedevi's garden, who was delighted with her Lord's decision. She taunted Bhoodevi, "The Lord has given you the responsibility of the plant, while making sure it is I who derive real pleasure from it." To humble Shreedevi, Vishnu said, "This plant will only bloom when I enter into Bhoodevi's garden. Each time Shreedevi finds the *parijata* in bloom, she will have to endure the knowledge that her husband is with someone else." – *Vishnu* by Devdutt Pattanaik

CHIN-MUDRA: It is a pose in which the right hand is held up with the thumb and the forefinger joined and the three remaining fingers straight up. It is the pose of Dakshinamurthi. It denotes the unity of the individual and the Brahman, the transcendental Reality beyond the three *gunas*. (*Mountain Path*, Jan.-March, 1974)

HAPPINESS IS HERE AND NOW: Worry follows desires just as night follows day. Just as desires have no end, worries too are endless. Do these worries have a purpose? No. We forget to enjoy our life now. We never get to enjoy life latter. Either we enjoy it here and now, or never. Find happiness being in the present. Be conscious, completely aware of what is happening at the moment. **Be happy with whatever you do.** Happiness will be yours to keep. – *Paramahansa Nithyananda*

SAGA OF GUJARATI DEVOTEES' LOVE FOR BHAGAVAN

Dhiruben Patel of Mumbai, a popular novelist of Gujarat, had received Sri Ramana's guidance in 1940s. While revisiting the Ashram in 2007, she agreed for a video graph of her experiences.

My mother was badly shaken at a tragic misfortune in 1944, when by brother met with a drowning accident witnessed by her from the shore. Chhaganlal Yogi [a great devotee of Bhagavan] suggested her to visit the Ashram. When she saw Bhagavan she was so much impressed that she came back to take the whole family to the Ashram. At that time I was 18 [now 81].

I had no interest in Bhagavan or his *darshan*. As I could not defy my mother, I bowed to him with folded hands and closed eyes. But as I raised my head, Bhagavan looked at me and in that very second I was annihilated totally by his gaze. I didn't exist any longer and there was a great sense of release and peace. I felt a soft moon light around me, with no boundaries and barriers. It was as if I was lost in a sky of light and peace. I don't know how many minutes or seconds I was in that state; it seemed a life- time. When I came back to my material existence, I could not accept what had happened.

We stayed five more days and I had Bhagavan's *darshan* many times, but that experience never got repeated. The event, however, made me think very deeply and continuously: What was it? And how could I be in that state constantly?

One day during our stay, we along with other devotees were watching Bhagavan going for his walk on the hill after lunch. Suddenly, my two-year-old nephew left us and caught hold of Bhagavan's walking stick. Everybody was aghast. The child was called back again and again and asked not to bother Bhagavan. He just wouldn't

listen and went on staring at Bhagavan. But as soon as Bhagavan put his hand on his head, he let go of the stick and started weeping, not loudly, but tears were streaming down his eyes, while he just stood looking at Bhagavan.

I saw Bhagavan again in 1950. There was a heavy bandage on his arm and people filed by, single file, quietly. When I came near him I couldn't help saying,

“Bhagavan call me again.” With infinite compassion and immense love he looked at me and said, “Sari, sari.” Now I have come back after 57 years, and I am sure that he has called me. It is a very strange thing that I do not feel the absence of Bhagavan. Perhaps it is because during all these years I have always felt that he was near me. I have at some level communicated with him, and have received his grace. When you are facing a big problem and you do not know where to turn or what to do, then Bhagavan really gives the answer in your heart of hearts. I may be anywhere, Bhagavan is always with me, and it is all due to the first wonderful moment when he had looked at me.

My mother used to rent a cottage near the Ashram, stay for two or three months at a time, and meditate very regularly. What she experienced, she spoke little. Back home, once she suffered a paralytic stroke and was not able to speak. After a month or so her speech came back but it was halting. Everybody was depressed about it. One evening I happened to recite one or two lines of *Upadesa Saram* to her. Mother picked up the recitation and concluded the thirty verses without a single mistake. After this she was able to recite Bhagavan's other works and slowly became normal. In her last illness she made me promise that Bhagavan should be with her when she goes and I was to be responsible for this request. And by God's grace and Bhagavan's blessings, it so happened that during her last moments we could hold a big framed photograph of Bhagavan before her eyes. She quietly gazed at it, slightly turned her face and passed away.

