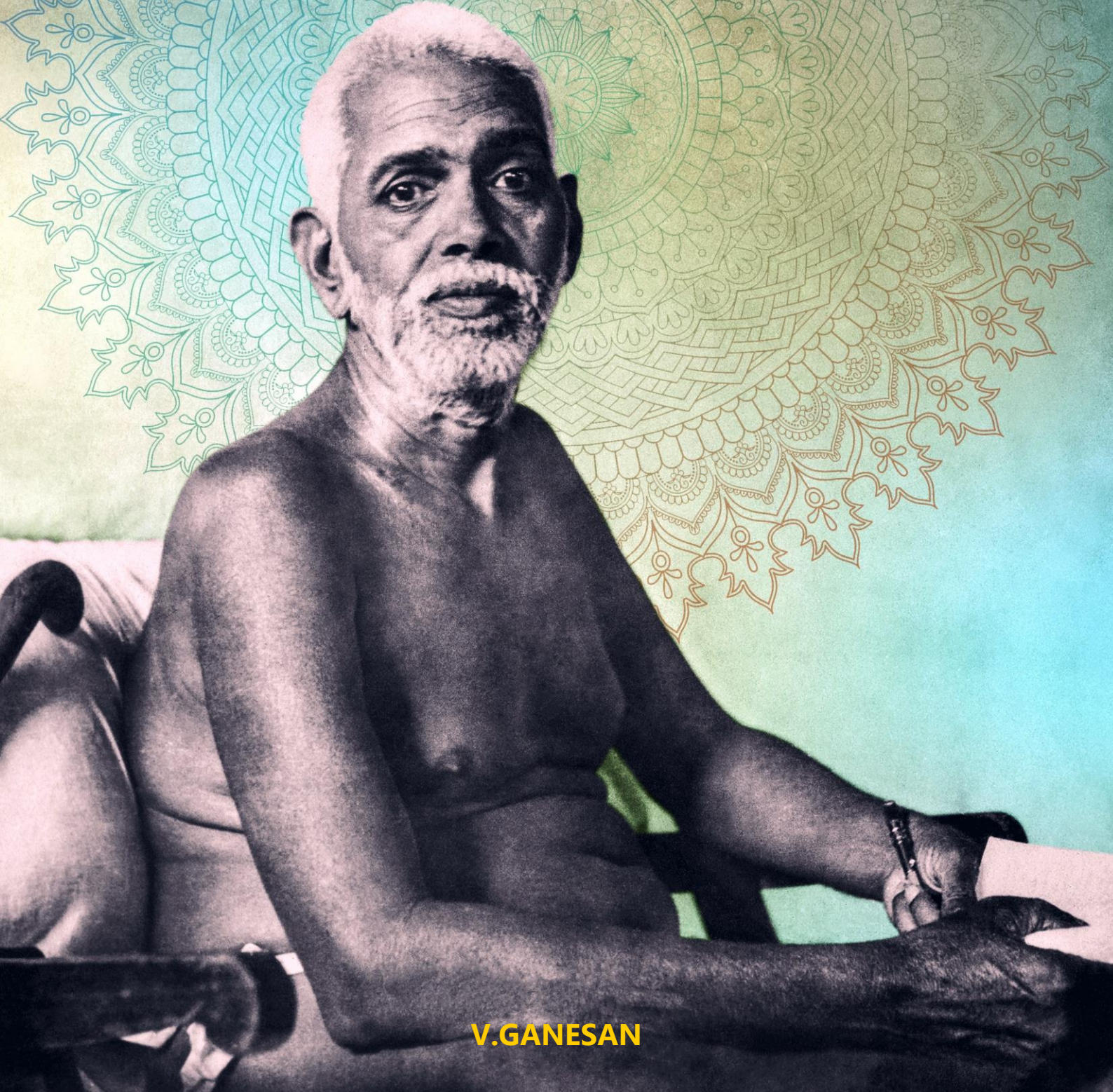
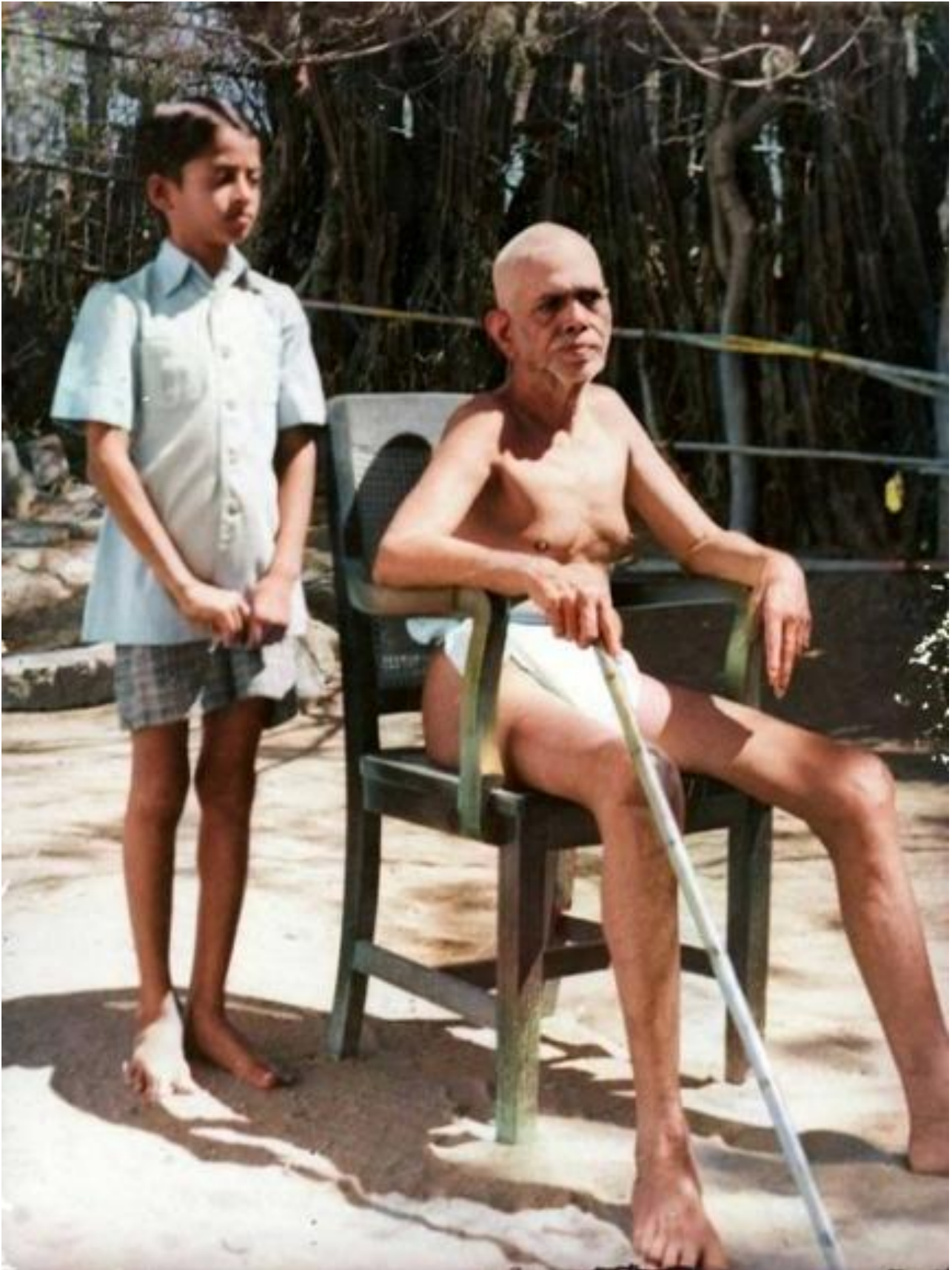


Treasure Trove of Sri Bhagavan's Grace

“ ஸ்ரீ ரமண திருவருள் நிதி ”



V.GANESAN



Sri Bhagavan: "Ganesa! Come! Stand behind the chair! Look straight as I am looking! Don't get distracted by anything!"

Very likely, it was this instruction from Sri Bhagavan to look straight, that kept me from getting distracted from the straight path and Direct Teaching of Sri Bhagavan — all these Years!

In 1946 the above photo was taken behind the Ashram Goshala (Cow Shed) by a professional photographer from Ahmedabad. He was using a large camera put up on a tripod stand, covering it up with thick black cloth. A true fascinating distraction for a ten-year old boy!

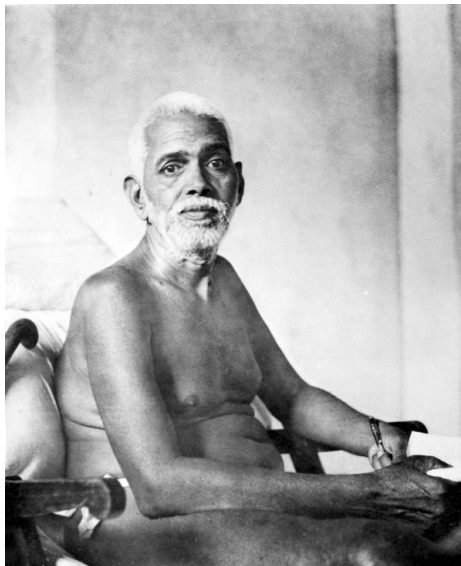


We Humbly lay:

“Treasure Trove of Sri Bhagavan’s Grace”

“ஸ்ரீ ரமண திருவருள் நிதி”

At the Lotus Feet of Sat-Guru Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



The Sacred Document

Due to the absence of a legal direction in the form of a "WILL", many legal disputes arose in other Spiritual Institutions. As such, a few reputed Advocates of that time, drafted a "WILL" for SRI BHAGAVAN to execute.

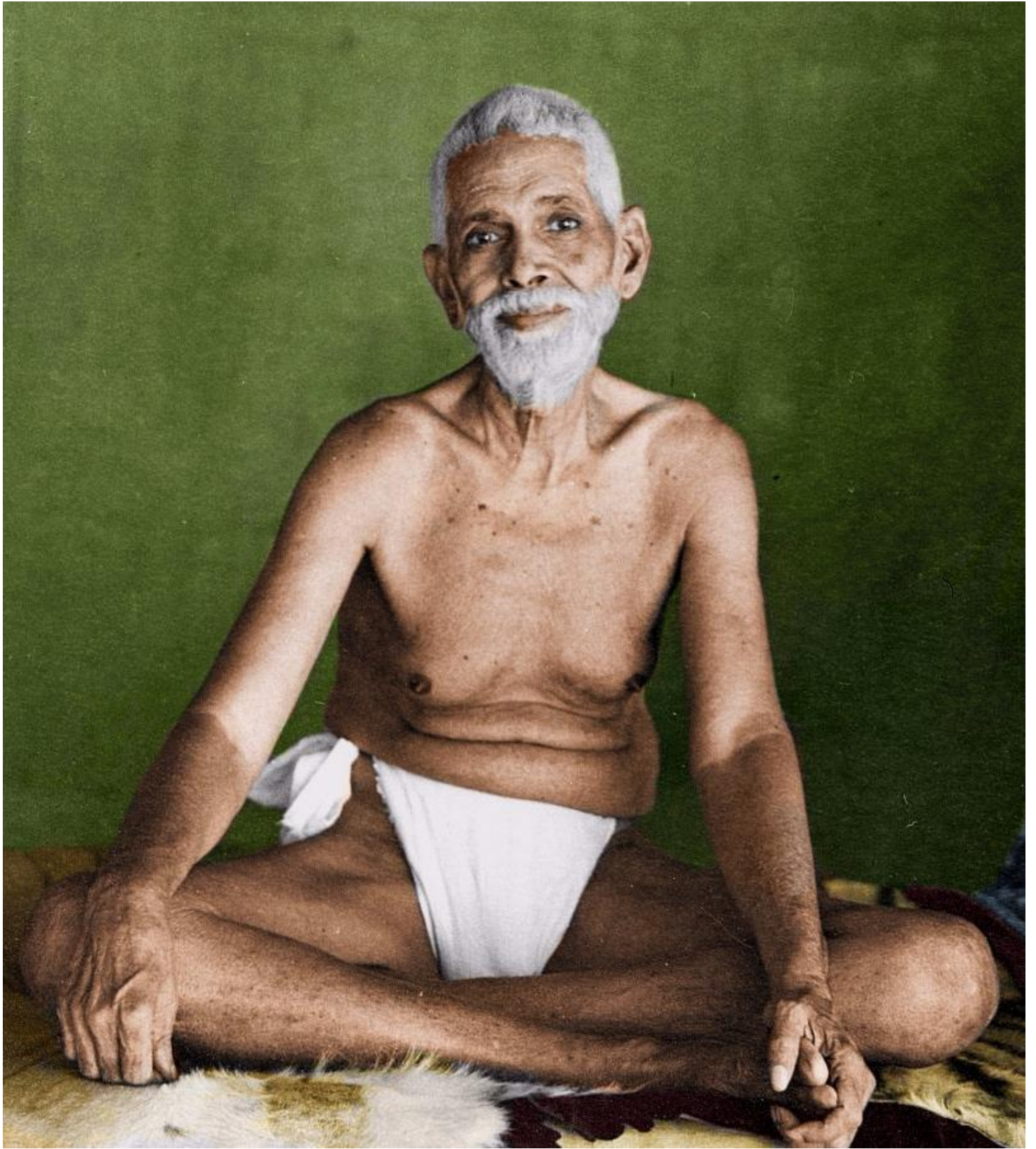
This photo was taken on the 6th March, 1938 — on which day SRI BHAGAVAN affixed a line in the "WILL".

NOTE: On the one hand SRI BHAGAVAN is holding the "WILL" and on the other hand, He holds a pen with which He drew the line on the space indicated by the Sub-Registrar.

The salient feature of the "WILL" is : —

"The management of 'Sri Ramanasramam' should ensure the smooth working of the Institution, and, make it a Centre for the diffusion of Spiritual Knowledge ; and, a place of Sanctity by affording scope for the fulfillment of objects germane to the advancement of Spirituality."

(This 'Sacred Document' was executed in the presence of Old Devotees which included: Retired High Court Judge, K. Sundaram Chetty, M. M. Bhargava, Chief of Reserve Bank of India, Yogi Ramiah, Major A. W. Chadwick, Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami, and, Sub-Registrar R. Narayana Iyer.)

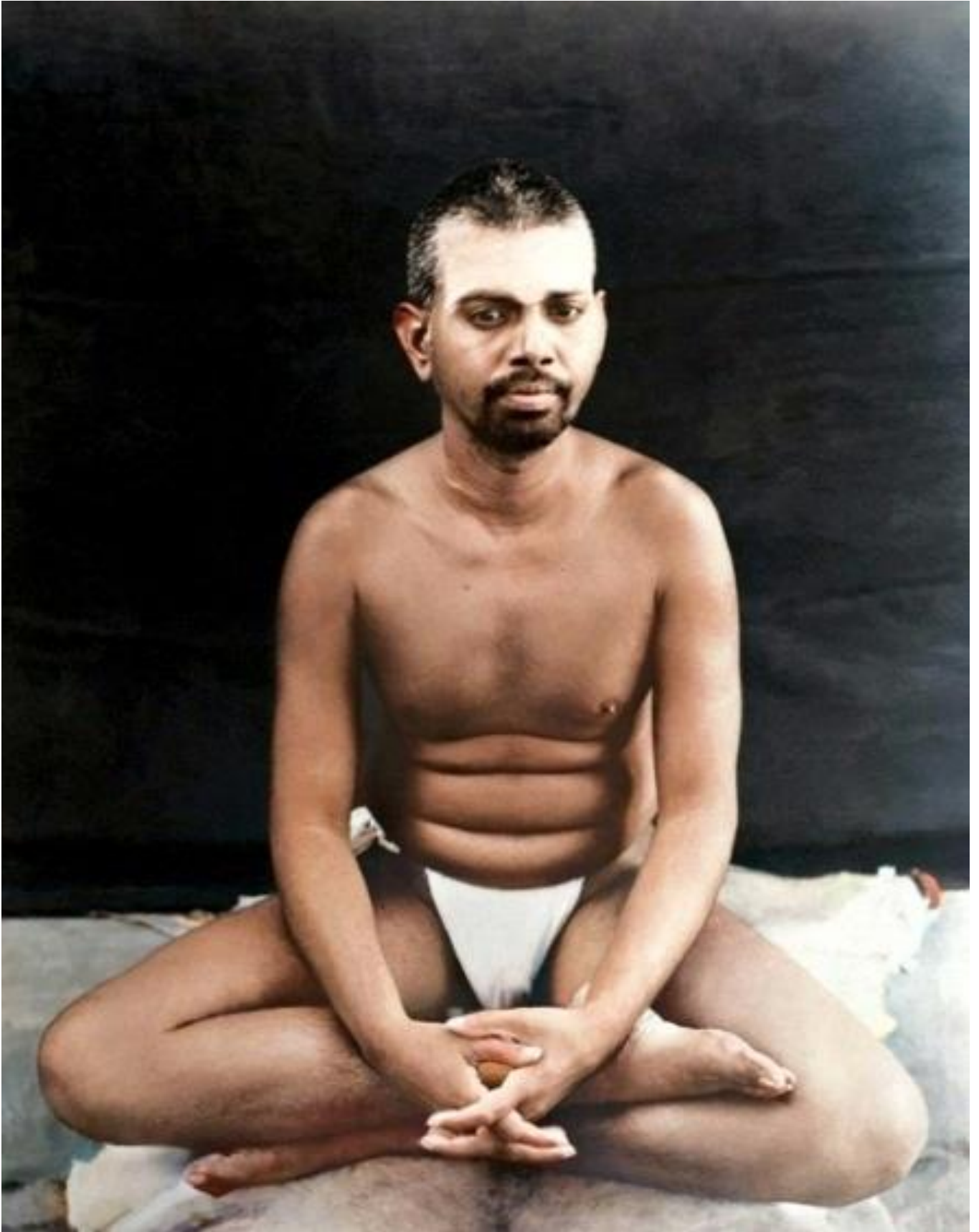


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Even in the 1940s this photo was not seen by anyone. Dr. T.N.Krishnaswami was taking all the rest of the photos. One day it was Sri Bhagavan who told Dr. TNK "Go and enquire at the EASANYA MUTT. They have a photo in seated posture". It is thus, Sri Bhagavan's exclusive blessings !

Foreword

'BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI' :

The very Sacred Name is a *mantra* that can make one feel the eternal ever-pure nature of the Self, *here* and *now*. The search for the Eternal is also eternal. The very sign of a 'pure mind' is the entry into the current of spiritual quest, an incessant inflow towards one's own depth. When the mind is pure, it no more becomes scattered due to fascination of outer *names* and *forms*; it no more becomes dull in exhaustion due to over-consumption through the sensory apertures; it no more becomes stressed due to attachment. In such a Heart, the current of 'intuition' awakens.



Bhagavan Ramana's own Life is the greatest demonstration of how the *Atman*, the Self, from within, initiates, protects, moulds, and swallows the 'mature mind' of a devotee. In fact, the Self itself becomes the Perfect *Guru*. In Sri Bhagavan's life — which is a revelation of the Power of Grace — we know how at one stroke, He dealt a death blow to Death. In the 'death experience', we see how the most inscrutable Power of Grace leads a truly prepared one from the limitations of his finite personality to the Mighty Impersonality. First, the utterance by a mysterious visitor awakened the name '**ARUNACHALA**' in the boy Venkataraman's Heart. The 'mind' of the sixteen-year-old was indeed like a volcano of *Jñāna* ready to erupt by a mere touch of Grace. And explode it did by listening to the name '**Arunachala**', which led to Enlightenment. Sri Bhagavan expresses this in *AksharaManamalai* thus: **"The moment I recollected Your Divine Name, You just pulled me (inward 'from death to the Immortality'), O Arunachala! Who can fathom your Divine Glory!"** (Verse 70)

After this, the Great Event of "death experience" happened silently in a small room in the southern street of the majestic temple of Sri Sundareshwara and Mother Meenakshi in Madurai. Sri Bhagavan Himself says that Lord Shiva, as both the Mother and the Father, initiated Him (*ākṣi*), gave the power to enquire (*alitthu*), and before the 'mind' could become scattered into the World, pulled it inward to the Heart, revealing the Immortal, Eternal, and Ever-Pure BEING-ness. This event, though we call it 'Death Experience', is actually the experience of the impossibility of Death. This experience is the *Shiva Deeksha* — the initiation of Arunachala — about which Sri Bhagavan sings in every line of the Five Hymns in His *Arunachala Pancharatnam*. Lord Shiva swallowed the 'body' and 'mind' of Venkataraman and shone forth as the "Pillar of Fire", and that is the BEING — **BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI**.

This Glory of '*Ramana Anubhavam*', many devotees, Sages, and Saints have sung again and again. Muruganar, one of the greatest devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, sings thus in *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* — **"Sri Bhagavan bestowed the 'mystical key' that opens the Treasure Trove of Enlightenment to the deserving. Hence, all the Sages who received it from Him sing His Glory in gratitude."**

In our midst too, we have a divinely 'blessed bard' who has sung all his life about nothing other than the Glory of Sri Bhagavan and His Teachings. This devotee who received the holy name '**Ganesan**' directly from Sri Bhagavan is almost eighty-seven now. He started his spiritual life as a baby fondled by Sri Bhagavan's Holy Feet. It is a well-known incident in which Sri Bhagavan put His Sacred Feet on the head and tummy of 'baby' Ganesan. Remembering this incident, Annamalai Swami used to touch Ganeshanna's head with great reverence, saying: "This is the place touched by Sri Bhagavan's Sacred Feet." Ganeshanna was often referred to as *Kuzhandai Swami* (Child Swami) by Kunju Swami. Though this '*child swami*' has physically become older now, inwardly he is still the same 'child' initiated by Sri Bhagavan's Sacred Feet. It is a spiritual phenomenon that a person never ages inwardly after Spiritual Initiation.