SRI RAMANA ANSWERS QUERIES OF AN ICS OFFICER

S. Ranganathan, was collector of Vellore, when he met Bhagavan in 1935. He retired as Comptroller and Auditor-General of India.

Q. Kindly instruct me as to how the mind can be controlled?

A. There are two methods. The one is to see what the mind is; then it subsides. The second is to fix your attention on something; then the mind remains quiet.

Q. The *Gita* states that one's own *dharma* is the best; an alien *dharma* is full of risks. What is the significance of one's own *dharma*?

A. The whole gist of it is: *sva* = one's own, i.e., of the Self, of the *Atman*.

para = the other's, i.e., of the non-self, of the *anatma*. *Atma dharma* is inherence in the Self. Troubles arise when there is a second to one self. The man as he is now, confounds the *anatma* (non-Self) *dharma* with *atma* (the Self) *dharma* and suffers. Let him know the Self and abide in it. Even if the *sloka* is interpreted as *varnasrama dharma* the significance is only this much that such *dharma* bears fruit only when done selflessly. That is, one must realize that he is not the doer, but he is tool of some Higher Power. Let the Higher Power do what is inevitable and let me act only according to its dictates. Be it *varnasrama dharma* or *laukika dharma* (worldly activities), it is immaterial.

Q. The *Gita* was taught for action.

A. What does the *Gita* say? Arjuna refused to fight. Krishna said, "So long as you refuse to fight, you have the sense of doership. Who are you to refrain or to act? Give up the notion of doership. You are being manipulated by a Higher Power. Instead of being an unwilling worker, be a willing one. Be fixed in the Self and act according to nature without the thought of doership. Then the results of action will not affect you. Thus, 'inherence in the Self' is the sum and substance of the *Gita*'s teaching. If a man is established in the Self these doubts will not arise. They arise until he is established there.

Q. Then of what use is such reply to the enquirer?

A. The words still have force and will surely operate in due course.

(Excerpts from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, 28th March and 4th July 1935.)

THE ROAD TO ENLIGHTENMENT: The first step in the thousand mile journey is to make a choice or decision for enlightenment. With this choice comes the eventual transformation that will take you out of this physical realm and into another. There is a Buddhist teaching that says if you want to put new tea in your cup you must make sure you have an empty cup. Enlightenment won't come when your mind is busy with old thoughts. Neither will it come while you try to analyse it;

acceptance is the key to enlightenment. The pull of the physical world is very strong and addictive. ‘A rich man cannot go into heaven’, for when you are attached you are not going anywhere. **In preparing for enlightenment you must be prepared to leave all things behind.** Enlightenment can come in an instant or it may take many life cycles but always it is about freedom of choice and unconditional love. – *Roy Klienwachter*

GET FULLY IMMERSSED IN WHAT YOU DO: A king went to a Zen Master and asked – How can I become enlightened? Tell me about all the practices you do. What did you do to become enlightened? The Master said, “Oh! I eat when I eat; sleep when I sleep. That is all I do.” When the king could not understand, the Master explained, “When I eat I only eat, I do not do anything else. When I sleep I do not do anything else.” But what do you do? Recall how you eat. You will remember that you were watching TV or reading a magazine when you were eating. In one way or another, when you eat, your mind does everything else but focus on the food and eating. This is true even when you sleep! When you sleep you do everything else except sleeping. Because, when you sleep you dream, you have your nightmare and fear strokes. You have disturbed sleep... Catch yourself in the act. Become aware. That will set your inner transformation in motion. – *Paramahansa Nithyananda*