'Treasure Trove of Sri Bhagavan's Grace' penned by Ganeshanna is an illustrious 'tail' for the compendium of his classic works such as *Ramana Periya Puranam* and *Meetings with Sages and Saints*. I was wondering what more remains to be written after those two voluminous books. But, when I went through this **"Treasure Trove"**, it was indeed a thrilling experience. In the beginning, as I read the stories narrated from the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavatham*, the thought came that this is perhaps a book that does not directly deal with Sri Bhagavan and His Teachings. But soon, the stream of contemplation found its way back to the "Celestial Waters" of Sri Ramana. After that, every story is Sri Bhagavan, Sri Bhagavan and Sri Bhagavan! Many of the anecdotes are like sequels to events narrated in *Ramana Periya Puranam*. And each story reveals one or the other new facet of Sri Bhagavan's Teaching.

In Tamil, the 'Perfect Knowledge' is called '*Vaal-Arivu*'. In *Vedanta*, it is called '*Brahma-Puccham*' (the Tail of *Brahman*). As a snake is caught by its tail, so too, the Infinite, the Eternal, can be caught hold of by the clue that is available in our experience as 'I-I'. This is indeed the message that comes again and again in Sri Bhagavan's Teachings. This indeed is the essence of all of *Vedanta*. The deep thirst to focus one's attention on one's own 'I' is not something which happens in the 'thought-plane'; it is the surfacing of the Profound *Shakti* (Power) inherent in the Self. The outer *Guru* becomes a reflecting medium and a cause to invoke that Power from within. By His presence, the Power is awakened and is also recognised by the 'intellect'. The *Bhagavad Gita* says, "*buddhi-grāhyam atīndriyam* — the Transcendental is intuited by the 'pure intellect'." This phenomenon we can see demonstrated in every single anecdote narrated by Ganeshanna.

In my younger days itself, I have tasted the sweetness of Ganeshanna's '*Moments Remembered*' in *The Mountain Path*. Amidst the powerful writings that used to appear in the journal from the pens of Arthur Osborne, Viswanatha Swami, Muruganar, Paul Brunton and many other scholars

from the West and the East, "V. Ganesan's *Moments Remembered*" were very simple and light revelations of the same Profound Teachings of Sri Bhagavan.

Some hold the opinion that these writings contain a lot about his own personal life. But that indeed is the taste of the book. His personal experiences are not proud boastful narrations but a natural style of story-telling which has simplicity and innocence of a simple villager narrating incidents about the simple villagers around. In fact, I felt it directly appealing to my Heart. It was like our own affectionate granny narrating anecdotes about how our own relatives met the "Divine" in human form.

If the experiential words of Sri Bhagavan are like the explosion of a 'volcano', here we find the 'lava' is not hot but is the cool nectarine river of *Jñāna*, *Bhakti* and unmotivated service to *Guru*. The stories of Sankaramma, Sampurnamma, Sundarammal and many other such devotees reveal what the Presence of Sri Bhagavan did to the deserving ones. The supernal height of *Jñāna* or *Jīvanmukti*, which otherwise would have felt like the unconquerable Mount Kailas was made to feel like an easily mountable peak by stories of such illiterate but simple and pure devotees who attained the Highest by the Grace of the Master. Some articles, for example, like that of *Mercedes de Acosta*, contain profound portions of Sri Bhagavan's conversations hitherto unavailable in *Talks*. It contains many insightful statements of Sri Bhagavan. In one portion, the conversation happens thus:

Q: Why have we no memory of past lives?

B: 'Memory' is a faculty of the 'mind' and part of the 'illusion'. Why do you want to remember other 'lives' that are also 'illusions'? If you abide within the Self, there is no 'past' or 'future' or not even a 'present' since the Self is out of time — 'timeless'.

Q: Are the World, the 'mind', the 'ego' and the 'body' — all the same thing?

B: Yes. They are one and the same thing. The 'mind' and the 'ego' are one thing, but there is no word to explain this. You see, the World cannot exist without the 'mind', the 'mind' cannot exist without what we call the 'ego' (itself, really), and the 'ego' cannot exist without a 'body'.

Q: Then when we leave this 'body', that is, when the 'ego' leaves it, will it (the 'ego') immediately grasp another 'body'?

B: Oh, yes. It must. It cannot exist without a 'body'.

Q: What sort of 'body' will it grasp then?

B: Either a 'physical body' or a 'subtle-mental body'.

Q: Do you call this present physical 'body' the 'gross body'?

B: Only to distinguish it — to set it apart in conversation. It is really a "subtle-mental-body" also.

Sri Bhagavan concludes the conversation with a grand *upadeśa*:

"These questions are good, but tell de Acosta she must not become too 'intellectual' about these things. It is better just to meditate and have no 'thought'. Let the 'mind' rest quietly on the Self — in the cave of the Spiritual Heart. Soon this will become natural and then there will be no need for questions. Do not imagine that this means being inactive. 'Silence' is the only real activity."

Each and every anecdote of this book is an illustrious demonstration of the Power of a *Jñāni*. Whoever may be the devotee, whatever be their qualification or quest, we find the strange Power of Sri Bhagavan's "*Mauna*" playing about on him or her. Most of them are somehow made to feel intuitively the *Adhishṭhāna* — the Substratum — on which the individuality, the 'I', and its World with all its problems appear and disappear, like a 'mirage' in the desert. The 'Divine Power', '*Chit-shakti*', that emanated from Sri Bhagavan pushed the devotees' attention away from the actors, actresses, comedy, tragedy, events, and emotions of the 'movie' called *saṃsāra* and towards the "Screen" on which all these merely appear to exist. That *Adhishṭhāna* is **Bhagavan Sri Ramana** Himself. That *Substratum* is "**Arunachala**". When one pays attention to "That" directly, the 'I' merges back in the Source, leaving aside only the Pure Space of *Shivānubhava*. This is what Sri Bhagavan says in *Aksharamanamalai* — "**O Arunachala, when will my 'thoughts' subside so that I will intuit the subtle-most Infinite Space, the Divine Nature of Thine?**" (Verse 57)

This experience of transcending the 'mind' and merging in the "**Silence of the Self**", we find re-enacted again and again in every episode of this book. To open this "**Treasure Trove**" is to own that "**Great Treasure of Grace**" — *tiru aruḷ nidhi*. Some of us have often sat with Ganeshanna, drinking the ambrosia of *Ramana-Amrita* for days and nights. The same impact of "*Ramana Experience*" is invoked in this book-form as well. 'Let the reader himself taste the *Ramana-Samādhī* — the Ecstasy of Sri Ramana — by reading with his whole Heart' is our prayer to Sri Bhagavan.

'NOCHUR' RAMANA

(RAMANA CHARANA TIRTHA NOCHUR VENKATARAMAN)



Introduction



Does anyone of us know what are we doing as 'human beings'? What is this 'body'? What is a 'thought'? What is the immense 'object' projected out of our body as the 'World'?

These are vital questions not expected to be 'answered' by anyone but to be 'felt', 'experienced' and 'inwardly understood' by everyone!

The strongest, strangest question is: "What is 'God'? 'Who is God'? 'Where is God'?"

Most complicated and never answered questions (more than all the above questions) is: 'What is the SELF? Whose is the SELF? Where is the SELF?' Have faith in yourself and raise, put to yourself all these questions!

The single, solid and sacred answer is very, very simple!

Our Being, (our aliveness), is the SELF !

Its nature is constant Inner Silence and Stillness. It is the 'I AM', the Truth of and in each one of us. It is always *here* and *now*. But, this Eternal Truth can never be grasped by the 'intellect' — logically analysed and understood through the 'brain'! For the simple reason — Truth is Pure Being and it is always the 'subject', and never an 'object'. To the 'intellect', which can only perceive and understand 'objects', the SELF is unreachable. Yet, the SELF, 'I AM', is felt intuitively by all. In fact, the 'intellect', '*buddhi*', which thrives only in the aspect of 'understanding', is by its very nature, the strongest obstacle to 'feeling', 'understanding' and 'realising' the SELF. The 'intellect' logically demands an objective — pointing out of the SELF — as one can point out to a Tree or to a Mountain.

The SELF, is always the 'subject' and never an 'object' !

Sri Bhagavan clarifies this very same point in *Talks No. 502*.

"The desire for permanency of happiness and of peace bespeaks such permanency in his own nature. Therefore he seeks to find and regain his own nature, i.e., his SELF. That found, all is found.

Such inward seeking is the path to be gained by man's 'intellect'. The 'intellect' itself realises after continuous practice that it is enabled by some Higher Power to function. It cannot itself reach that Power. So, it ceases to function after a certain stage. When it thus

ceases to function, the Supreme Power is still there all alone. That is "Realisation"; that is the "Finality"; that is the "Goal".

It is thus plain that the purpose of the 'intellect' is to realise its own dependence upon the Higher Power and its inability to reach the same. So, it must annihilate itself before the "Goal" is gained. ... What is wanted for gaining the Highest Goal is loss of 'individuality'. The 'intellect' is co-extensive with 'individuality'. Loss of 'individuality' can only be after the disappearance of '*buddhi*', 'intellect' — good or bad.

One must know the right thing, choose the right path, practice the right *dharma* and hold fast to it."

This is the True Essence of Sri Bhagavan's *Direct Teaching*, and so, very important that the spiritual aspirant adheres to it and thus emancipates himself/herself.

As guided by *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana through the *Siddha Purusha* Yogi Ramsuratkumar — I took exclusively to Spiritual *Sadhana*¹ by inwardly practising *Atma Vichara*; and as a Blessing remaining alone and in Silence, most of the time. Nochur Ramana was staying in 'Retreat' at "*Yoga Nikaya*", Hosur; and in spiritual *Sat-Sangh*. In 2020, he invited me and Anu Ma to come there and join them, by myself giving *Sat-Sangh* practical courses.

I feel grateful to Sri Nochur Ramana that he has fulfillingly followed the ancient dictum: "*Be a Channel for the 'White Light' to pass through*"! How many yearning spiritual aspirants are de-alienated from their 'dreams' that they are the 'body', they are in the 'World', to the Truth : "*they are Atma*", through his series of talk, throughout the year, all over India !

Perhaps, as part of exhausting my *Prarabdha Karma* very strangely, I had an unexpected fall, which caused the urgent necessity of undergoing a major Hip Surgery. I was, thus, bed-ridden for two years, during which time, I feel I should share with you — I underwent many layers of Consciousness — high and low!

Though I was under great pain; and, feeling very weak, this gave me a great fillip. I felt deeply that I should start the Book and its Title could be "*SRI RAMANA BHOKKISHAM*". But still, I was not fully comfortable with the word "*Bhokkisham*". As I was pondering over what else to call the Book, Sri Nochur Ramana walked into my room.

I put the matter before him and sought his help to replace "*Bhokkisham*" with a better word. He smiled and replied, "Why worry, Anna! SRI BHAGAVAN has already given you the Perfect Title for the Book! In verse 49 of "*The Marital Garland of Letters*", has He not said, "*Thedaadhu Utttra Nal Thiruvarul Nidhi*", meaning, "Treasure of Benign and Holy Grace"? "*Thiruvarul Nidhi*"! What better Title can there be for the Book!"