LEARN TO QUESTION YOURSELF: Shall we take courage into our hands and get ready to question, no others, but ourselves. Shall we question why we ‘dislike’ and why we ‘like’? Shall we question where the ‘like’ and ‘dislike’ reside within us, and where they come from? Shall we build up the strength to question everything regarding ourselves? Could we ask ourselves where we are headed and what we are looking for in our hectic life of unabated activity? Could we ask ourselves why we are so utterly and absolutely terrified of non-activity? Why do we fight shy of even a moment’s stillness? Why do we evade a possibility of coming face to face with ourselves for even a split second by filling every waking moment with movement? Do we believe that Self-knowledge is our treasure stolen from us that we need to hunt down? Without having full knowledge of the existence of the self, how do we say, ‘I like, ‘I dislike, ‘I went, and so on? Who is this ‘I’? – *Sarada Natarajan*

FACE TO FACE WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

Review by Swami Nilakanthananda

Let us visualize. Suppose you attend a session on Indian classical music. The performer, the singer or the player, begins with ‘*alap*’, a slow but graded presentation of a *raga*. At first it sounds uninteresting and a bit boring. But soon, in few minutes, the performance begins to grip the heart in a firm yet ecstatic manner and one becomes absorbed, oblivious of the time and space. This book has a similar effect.

To a new reader, unfamiliar with what it means to be in the company of a spiritual master, it takes time even to pick up the book. But once you take it, the tempo picks up and then the ethereal being of Sri Ramana Maharshi just grips the heart. Reminiscences have this wonderful quality of transporting you in the presence of the person and you start feeling that the incidents are happening right now. Then reminiscences of great souls like Sri Ramana Maharshi give you the spiritual insight as well. The photo on the book cover and the words inside together bring a deep sense of peace and calmness to anyone who reads the book.

The book simply elevates. One encounters Ramana vividly, and feels his presence through the numerous anecdotes narrating his spiritual insight, compassionate handling of daily affairs and his divine silence. The book is an excellent production. One feels grateful to the compiler for this excellent gift. (Source: *Vedanta Kesari*, June 2007)

THE PATH OF ENQUIRY

By Arthur Osborne

Self-enquiry is not analysis; it has nothing in common with philosophy or psychology. The Maharshi showed this when he declared that no answer the mind gives can be right. (And, indeed, in this it resembles a Zen koan). If it had a mental answer it would be a philosophical conundrum, not a spiritual practice; and it was as a spiritual practice that the Maharshi prescribed it. So anyone who tells you what the answer to the enquiry is, shows by that very fact that he has not understood it. It does not mean arguing or saying that I am not this or not that; it means concentrating on

the pure sense of being, the pure I-am-ness of me. And this, one discovers, is the same as pure consciousness, pure, formless awareness.

So far is it from being a mental practice that the Maharshi told us not to concentrate on the head while doing it but on the heart. By this he did not mean the physical heart at the left side of the chest but the spiritual heart on the right. This is not a physical organ and also not a yogic or *tantric chakra*; but it is the centre of our sense of being. The Maharshi told us so and those who have followed his instructions in meditation have found it to be so. The ancient Hebrews knew of it: "The wise man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart is at his left," it says in the Bible. It is referred to also in that ancient Advaitic scripture, the *Yoga Vasishtha*, in verses which the Maharshi quoted as Nos. 22-27 in his Supplementary Forty Verses on Reality. Concentration on the heart does not mean thinking about the heart but being aware in and with the heart. After a little practice it sets up a current of awareness that can actually be felt physically though far more than physical. At first this is felt in the heart, sometimes in the heart and head and connecting them. Later it pervades and transcends the body. Perhaps it could be said that this current of awareness is the 'answer' to the question 'Who am I?', since it is the wordless experience of I-ness.

There should be regular times for this 'meditation', since the mind accustoms itself and responds more readily. I have put the word 'meditation' in inverted single quotes, since it is not meditation in the usual sense of the word but only concentration on Self or on being. As Bhagavan explained: "Meditation requires an object to meditate on, whereas in Self-enquiry there is only the subject and no object." Good times are first thing when you wake up in the morning and last thing before going to sleep at night. At first a good deal of time and effort may be needed before the current of awareness is felt; later it begins to arise more and more easily. It also begins to occur spontaneously during the day, when one is not meditating. That explains Bhagavan's saying that one should keep up the enquiry constantly, not only during meditation. It comes to be more and more constant and, when lost or forgotten, to need less and less reawakening.