¹ Refer to *Vasana Kshaya* and *Guru's Anugraha* page 377

And, thus, was born the title of the Book — with the Full Blessings — of SRI BHAGAVAN Himself:

**"Treasure Trove of Sri Bhagavan's Grace"
"Sri Ramana Thiruvarul Nidhi"**

In one of my "altered Consciousness" states — as I call them — Sri Bhagavan intuitively commanded me that "I should write one more book!" Sri Bhagavan further guided me very specifically that the content of the book should bring out as how He had directed the spiritual aspirants to other Specific Spiritual Texts to give them greater grip on the abject necessity of their following scrupulously the *Atma Vichara*. More so, how He took intimate care of them by going to them and revealing the TRUTH to them in the most intimate way of personal benefit — in mysterious ways!

As a humble and reverential expression of surrendered devotion to *Sat-Guru SRI RAMANA*, I am enclosing a Colour '*Supplement*' on the Divine Life of *SAT-GURU RAMANA* — so very well composed and brought out by our dear Editor-Brother SURESH KAILAASH. Sri Suresh helped me by editing passages freshly written by me — as introduction — to a few important and specific spiritual topics of absorbing interest. My grateful thanks go to him, whole-heartedly! My Heart overflowed with gratitude, fulfilment and contentment that by bringing it out, I should refer and draw the reader's attention to this Greatest Event!

Please also pay specific attention to the specially designed "Book Mark" — perhaps, the best essence of *Vedanta* is reflected therein by the Two Greatest Spiritual Masters!

To make it clear about His State of *Ati Ashrama*, compassionately He referred to the Three ancient *Ati Ashramis* — *Suka, Jada Bharata, King Rishaba*. His reference to these three ancient great personalities had a confirmation — as it were — by the recent reputed *Shankaracharya* of Puri (the World-recognised great Mathematician) by his comparing Sri Ramana Maharshi with the ancient Sage Vasishta! ("After Sage Vasishta, only Sri Ramana Maharshi !" affirmed the Shankaracharya in his leadership speech while presiding over an International Spiritual Conference in New Delhi !).

For the scholastic minds, Sri Bhagavan referred to ancient Texts, like *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* and Tamil *Vedantic* Texts to quell and solve their scholarly doubts².

Perhaps, the interesting features that follow might be the sections dealing with 'Old Devotees', 'Rare Experiences', 'True Efficacy of Spiritual Sharing', 'How to give up the 'me'!' and '*Vasana Kshaya* and *Guru's Anugraha* operate simultaneously'. Then follow the 'Appendices'. For serious aspirants, this section would be of absorbing interest !

² Refer to Appendices page 407

Oh! Dear Brother Seeker! Who are reading this — right now — be assured, that every page of this “*Treasure Trove*” would give you not only interesting reading but also would be of very great practical interest and use for your maturing in spiritual *sadhana*!

Everything is Great ! Every one is Great !

Everything is purely ‘Spiritual’ only, in content !

Everything is BHAGAVAN RAMANA’s Blessings !

My Heart brims with gratitude, contentment and *Ananda* that *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana blessed the “TREASURE TROVE” to be made available to you — earnest and yearning spiritual aspirant — for helping you attain Emancipation, Inner Perfection and Silence of AWARENESS!

Such assurance of ‘Grace’ is available to all aspirants who turn to the *Direct Teaching* of Bhagavan Sri Ramana! My humble plea to you, therefore, is to read these pages with one-pointed attention and with an attitude of surrendered faith.

Feel blessed, that His *Grace* is *ever* on You! This has repeatedly been assured to us by Sri Bhagavan!

One day — in a state of ecstasy — on realising the immensity of having been Blessed, I realised the necessity of re-recognising (*‘pratyabhijna’*) the TRUTH of “I AM”, I wrote:

"இன்று இங்கு இப்போதே இருப்பாய் இருந்து ஆழ் உள் ஆனந்தத்து
என்று பணித்திடும் பகவான் ரமணர் பரனே — பற்றிடு! நீ
கன்றுக் குரங்கு நல் தாய் பூனை ஞான நாதன் ரமணனே!
நன்று நில் இப்போதே பூரணனாய் அருள் உற்று."

“BHAGAVAN RAMANA IS now commanding you to dive WITHIN into the OCEAN OF BLISS by remaining ever as the AWARENESS per se — HERE and NOW — consciously ! ‘AWARENESS’ alone is the ETERNAL TRUTH ! ‘AWARENESS’ alone is GOD the SUPREME !

“To successfully abide by His Commandment, we have to necessarily make the effort of ‘clinging’ like the baby-monkey to HIM. On His part, He assures us — like the Mother-Cat by holding our hands and by taking us to the shore of Self-Realisation — the TRUTH of AWARENESS!”

NAMASKAR

Ganesan.

“Ramanaarpanamastu” !

**God or Guru never forsakes the
devotee who has surrendered
himself.**

**Leave it all
to the Master.
Surrender to Him
without reserve.**

**Sri
Ramana
Maharshi**



Seated on a Rock up on Arunachala, showering His Gracious Blessings

The Direct Teaching of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

To tread the path of true spirituality, the Great Master, Sri Bhagavan Ramana, gave immense importance to inward-turned *sadhana* rather than to indulge in outward-turned good works. The recorded 'Talks' of the Maharshi, contained in the various published books, abound with statements confirming this, like "Practice is very important", "Practise, practise; practise more". There can be no two opinions on this.

The real significance of what the Master referred to as "practice" is revealed in the following report of an ardent *sadhaka*-devotee, S.S. Cohen: "Once, the devotee who was in charge of English Correspondence in the Ashram office was unavailable and the *Sarvadhikari* [Manager] asked Major Chadwick, who was living in the Ashram, to take his place. Chadwick refused but felt a prick of conscience for doing so. After dinner that night, when we were alone or almost alone with Bhagavan, Chadwick told Him about it and asked whether he had done right. Bhagavan answered that Chadwick was doing Him greater service by meditating, thereby greatly relieving the latter's mind." ("*Fragrant Petals*", p. 27) (underlining is mine).

There is also another significant incident, reported in *Ramana Smrti*, in the case of Shantamma, the Ashram lady-cook. Shantamma complained that her working all the time in the kitchen deprived her of doing meditation in the presence of Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan's reply is equally important: "Let the hands and legs do the work and *the mind be merged in meditation*."

While the apparent contradiction explicit in these two instances makes one face the fact that perhaps one has no choices with regard to the body's circumstances, one should not fail to notice the inherent freedom that one has to meditate, inwardly, all through, under all conditions.

In His holy presence, there prevailed total freedom, which included identification or non-identification with the course of events ordained. However, the earnest seekers, like B.V.Narasimha Swami, Paul Brunton, Muruganar, S.S.Cohen, Munagala Venkataramaiah, Nayana, Annamalai Swami, Viswanatha Swami, Kunju Swami, did choose only to live in isolated huts put up in an adjoining flower-garden, named '*Palakottu*', dedicating themselves to the practice of meditation and turning inward, doing Self-enquiry, the enquiry of '*Who am I?*'. This had the approval of Sri Bhagavan as well. It should be noted that they refrained from engaging in activities that were not related to their *sadhana*. When a true seeker was seen indulging in any unnecessary outward activity, Sri Bhagavan did reprimand him! These true seekers were thus guided, constantly too, by Him, to delve within and meditate.

And for the fresh seekers this forms a pointer as to where their true choice lies. An effort is made here to genuinely draw the seeker back to the one and only 'practice' our Master insisted on — "Self-enquiry".

Blossoms of Blessings¹

"REALISATION of the Self is the greatest help that can be rendered to humanity."

— Sri Ramana Maharshi

"It is tremendously exhilarating to learn for the first time the truth of the One Self and the possibility of Self-Realisation. At last life has a meaning and purpose."

— Arthur Osborne

"Self-enquiry ought to be the easiest of all tasks. But it seems to be the most difficult because we have become strangers to our Self. What one has to do is simple — to abide as the Self."

— Dr. T M.P. Mahadevan

"It is all pure gold. And here we find the ever-living Sri Ramana Maharshi before us in person, teaching us in his own inimitable words for our benefit."

— Major A.W.Chadwick

"THE PRACTISE"

"THE Self is always there. It is you. There is nothing but you. Nothing can be apart from you."

"You are the Self. You are already That. The fact is that you are ignorant of your blissful state. Ignorance supervenes and draws a veil over the pure Bliss. Attempts are directed only to remove this ignorance. This ignorance consists in wrong knowledge. The wrong knowledge consists in the false identification of the Self with the body, the mind, etc. This false identity must go; and, there remains the Self."

"You are already the Self. Therefore realisation is common to everyone. Realisation knows no difference in aspirants. The very doubt, 'Can I realise?' or the feeling, 'I have not realised' are the obstacles. Be free from these."

— Talk No. 251

¹ Culled from: The Direct Teaching of Bhagavan Ramana

M.: There is the absolute Self from which a spark proceeds as from fire. The spark is called the ego. In the case of an ignorant man it identifies itself with an object simultaneously with its rise. It cannot remain independent of such association with objects. This association is *ajnana* or ignorance, whose destruction is the objective of our efforts. If its objectifying tendency is killed it remains pure, and also merges into the source. The wrong identification with the body is *dehatma buddhi* ('I-am-the-body idea'). This must go. — *Talk No. 286*

"The awareness is the 'I'. Realise it and that is the Truth."

— *Talk No. 196*

"Existence is your nature." — *Talk No. 380*

"The Self alone is and nothing else." — *Talk No. 264*

"Silence is 'I'." — *Talk No. 248*

"Simple being is the Self." — *Talk No. 433*

"The egoless 'I am' is not a thought. It is realisation. The meaning or significance of 'I' is God." — *Talk No. 226*

"'I AM' — that is all." — *Talk No. 273*

D.: What is the Real thing?

M.: That is what IS; the others are only appearances. Diversity is not its nature. We are now confounding appearances with Reality. Appearance carries its end in itself.

— *Talk No. 238*

"Reality was, is and will be." — *Talk No. 264*

"The birth of the 'I'-thought is one's own birth, its death is the person's death."

— *Talk No. 276*

"Ego is 'I'-thought. In its subtle form it remains a thought whereas in its gross aspect it embraces the mind, the senses and the body. They disappear in deep slumber along with the ego. Still the Self is there; similarly it will be in death."

"*Aham* — 'I', is only one. Egos are different. They are in the One Self. The Self is not affected by the ego. 'I' is one only. 'I' is the Truth."

"Real knowledge of the Self is an experience and not apprehension by the mind."

— *Talk No. 285*

"Each one must work for himself." — *Talk No. 257*

"If the longing is there, Realisation will be forced on you even if you do not want it. *Subechcha* (desire for enlightenment) is the doorway for Realisation." — *Talk No. 265*

"The differences 'He' and 'I' are the obstacles to *Jnana*."

"Think: 'I', 'I', 'I', and hold to that one thought to the exclusion of all others."

— *Talk No. 266*

"There is the peaceful mind which is the supreme. When the same becomes restless, it is afflicted by thoughts. Mind is only the dynamic power (*Sakti*) of the Self."

— Talk No. 268

"The Supreme Being is that from which the body is born, in which it lives and into which it resolves."

— Talk No. 269

D.: How can the mind be made to vanish?

M.: No attempt is made to destroy it. To think or wish it is itself a thought. If the thinker is sought, the thoughts will disappear.

D.: Will they disappear of themselves? It looks so difficult.

M.: They will disappear because they are unreal. The idea of difficulty is itself an obstacle to realisation. It must be overcome. To remain as the Self is not difficult.

— Talk No. 244

"So long as false identification persists doubts will persist, questions will arise, there will be no end of them. Doubts will cease only when the non-self is put an end to."

— Talk No. 245

"Spiritual fare is common to all and never denied to any one — be the person old or young, male or female."

— Talk No. 251

M.: Make effort. Just as water is got by boring a well, so also you realise the Self by investigation.

D.: Yes. But some find water readily and others with difficulty.

M.: But you already see the moisture on the surface. You are hazily aware of the Self. Pursue it. When the effort ceases the Self shines forth.

D.: How to train the mind to look within?

M.: By practice. The mind is the intelligent phase leading to its own destruction, for Self to manifest.

D.: How to destroy the mind?

M.: Water cannot be made dry water. Seek the Self; the mind will be destroyed.

— Talk No. 240

"The only useful purpose of the present birth is to turn within and realise it. There is nothing else to do."

— Talk No. 219

"The thought 'I have not seen', the expectation to see and the desire of getting something, are all the working of the ego. You have fallen into the snares of the ego. The ego says all these and not you. *Be yourself* and nothing more!

"That which exists, exists for ever, that which newly appears is later lost."

— Talk No. 186

M.: If you do not make *Atma vichara*, then *Loka Vichara* (Worldly worries) creeps in. That which is not, is sought for, but not that which is obvious. When once you have found what you seek, *Vichara* (enquiry) also ceases and you rest in it. As long as one is confusing the body with the Atman, Atman is said to be lost and one is said to seek for it, but the ATMAN itself is never lost. It always exists.

— Talk No. 186

"When the attempt is made, it will of itself take you to the goal!"

"Just on waking from sleep and before becoming aware of the World there is that pure 'I'-'I'. Hold to it without sleeping or without allowing thoughts to possess you. If that is held firm it does not matter even though the World is seen. The seer remains unaffected by the phenomena."

— Talk No. 196

D.: Should we not find out the ultimate reality of the World, individual and God?

M.: These are all conceptions of the 'I'. They are only dependent upon the 'I'-thought. Find out who you are and there will be an end of all your doubts.

— Talk No. 197

M.: ...all *lokas*, even the *Brahma loka*, do not release one from rebirth. Vide the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Reaching ME, there is no rebirth ... All others are in bondage." What is birth? It is birth of ego. Once born you reach something; if you reach it you return also.

Therefore leave off all this verbiage! BE as you ARE. See who you ARE and remain as the Self, free from birth, going, coming and returning.

D.: True. However often this Truth is heard, still it eludes us and we forget it.

M.: Quite so. Reminders are often necessary.

— Talk No. 181

"Though the 'I' is always experienced, yet one's attention has to be drawn to it. Then only knowledge dawns. Thus the need for the instruction of the *Upanishads* and of Wise Sages."

— Talk No. 92

"All these doubts arise because of the wrong outlook and consequent expectation of things external to oneself."

— Talk No. 157

"The feeling 'The body is I' is the error. This false sense of 'I' must go. The real 'I' is always there. It is *here and now*. Realisation is not acquisition of anything new nor is it a new faculty. It is only removal of all camouflage."

— Talk No. 96

"Turn all your enquiries towards search for Self. The force set up within you will operate in others also."

— Talk No. 109

To another question Sri Bhagavan said : "How do you say 'I am'? Do you take a light to find yourself? Or did you come to know it on reading books? How?"

The questioner said: "By experience."

M.: Yes. Experience is the word. Knowledge implies subject and object. But experience is non-terminous (terminal), eternal. — Talk No. 128

"Do not engage (in any kind of disputes). Turn inward and put an end to this. There will be no finality in disputations."

"The ego comes up only holding you (the Self). Hold yourself and the ego will vanish. Until then the Sage will be saying: 'There is' — The ignorant will be asking: 'Where?'"

— Talk No. 132

"Effort is necessary up to the state of Realisation."

— Talk No. 78

"Does not one find some kind of peace while in meditation? That is the sign of progress. That peace will be deeper and more prolonged with continued practice."

— Talk No. 73

"Unless intellectually known, how to practice it? Learn it intellectually first, then do not stop with that. Practise it."

— Talk No. 40

"Find out what is immediate, intimate, instead of trying to find out what is distant and unknown."

— Talk No. 17

M: The mind is by nature restless. Begin liberating it from its restlessness; give it peace; make it free from distractions; train it to look inward; make this a habit. This is done by ignoring the external World and removing the obstacles to peace of mind.

— Talk No. 26

D.: Distractions result from inherited tendencies. Can they be cast off too?

M.: Yes. Many have done so. Believe it! They did so because they believed they could.

M.: Success begets success. If one distraction is conquered the next is conquered and so on, until all are finally conquered.

— Talk No. 28

M.: When told you are not the ego, realise the Reality. Why do you still identify yourself with the ego? It is like saying — "Don't think of the monkey while taking medicine" — it is impossible.

The significance must be traced and understood. It is not enough to repeat the bare words or think of them.

Reality is simply the loss of the ego. Destroy the ego by seeking its identity. Because the ego is no entity it will automatically vanish and Reality will shine forth by itself.

This is the direct method. Whereas all other methods are done, only retaining the ego. In those paths, there arise so many doubts and the eternal question remains to be tackled finally.

But in this method the final question is the only one and it is raised from the very beginning.

There is no greater mystery than this — viz., ourselves being the Reality we seek to gain Reality. We think that there is something hiding our Reality and that it must be destroyed before the Reality is gained. It is ridiculous. A day will dawn when you will yourself laugh at your past efforts. That which will be on the day you laugh is also *here* and *now*.

D.: So it is a great game of pretending?

M.: Yes.

In *Yoga Vasishtha* it is said: "What is Real is hidden from us, but what is false, is revealed as true." We are actually experiencing the Reality only; still, we do not know it. Is it not a wonder of wonders?

The quest "Who am I?" is the axe with which to cut off the ego. — Talk No. 146

Cease to be a knower, then there is Perfection.

— Talk No. 147

M.: Grace is the Self. I have already said, "If you remember Bhagavan, you are prompted to do so by the Self." Is not Grace already there? Is there a moment when Grace is not operating in you? Your remembrance is the forerunner of Grace. That is the response, that is the stimulus, that is the Self and that is Grace.

There is no cause for anxiety.

— Talk No. 251

"The 'I' casts off the illusion of 'I' and yet remains as 'I'. Such is the paradox of Self-Realisation."

"If you give up 'I' and 'Mine', all are given up at one stroke. The very seed of possession is lost. Thus the evil is nipped in the bud or crushed in the germ itself."

— Talk No. 28

"All thoughts are inconsistent with Realisation. Thought is one thing and realisation is quite another."

— Talk No. 30

"If two, why do people say 'I' and not 'we'? There is therefore only one."

— Talk No. 34

"Where psychology ends, there philosophy begins. This is experience; the mind is born; we see it; even without the mind we exist. There is every one's experience to prove it."

D.: Is the study of science, psychology, physiology, philosophy, etc., helpful...

M.: Very little. Some knowledge is needed for yoga and it may be found in books. But practical application is the thing needed, and personal example, personal touch and personal instructions are the most helpful aids.

— Talk No. 28

"We seek to reach the Goal with the ego, but the Goal exists before the ego." — Talk No. 146

"Jnana once revealed, takes time to steady itself."

— Talk No. 141

"The fact is, there is Reality. It is not affected by any discussions. Let us abide as Reality and not engage in futile discussions as to its nature, etc." — Talk No. 201

"Turning the mind inward is done by practice and dispassion; and, that succeeds only gradually."

D.: Contemplation is possible only with control of mind and control can be accomplished only by contemplation. Is it not a vicious circle?

M.: Yes, they are interdependent. They must go on side by side. Practice and dispassion bring about the result gradually. Dispassion is practised to check the mind from being projected outward; practice is to keep it turned inward. There is a struggle between control and contemplation. It is going on constantly within. Contemplation will in due course be successful.

D.: How to begin? Your Grace is needed for it.

M.: Grace is always there. "Dispassion cannot be acquired, nor Realisation of the Truth, nor Inherence in the Self, in the absence of *Guru's* Grace," the Master quoted.

Practice is necessary. It is like training a roguish bull confined to his stall by tempting him with luscious grass and preventing him from straying. — Talk No. 220

"Misery is only unwanted thought. The mind is not strong enough to resist it."

— Talk No. 241

"Pleasure consists in turning and keeping the mind within; pain in sending it outward. There is only pleasure.

Absence of pleasure is called pain. One's nature is pleasure — Bliss (*Ananda*)."

— Talk No. 244

At lunch, a visitor from Nellore asked the Master for a tiny bit of food (*prasad*) from His dish.

M.: Eat without thinking of the ego. Then what you eat becomes Bhagavan's *prasad*.

— Talk No. 228

D.: How does book lore help in Self-Realisation?

A: Only so far as to make one spiritually-minded.

D.: How far does intellect help?

A: Only so far as to make one sink the intellect in the ego, and the ego in the Self.

— *Talk No. 23*

The conversation turned upon the question as to whether *Iswara Prasad* (Divine Grace) is necessary for the attaining of *samrajya* (Universal dominion) or whether a *jiva's* honest and strenuous efforts to attain it cannot of themselves lead him to That from whence is no return to life and death. The Maharshi with an ineffable smile, which lit up His Holy Face and which was all-pervasive, shining upon the coterie around Him, replied in tones of certainty and with the ring of truth, "Divine Grace is essential for Realisation. It leads one to God-Realisation. But such Grace is vouchsafed only to him who is a true devotee or a yogin, who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path towards freedom."

— *Talk No. 29*

"You are being manipulated by a Higher Power. You are admitting it by your own refusal to submit to it. Instead recognise the Power and submit as a tool. Or to put it differently, if you refuse you will be forcibly drawn into it. Instead of being an unwilling worker, be a willing one."

— *Talk No. 58*

D.: What are the obstacles to remaining steady in unbroken Bliss? How can they be overcome?

M.: The obstacles are:

(1) *Ignorance* which is forgetfulness of one's pure being.

(2) *Doubt* which consists in wondering if even the experience was of the Real or of the unreal.

(3) *Error* which consists in the "I-am-the-body" idea, and thinking that the World is real. These are overcome by hearing the Truth, reflection on it and concentration.

Hearing the Truth is of two kinds. The ordinary one is to hear it enunciated and explained by a Master. However, the right one is to raise the question (Who am I?) for oneself and seek and find the answer in oneself as the unbroken 'I-I'.

To be reflecting on this experience is the second stage. To remain one-pointed in it is the third stage.