In *Forty Verses on Reality* Bhagavan asks: "If, since you are a single being, you cannot see yourself, how can you see God?" And he goes on to answer: "Only by being devoured by Him."

This brings the path of enquiry to the same point as the path of surrender, since in either case the ego must be sacrificed. It is a very profound verse. It recalls the

Hebrew saying: "No man can see God and live." Many people see visions of God in one form or another, but that is not seeing God. The mind and senses of a man knot themselves together into what wrongly supposes itself to be an individual entity separate from the Universal Being which it aspires to see. But that Universal Being is the true Self of it. Only by surrendering their illusory individual entity to be devoured out of existence can the mind and senses become true instruments for perception by what is thereafter understood to be their true Self, so that, as the Maharshi sometimes said, the only way to see God is to be God. (Source *Mountain Path*, Vol. 2, 1968.)

TINNAI SWAMI – A UNIQUE DEVOTEE

He was born as Ramaswami in a small Telugu Brahmin community of Coimbatore in 1912. He resigned his job in Madras Medical College in protest against a patently unfair discrimination, and came to Bhagavan in 1948. For sometime his wife and children also joined him but later he got totally absorbed in Self by grace bestowed upon him by Bhagavan. His inward transformation was reflected in a complete transformation in his outward life. He neglected his appearance, allowed his nails and hair to grow, and lived by begging his food. He spent most of his time in Self-absorption and would on most days get up only once to go for *giri pradakshina*, till he could walk the distance.

In the eyes of the world there may appear to be little greatness in the extraordinary life of the Swami. He did not speak, write or teach anything, nor did he perform any other 'useful' function. Whether we are able to recognise it or not, his mere being was a great blessing bestowed upon the whole world by Bhagavan, the effect of which cannot be known or measured by our finite intellects. As Bhagavan says in verse 303 of *Guru Vachaka Kovai*: "They [the wise] say that the *ucchistha* [the leftover food] consumed by the God is the supreme purifier that removes all sins. Take to heart that the life of *sat-achara* [abidance in the state of being] lived by a *jnani* in this material world is in itself that *ucchistha*. That is, the mere existence of a *jivanmukta*, whose physical form continues to live in this world after God has consumed his ego, is itself the sacred *ucchistha* that purifies the world of evils. When this supreme good is done by his mere being, what need is there for the *jnani* to do anything – whether to speak, write, teach or perform any other kind of 'good deed'?

As the Swami after late 1950s, lived on and seldom moved away from the *tinnai* [masonry bench] in the verandah of the house of the family of late C.P. Nathan in Tiruvannamalai, who gave him food and shelter, and attended to his few physical needs, till his death in 2003, he came to be known as Tinnai Swami. (Based on the write-up of Michael James in *Mountain Path*, April-June, 2004.)

GURU-KRIPA: Guru is the Self...The guru is both ‘external’ and ‘internal’. From the ‘exterior’ he gives a push to the mind to turn inwards; from the ‘interior’ he pulls the mind towards the Self and helps in the quieting of the mind. That is *Guru-kripa*. There is no difference between God, Guru and the Self. – *Sri Ramana Maharshi*

SYMBOLISM IN MAHABHARTA: Imagine Draupadi as the human body. The Pandavas, the five senses, are wedded to it. Their first cousins, a hundred in number, the Kauravas, are present in the form of tendencies of the mind. The senses think that they can win over the tendencies of the mind. The Pandavas keep gambling till they lose everything. Likewise, we lose everything when we gamble with our tendencies, and like Pandavas, end up in spiritual exile. Kurukshetra is the world in which we live this life, witnessing a war between senses and mind’s tendencies. Our senses are basically part of our divinity, the instruments born to keep us in this form. The original name of Kunti was Pritha, signifying prithivi, the Earth. She took the name Kunti when Kuntibhoja adopted her. So the Pandavas were born through conjoining of the Earth and the divine [the fathers of Pandavas were – Dharma (Yudhishtir), Indra (Arjuna), Wind (Bhima) Ashwani Kumars (Nakul and Sahdev)] – the body and the spirit. Krishna’s deep blue colour is that of eternity. Yellow is the colour of the earth. A deep blue god-image enclosed in yellow clothes, symbolizes the spirit clothed in the body. – *asthanal@yahoo.com*