— *Talk No. 95*

D.: What is Renunciation?

M.: Giving up of the ego.

D.: Is it not giving up possessions?

M.: The possessor too.



The Practice Of Self-Enquiry – The Ramana Way²

அதுநீ என்று அம்மறைகள் ஆர்த்திடவும் தன்னை
எது என்று தான்தேர்ந்து இராது - அதுநான்
இது அன்று என்று எண்ணல் உரன் இன்மையினால் என்றும்
அதுவே தானாய் அமர்வதால்.

– உள்ளது நாற்பது, 32

"Although the scriptures proclaim 'You are That', it is a sign of weakness to meditate: 'I am not this but That', instead of enquiring what one IS and remaining so; for one is always THAT."

– Reality in Forty Verses, v. 32

* * *

I have divided it into three parts for the sake of convenience.

- (1) Overall Perspective;**
- (2) The 'How' of Self-Enquiry and**
- (3) The Uniqueness of the Ramana Way.**

(1) OVERALL PERSPECTIVE

It is said in the *Old Testament*, 'God made man in His own Image'. Man is thus a product of the Divine Will only. He partakes of the Holiness of God and he can commune with the Creator, the Perfect One. When man realises his Perfect Nature, he is fully Divine. Man is now steeped in ignorance, oblivious of this Divine Essence in him. The Divine Nature in man is ineradicable; it may be covered up for a time being, but it must shine forth again.

² Be the Self

As the *Upanishads* point out, man's movements are generally directed only outwards and not inwards to his Self, which is Divine, since all the senses in his body are turned outwards and tuned to absorb things only from outside. When his attention is one-pointedly turned within, he becomes aware of an entirely different Nature of himself. He recognizes the Divine Nature in him revealing Itself in all splendour. Anyone thus turning within is bound to realise this Eternal Truth within him; man turning his attention outward by the very act excludes himself from consciously experiencing it, though every man, even in his ignorance, is not devoid of this Divine Consciousness in him. In his song of '*Self Knowledge*', Sri Bhagavan says "True, strong, fresh forever stands the Self. From it in truth springs forth the phantom body and phantom World. When this delusion is destroyed, and not a speck remaining, the Sun of Self shines bright and real with vast Heart expanse." Whether he knows it or not he is nothing but Pure Consciousness, Pure Awareness — the Self.

That which clouds such awareness from his conscious experience is his habits to cling to externalities which are expressed in his discontent, frailties, darkness and fear. Let him look within deeper and longer and without fail he will notice this so-called 'hidden and mysterious' Self inhabiting his Centre, the Source of his Being. Turning within from the externalities and paying full attention to this Source, brings about a tremendous change in a man's life, since for the first time he recognises that he possesses this Divine Essence within him. He understands the declaration: "*You are That*" to mean "*You are Brahman*, the Supreme Reality, the Truth, the Self.

In verse 34 of *Ulladu Narpadu*, Sri Bhagavan says "The natural and true Reality for ever resides in the Heart", and in the next verse he affirms "To discern and abide with the ever present Reality is true attainment". The marks of the Reality are that it always exists and it shines by its own light. The Awareness in man exists always, by and in itself. Each man has therefore within his grasp this opening to this Eternal Light within.

When he has a glimpse of experience of this — his true Being within — which glows totally independently not needing his effort or support for its existence, it is a sacred experience of a transcendental and immanent State. This is an experience which is beyond the senses, the mind, the five sheaths which cover the Self. It is a state of Being oneself, being everything and one with Eternity. Whoever engages in such inward exploration becomes an Awakened One, a *Buddha*. 'He merely antedates today what the multitude of men will have perforce to do tomorrow.' Man, therefore, is a spiritual being having this capacity to become the timeless Wisdom. He breathes this Truth every moment. He thus contains the Divine Infinitude within him. This Infinite Awareness is experienced as a perennial feeling of absolute happiness – the *Ananda* which is also *Sat* (Being) and *Chit* (Awareness).

One might say, 'All right, there is something marvellous, limitless, blissful, sacred within us all and that is, as realised beings like Bhagavan Ramana say, is one's own true identity'. What about the World of appearances in which we live, work, have mutual relationships? Is that to be ignored? In any case, it does not ignore us, rather it has us in its grip. Time

too rushes onward like a roaring stream carrying the human race along with it and drowning it in its flux. In such a struggle – all the time forced to run outward and forward, both physically and mentally – if a man is asked to take a leap backwards, to dive within, perhaps never to surface again, is it not too tall an order? Won't it daunt the doughtiest of men? Won't he fear the leap in the dark, into the unknown? And, even if he is ready to go inward, how does one do it?

When the *Sat-Guru* says 'Turn your attention inward, see yourself,' he only asks us to be our own Self, and not this or that, which is nothing but an imagination, whereas being ourselves is Reality. Is it not ironical that we grasp everything that is suggested to us on the World of appearances but look askance when we are asked by the Awakened One, the *Sat-Guru*, not to dream but to wake up?

(2) THE 'HOW' OF SELF-ENQUIRY

Self-inquiry is the art and science of inquiring into and knowing by being one's own true Self. A man who knows himself is a *Buddha*. Bhagavan Ramana — in his infinite compassion — put at the disposal of everyone — no matter what his intellectual or other status may be — a simple, direct method of knowing who he or she is. In his own words, "*Atma Vidya*, Self-Knowledge is easy, indeed the easiest". So much so, in trying to explain or expound his way, we may end up, albeit unwittingly, complicating it. As Dr. Mees (Sadhu Ekarasa), the Dutch philosopher-devotee said, Bhagavan's words are enough, no commentaries are necessary.

Keeping this in mind, we may proceed with our *Sat-Sangh*. Verbal communication, spoken or written, is indeed a *Sat-Sangh* in which the speaker and listener or writer and reader are equally involved (50% + 50%).

Though everyone says 'I', 'I' only, yet strangely not many make effort to know what exactly this 'I' is or what it means. By 'I' usually primarily we mean only the body, but on deeper analysis we mean by it the faculties of thinking, feeling and willing. We can easily arrive at the conclusion that the body is not the 'I' since it is insentient. By insentience, we mean that the body is always the known one and never the knowing principle. Said the great Hindu sage, *Allama Prabhu*: "Know yourself without losing your Awareness. If the body be yourself, why do you say: 'my body'. Everybody speaks of his possessions as 'my clothes, my gold' only. Tell me if anyone ever identifies himself saying 'I am the clothes or I am the gold'? You are mistaking a superimposition for a fact when you take your body to be your Self".

Then, what is this 'I'?

In the body, which is insentient, there arises a 'sense of alertness', a sensation of 'I'. It is termed as 'mind'. Bhagavan Ramana says that if one investigates the mind, it is seen to be a bundle of thoughts. The 'I' functions as the basis of all thoughts. All thoughts are related to you. Every thought is either about you or connected with you as individuals,

objects, things, events or opinions. All these are rooted in your 'I'; thus the 'I' in you is only an 'I'-thought — the ground for the entire gamut of countless thoughts. Let us look at it still closer.

Every day the first thought on waking from our sleep is this 'I'-thought. In sleep you do not know anything, including the 'I' with which you refer to yourself. This 'I' or 'I'-thought is completely subsided in deep sleep, along with its chain of other thoughts. If we observe further carefully it will be seen that the last thought to 'set' before sleep is this 'I'-thought, which is also the first to 'rise' when you wake up the next morning! Where does this 'I' set and where from does this 'I' arise? We should seek the source of this 'I' which 'dies' every night in our sleep and again takes birth the next morning. In this quest we have the assured help of Sri Bhagavan who leads us further on by saying that there is an Eternal 'I' behind the known 'I', into which this 'I' or 'I'-thought merges and again comes out daily, since it is the Source. Scriptures declare that the first Name of God is 'I'. It should definitely refer to the Eternal 'I' — the source of Being — and not to the 'I' of our everyday knowledge. Moses got a verbal answer from God when he questioned God what His Name was: 'I AM That I AM'. Sri Bhagavan says that this is the best definition of God.

The word for God in the Hebrew language is '*Yahweh*' (*Jehova*) which means 'I AM'. So, both from sages' statements and scriptural declarations and from our own common experience we can easily arrive at the conclusion that there is an Eternal 'I' behind the 'I' by which we refer to ourselves in our daily lives. We forget the infinite 'I' which is our true identity and are content to be with the limited, phantom 'I'.

Let us observe closely the 'I'-thought which is the link between the insentient body and the Eternal 'I' which is Pure Consciousness, which the Scriptures say lies hidden and shrouded within us. Let us trace the 'I'-thought to its source.

When other thoughts arise, we should focus our attention on the 'I'-thought. All the time our attention should be unflinchingly focused on the feeling of 'I' or 'I'-thought. When we are filled with thoughts, how do we bring back our attention to the 'I'-thought? When we have other thoughts, Bhagavan says we should ask ourselves 'For whom is this thought?'. He added, the answer will come, 'To me'. Then ask, 'Who am I?'. When we do that, our attention is drawn back to the 'I' or 'I'-thought and this attention leads us to the Source. Thus, focusing one's attention on oneself is the sole effort one has to put in to find one's true identity.

When one is probing into oneself, persistently questioning 'Who am I?', one gets in direct touch with the inner Reality, the Eternal 'I'. The greater our seriousness and one-pointedness in delving within ourselves, the sooner will be the success. Self-enquiry is not only the straight path but it is also the easiest since no outer aid is required nor are you seeking anything but yourself. As taught by Sri Bhagavan, any act which directs the outgoing mind inward to its Source, the Eternal 'I', is spiritual and that anything that drags the mind outward, doping it in any activity, is unspiritual.

Bhagavan Ramana has offered a Direct Path to wake us all up to this Truth of Inner Bliss. Anyone can follow this silent, inward path of Sri Ramana wherever they may be and in whatever walk of life they may be placed, regardless of the challenges of perplexed environments. Thus, this path of introspective Self-Enquiry is an ever open path and hence anyone can tread it. This path, is for the learned and unlearned, rich and poor, for the recluse and the householder, for all who wish to renounce the World.

What makes Sri Bhagavan's method unique is that it is based on 'intuition' checked by 'reason'; also, this pure reasoning is employed in the enquiry into the Self only by 'illuminated intuition'. So, to summarise, quoting Sri Bhagavan's own words: "The state of non-emergence of 'I' is the state of Pure Being, Pure Awareness. ('Heart' is the word used by Sri Bhagavan for this Pure Reality, within us). This could be achieved only through enquiring 'Who am I?' Just as a man would dive in order to retrieve something that has fallen in water, so would one dive into oneself with a keen one-pointedness and find the place whence the 'I' originates. The only enquiry leading to Self-Knowledge is seeking the Source of the feeling 'I'. If one enquires 'Who am I?' within, the individual 'I', the limited 'I', falls down abashed as soon as one reaches the Heart. Immediately the Reality manifests itself spontaneously as 'I'. Although It reveals Itself as 'I', it is not the limited 'I' known to us, but the Perfect Being, the Eternal 'I', the Divine Essence in us. The Self, the Truth that you seek to know is thus verily yourself". When once Sri Muruganar asked Sri Bhagavan what he should do to attain the ultimate Truth, Sri Bhagavan answered: "Be as you ARE!"

He was even terser to Ramaswamy who became later 'Thinnai Swami': 'Iru' (Be).

What an immediate and total transformation this one word brought in Ramaswamy!

(3) THE UNIQUENESS OF THE RAMANA WAY

The term *Atma-Vichara* or Self-enquiry is found in many of the ancient Scriptures of India. In his great work *Vivekachudamani* Sri Adi Sankara says that Liberation cannot be attained by any amount of action but only by Self-enquiry.

In *Jnana Vasishta*, Sage Vasistha proclaims: "Shining in everybody as 'I'-'I' is nothing but the Self, on which one has to meditate... With the stick of enquiry strike the fierce-looking mind and snake-like senses and make them abide in the Heart".

***Kaivalya Navaneeta* declares: "Enquiry alone can lead to the Knowledge revealed in the *Vedas*. Knowledge of Self cannot be gained by study".**

***Srimad Bhagavad Gita* declares: "Fix the mind firmly in the Self". It may be asked 'When Self-enquiry is already mentioned in Scriptures, what new revelation has been made by Sri Bhagavan?' The uniqueness of Sri Bhagavan's teaching is that it is not within the framework of the 'mind'. In fact, Sri Bhagavan is the Great Master who has exclusively dealt with the realm, scope and ultimate futility of trying to rid of the shackles of the**

mind through mental methods. "When questioned, it will merge in its Source and a new dimension of functioning will come about," He said.

In the first benedictory verse of *Ulladu Narpadu*, Sri Bhagavan points out the futility of thought. He asks "Since void of thoughts, the Reality exists in the bottom of the Heart, how does one know the Reality, which is called the Heart?" That is to say, if meditation is understood in its usual sense, namely a process of thinking, no amount of meditation can enable one to know or realise the Reality which is beyond thought. For, how can any amount of thought enable one to realise that which is beyond the range of thought? How then is the Reality to be realised? The answer is given by Bhagavan Himself in the remaining portion of the same verse: "To abide in the Heart as it IS, is truly meditating upon it". In other words, since the Reality is beyond thought, to abide without thought as that Reality is the only way to meditate upon it and to realise it as it IS. But how to abide thus without thought?

What is it that now prevents us from abiding without thought as the Reality? The Reality or Self ever shines in the Heart, beyond thought, as the pure adjunct-less 'I AM'. But instead of abiding as that 'I AM', there rises an 'ego', a separate individual who feels 'I am this body', 'I am so and so'. This ego is the root thought, the 'I'-thought; without it no other thought can exist, as we already saw. Therefore, it is this individual 'I' which assumes the thought-forms as 'body', 'World', etc. that obstructs our natural abidance as 'I AM'. Hence, if we want to abide without thought as the Self and thereby realise the Reality as it IS, we need only remove this obstruction, the first 'I-thought' or 'ego'. That is why so many of the verses of '*Ulladu Narpadu*' analyse and describe the nature of the 'ego' and its by-products – the body and World – for only when we understand their nature will we know how to be free from them.

What is the nature of this 'ego', and how are we to prevent its rising? The answer to this question is the uniqueness of Sri Bhagavan's teaching. In verse 24 of '*Ulladu Narpadu*', He tells us that the insentient body cannot of its own accord say 'I', that the real Eternal 'I' does not rise or set, but that between these two rises a false 'I' which is limited to the body; this is the 'ego', otherwise known as the '*chit-jada-granthi*' – the knot between the sentient Self and the insentient body – bondage, the individual soul, mind and so on". In the next verse, Sri Bhagavan tells us: "This formless and ghostly ego comes into existence by grasping a form (a body); grasping a form it endures; feeding upon forms which it grasps, it waxes more; leaving one form, it grasps another form..."

How then are we to remove this sole obstruction which prevents us from peacefully and happily abiding as the Self? The answer is given by Sri Bhagavan in the same verse (v. 25), "When sought for, it takes to flight"! He illustrates it with a story. A man posed himself as a friend of both the bride's and the bridegroom's party. So long as everyone believed him, he got on very happily, bossing over both the parties and feasting sumptuously. But, as soon as people got suspicious and an enquiry was started about him he made himself scarce. Such is the case with the 'ego' which, likewise, poses both as Self and as the body; it is endowed with consciousness and shines as 'I', which are the properties of Self, and, at

the same time, it is limited to a form and it rises and sets, which are the properties of the body. So long as we do not enquire who it is, this 'ego' will boss over us and will feast on the knowledge of objects gained through the five senses. But, as soon as we start Self-enquiry, as soon as we try to know who this 'ego' is, it will take to flight and disappear.

Why, some may wonder, does the 'ego' thus disappear when it is scrutinised or attended to? As Sri Bhagavan explains, the 'ego' comes into existence only by grasping a form, also it endures by grasping forms, and it feeds itself and waxes strong by grasping forms. Without a form to grasp, the 'ego' cannot stand. All thoughts, objects, knowledge of second and third persons are only forms. Therefore, so long as the 'ego' attends to objects, to second and third persons, it waxes and grows strong. But, the 'ego' itself has no form; so, if it tries to attend to itself, the first person or subject, it will lose its strength, subside and disappear, since, there, the 'ego' falls back into its Source, in the Heart. So long as it attends to second and third persons, it appears to exist, but when it tries to attend to itself, when enquired '*Who am I?*' it is found to be non-existent. This truth is clearly stated by Sri Bhagavan in verse 17 of '*Upadesa Saram*': "If one enquires without inadvertence into the form of the mind (or 'ego'), it will be found that there is no such thing as 'mind' at all! This is the Direct Path for anyone and everyone!" When the 'ego' thus disappears, being found to be non-existent, what remains? Only Self, the Reality! This, therefore, is the Direct Path which enables us to "abide in the Heart as it IS" as Sri Bhagavan says in the first benedictory verse of '*Ulladu Narpadu*'.

Sri Bhagavan clearly teaches us that there are no two 'I's, one the 'ego' and another the Self – duality during 'sadhana' or practice and non-duality on '*sadhyam*' or attainment – and that Self is the only Real 'I'. Only on this ocean of 'I AM', arise all emotions, feelings and thoughts, the adjuncts of the individual, the 'ego' making us feel that it is the real 'I'. Therefore, if we closely attend to this 'I', we will find that it is not the 'ego' but only the Real Self. That is why, while teaching the practice of Self-enquiry, Sri Bhagavan does not distinguish two 'I' s — the 'ego' and the Self. He merely says: "Enquire '*Who am I?*'"; in other words, attend to what you feel as 'I'. If what we feel as 'I' is the Self, by our attending to it, we will know it as it IS. If what we feel as 'I' is the 'ego', by our attending to it, it will disappear, and Self alone will then be known. Thus, whether the 'I' which we try to attend to is the 'ego' or the Self, the result will be the same; only the Self, the Eternal 'I' — the Substance and Ground of the false 'I' will remain shining.

Another uniqueness in the teaching of Sri Bhagavan is that He revealed the importance of paying 'attention'. We can thus boldly say that the correct technique of Self-enquiry as taught by Sri Bhagavan is paying full attention to the mere feeling 'I'. As soon as we try to attend to the feeling 'I', all sorts of thoughts arise and distract our attention. However, it is interesting to observe that thoughts do not rise of their own accord, they rise only because we 'think' them. Moreover, thoughts do not have any power of their own, they gain power only by our attending to them. If we do not attend to the 'thoughts' that rise, they will subside of their own accord. Sri Bhagavan says: "If you deny the 'ego' and scorch it by ignoring it, you would become free. If you accept the 'ego', it will impose limitations

on you and throw you into a vain struggle to transcend them". We have, thus, to set aside thought-attention and regain Self-attention. This method of 'attention' is clearly taught by Sri Bhagavan in his seminal booklet WHO AM I? where He says: "If other thoughts rise, one should, without attempting to complete them, enquiry 'To whom did they rise?'. What does it matter however many thoughts rise? At the very moment, that each thought rises, if one vigilantly enquires '*Who am I?*', the mind (our power of attention) will turn back (from the thought) to its Source, Self; (then, since no one is there to attend to it) the 'thought' which had risen will also subside. By repeatedly practising thus, the power of the 'mind' to abide in its Source increases". This is a great clue for aspirants so long as our 'attention' clings to this feeling 'I', we cannot know or attend to anything else.

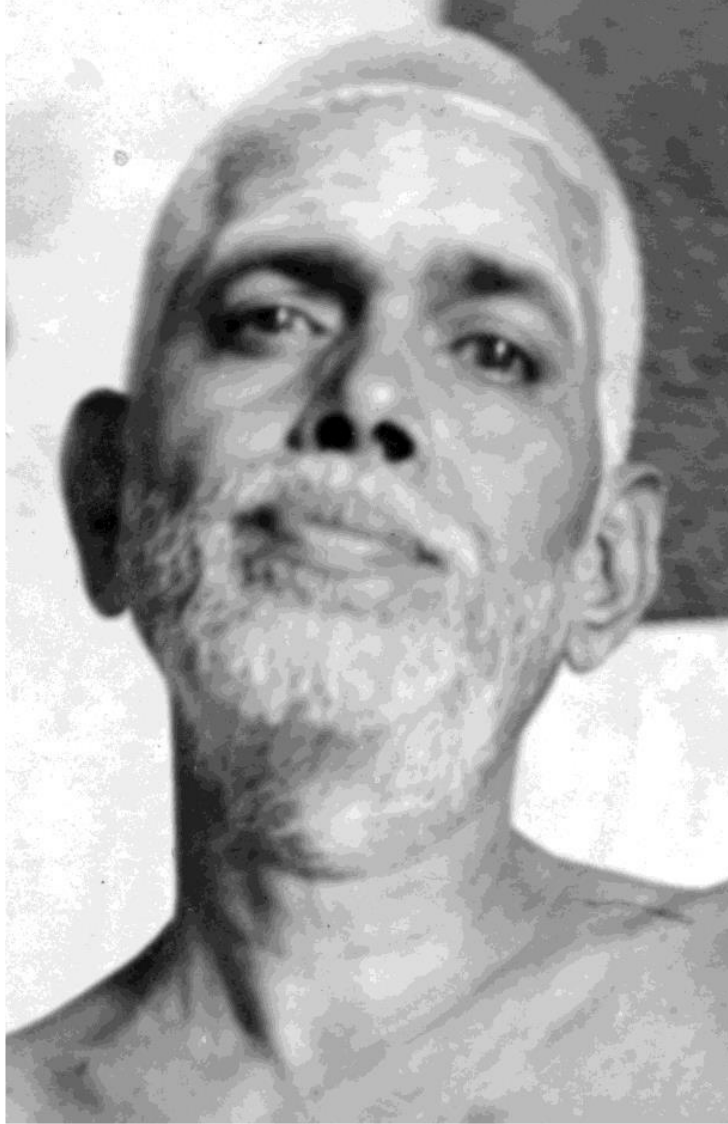
The sole purpose of the quest is to divert our 'attention' back towards this 'I'. Therefore, Self can be known only by means of Self-enquiry and Self-enquiry is not an activity of the 'mind' but the state of stillness of mind. As Sri Bhagavan says in verse 26 of '*Upadesa Saram*'. "Being the Self is itself knowing the Self, because Self is not two. This is Self-abidance". In verse 27 of '*Ulladu Narpadu*', Sri Bhagavan declares that unless we attend to Self we cannot attain the state of egolessness in which 'I' does not rise, and unless we attain that egolessness, we cannot abide in our True State of Oneness with the Reality. Why should this be so? Why should not other *sadhanas* also enable us to realise the Self? The reason is lucidly explained by Sri Bhagavan in '*Maharshi's Gospel*' (Book-I, Ch. 1): "Self-enquiry alone is the direct means to realise the Self, because every other kind of *sadhana* presupposes the retention of the 'mind' as the instrument for carrying on the *sadhana*, and without the 'mind' it cannot be practised. Therefore, the attempt to destroy the 'ego' or 'mind' by *sadhanas* other than Self-enquiry, is just like a thief posing as a policeman and pretending to try to catch the thief. Self-enquiry alone can reveal the Truth that neither the 'ego' nor 'mind' really exists, and thus it alone can enable one to realise the Self". Sri Bhagavan has also employed another analogy. He explains that trying to kill the 'mind' by other *sadhanas* is like trying to bury one's own shadow. If the 'mind' were real, it could perhaps kill itself. But, the truth is that the 'mind' is non-existent and hence it can no more kill itself than a man can bury his own shadow!