SWAMI SIVANANDA (1887-1963), pre-monistic Kuppuswami, was one of the great sages of recent times. He was born in Tamil Nadu. He studied medicine and practiced as a doctor in Tiruchi. In 1913 he left for Malaysia to practise his profession. In spite of his busy schedule he visited the homes of poor and treated them with care. He had great joy in serving *sadhus* and beggars. In 1923, he renounced the worldly things, came to India, and settled in a small *ashram* in Rishikesh to work for the welfare of humanity. He opened a dispensary to treat sick pilgrims. He believed in *nama sankeertham* and composed numerous *bhajans*. He

founded the Divine Life Society in Rishikesh, to spread spiritual knowledge through books, and taught yoga *sadhana* to thousands of people. (Source: *Tattvaloka*)

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*

A journey of thousand miles does begin with a small step. The trick to be remembered by a *sadhak* is to keep on taking step after step without getting off course. – *V. C. Nadkarni*

The purpose of life is to live a life of purpose. – *Robert Byrne*

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

BHAGAVAN'S INTEREST IN MUSIC

During Deepan festival, Veerappa Chettiar, a hereditary trustee of Arunacheshwara temple, Tiruvannamalai, who was a devotee of Bhagavan, would bring a few musicians to the Ashram and ask them to sing in Bhagavan's presence. Once Ramanuja Iyengar sang before Bhagavan accompanied by Pillai on the *ganjira* and Iyer on the *ghatam*. The concert lasted from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. Bhagavan who usually went out at 5.30 for his evening walk, never stirred that day. The performers and the listeners were enthralled by Bhagavan's presence.

After one such music performances a devotee said to Bhagavan, "The performance was superb, we completely forgot ourselves, and how was it for Bhagavan? The reply was, "I know they were coming, prostrating and the beginning of the performance. Then I was not aware of anything till they got up after the performance. The One within eats up everything. Then what is there to listen?" (*Arunachala's Ramana*, Vol. II.)

A MEMORABLE VISIT TO SRI RAMANA

Apa B. Pant was High Commissioner for India in the U.K. He visited the Maharshi in 1937 along with Maurice Frydman*.

I well remember the day Maurice and I reached there. There was some festival and the Maharshi's hall was overflowing. We found a seat in a corner and fell silent. In a minute or two, I felt that there was radiance alight that was filling the whole hall. It was so quiet, so still. The impression was so indelible.

I had just returned from England after doing my course on philosophy, and thought I knew answers to the eternal questions. I wanted to put those before Bhagavan. But somehow in his presence, I did not feel like opening my mouth.

At night, as it was hot, we slept in the open. There was so much of turmoil and noise all around. The whole night it was impossible to sleep. In the morning I spoke to Maurice about it. He asked, "What noise? There was no noise whatsoever; everything was peaceful." I was stunned! I was sure I had not slept a wink and here was Maurice saying that there no noise at all. Then it dawned on me that Bhagavan had given me a message. He had spoken without speaking that the mind creates the noise and is chattering and arguing illusions and unless one goes beyond this turmoil there can be no living in Truth or Liberation. He had given me in a flash the message that 'Awareness is all'.

The same evening, Maurice said to Bhagavan that I do *surya namaskars* [A type of physical exercise]. Bhagavan looked at me very straight and said, "Let me see how you do it." So in front of all I did 12 *surya namaskars* with breathing and mantras as my father had taught me. Bhagavan smilingly said, "Yes, it is a good exercise to be done after you have been sitting for hours in meditation and your knees and other joints feel a little stiff." I never used to do any meditation at that time. But I know now [30 years later] that it were these words which kept me on the *surya namaskars* and led me to daily meditation. (*The Mountain Path*, July, 1970)

*An outstanding foreign devotee of Bhagavan, who once wrote, "The Maharshi is with me not only when I think of him but also when I am not thinking of him. Otherwise, how do I live?"