Sri Bhagavan has categorically stressed in '*Atma Vidya*' that Self-enquiry is the easiest of all paths. Let us see why Sri Bhagavan has said 'easiest'. What do the terms 'easy' and 'difficult' mean? In the words of Sri Sadhu Om: "What we do not like, what we cannot do and what we do not know, we call 'difficult', whereas what we already like, what we have already done and what we already know, we call 'easy'." That is, if something is within our power of 'loving', our power of 'doing' and our power of 'knowing' we feel it to be easy; but, if it is not within our power of loving, doing or knowing, we feel it to be 'difficult'.

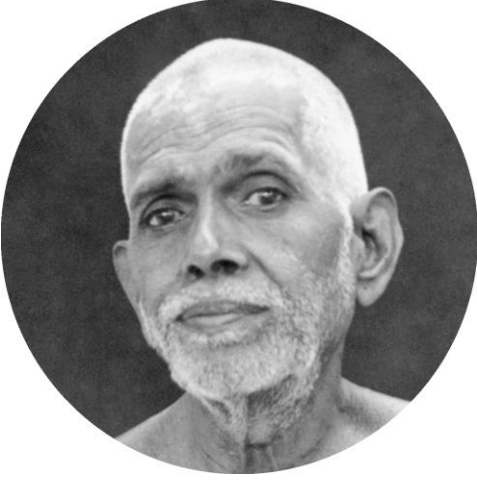
With this simple definition, let us see whether Self-enquiry is easy or difficult. Is there anyone who can say that he does not love himself? No, among all the things we hold dear, it is our-self that we love most. Is there anyone who can say that he does not know himself? No, because before we know any other thing, we must first know our-self; when we say: "I know so-and-so" does it not prove that we know the feeling 'I'? And is there

anyone who can say that he is not able to remove all his adjuncts such as the body and mind, and to abide as himself? No, because every day in deep sleep, we effortlessly and naturally remove these adjuncts and remain in our true nature. Thus, it is clear that we all love our Self, we all know our Self, and we are all able to abide as our Self. In other words, the *ichha-sakti* (power of 'loving'), *kriya-sakti* (power of 'doing') and *jnana-sakti* (power of 'knowing') necessary for Self-enquiry are already inherent in us! Therefore, Self-enquiry is easiest. All Sri Bhagavan asks us to do is: "Love yourself, know yourself and be yourself". How can this be called difficult?

When Sri Bhagavan assures that Self-enquiry is the easiest, He has also subtly left us a clue there. His reassurance is that we are not alone in this endeavour, but that His Grace is always there to help us. When His Grace has brought us all to His Lotus Feet, will He not help us to achieve success with this noble and worthiest endeavour viz., Self-enquiry taught by Himself.



Sri Bhagavan's "Glance of Grace" !



Be The Bliss

இழிவு உடல் யான் என்னல் இகந்திடுக என்றும்
ஒழிவு இல் இன்பாம் தன்னை ஓர்க - அழியும்
உடல் ஒம்ப லோடு தனை ஓர உனல் யாறு
கடக்கக் கராப்புணை கொண்டு அற்று.

– உள்ளது நாற்பது அனுபந்தம், 12

"Give up the idea that this loathsome 'body' is the Self. Realise the eternally Blissful Self. To seek to Know the Self while cherishing the ephemeral body is like mistaking a crocodile for a log and trying to cross the river on it."

– *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v. 12

Paul Brunton, Arthur Osborne and other writers on Sri Ramana Maharshi were wonder-struck by the way He confronted and overcame 'Death' at the tender age of 16 years. The wonder deepened their study of His teaching of 'Who Am I?' and dragged them to His Presence at Arunachala. The great change in His life was brought about by the 'Death Experience'. What resulted became the essence of His teachings. The Life of the Sage and His teachings are thus inseparable.

The first two lines of verse 12 of '*Supplement to Forty Verses*' contain the essence of His teachings:

"Give up the idea that this contemptible 'body' is the Self. Know and be the eternally Blissful Self."

THE CAUSE

The attachment to the 'body' is the source and ground of all other attachments. Taking the 'body' to be the Self is the sole cause of bondage, say the Scriptures. Sri Bhagavan has

given, at various places, the many difficulties faced by one who takes the 'body' for the Self. The seeker should beware of being swallowed by this *dehatma-buddhi*.

What happens when one is caught in 'I-am-the-body-idea' (*dehatma-buddhi*)? Sri Bhagavan deals with this in the following passages:

"Forgetful of the Self, mistaking the physical 'body' for it, one goes through innumerable births..."
– *Five Verses on Self*, v. 1

"... to fall into the deep sea called *jaganmaya* and get drowned in the universal illusion..."
– *Necklet of Nine Gems*, v. 9

"Save me from falling once again...or else I cannot cross the grim illusion, the cycle of births and deaths..." – *Ibid*, v. 5

"...rescue me from being drowned in the void..."
– *Eleven Verses*, v. 4

"...it wanders aimlessly in various ways..."
– *Ashtakam*, v. 8

Thus, we are sufficiently warned not to identify ourselves with the 'body'.

What exactly, then, is the 'body'?

"The 'body' is inert like a pot."
– *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v. 10

"... mistaking the earthlike 'body' to be the Self."
– *Navamanimala*, v. 4

"The 'body' is of the form of the five sheaths..."
– *Forty Verses*, v. 5

"... the perishable 'body' which is insentient like a stone."
– *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v. 23

"If we take ourselves to be the 'body', we are caught in the net of time and space."
– *Forty Verses*, v. 16

It is therefore clear that *dehatma buddhi* has to be given up. If we give it up, what results?

THE CONSEQUENCE

It dawns on us that “we are eternally the blissful Self alone and nothing else”. What is this state of Blissful Being? Sri Bhagavan describes it clearly in many places.

“...it is the Wholeness, Fullness (*poondram*)...”
– *Forty Verses*, v. 7

“... it is the experiential knowledge of all...”
– *Ibid*, v. 33

“...ever the One state for all...” – *Ibid*, v. 34

“...it is always present and to remain as it is, is the real attainment...” – *Ibid*, v. 35

“... this state is essential...” – *Ibid*, v. 38

“The One Self, the Sole Reality, alone exists eternally...” –
Five Verses on the Self, v. 5

The eternal state of Bliss, ever shining within each one of us, Sri Bhagavan asserts, it is common to all, irrespective of one's spiritual maturity. It is repeatedly stated that this Ultimate State of Perfection, being common to all, one has only to open up oneself to this ever-existing Truth. He says:

“Liberation is for all.” – *Devikalottara*, v. 1

“...everyone is in that State of Perfection...”
– *Ibid*, v. 12

Sri Bhagavan's reiteration has great significance. The Truth has to be repeated any number of times so that the anxious 'mind' grasps it afresh and makes it its own.

'*Dehatma buddhi*' and the 'Perfect Blissful State', though widely different, exist in oneself only, like the two sides of one coin. The yearning seeker steeped in *dehatma buddhi*, also longs for the attainment of the Blissful State, which Sri Bhagavan says “exists always”. How can one transcend the sense of identity with the 'body' and abide in the Self?

THE CONNECTION

Let us begin again at the beginning.

Is the problem really with the 'body'? 'No', says Sri Bhagavan, the 'body' is inert, insentient.

Sri Bhagavan says:

"The 'body', which is matter, says not 'I'. Eternal Awareness neither arises (nor disappears). Between the two, bound by the 'body', arises the thought of 'I'. This is the knot of matter and Awareness. This is bondage. This is *jiva*, the subtle body or 'ego'. This is *samsara*. This is the 'mind'." – *Forty Verses*, v. 24.

Sri Bhagavan says in verse 23, *ibid.*: **"Since it is insentient, the 'body' does not say 'I'. None says in sleep 'I am not'. Once the 'I' arises everything arises. Enquire with a keen mind wherefrom this 'I' arises."**

In the state of waking, we are well aware of the 'body', but the 'body' does not say 'I'. In the absence of body-consciousness, in sleep, no one says 'I do not exist'. It follows then that there is an 'I' which is independent of the 'body'. This knowledge is a very important clue in our Quest of the Self. Once we know intellectually that the 'body' is not 'I', we should then proceed to find what is this 'I' and wherefrom it emerges. It is the greatest quest, most adventurous hunt, the hunting for the 'I'.

"Enquiry into the source of the 'I', declares Sri Bhagavan "is the Direct Path". Relentless enquiry reveals that the birth-place of the 'I' is where the 'I' dissolves in sleep and emerges from sleep. It, therefore, becomes clear that the egoless state is the state of Reality. To remain in this state is the Goal of Self-enquiry. It was the supremely Blissful state of *jagrat-sushupti*, Wakeful Awareness.

Sri Bhagavan says:

"The state in which the 'I' does not arise is the state of 'THAT' Which is Self. Realise this as your experience through keen investigation." – *Forty Verses*, v. 27

Self-enquiry is the sure way to get rid of 'ego', the *dehatma bhava*, known as 'I-am-the-body-idea' and to be the Self. This is the Royal Path. Diving deep within, and like a hunter tracking silently the quarry, one reaches the Source. This state, beyond 'thought', is the Ultimate Reality. To remain in that alert state of tranquility and perfect equilibrium, is the Goal and Aim of all *sadhana*. Through the Royal Path of Enquiry, Sri Bhagavan has made it absolutely easy for seekers to abide as the Self.

In verse 20 of *Supplement to Forty Verses*, He says: **"By remaining as 'THAT' through continued effort (of Self-enquiry) the ignorance in the form of 'I-am-the-perishable-body' will disappear, like darkness at Sunrise."** In verse 30 of *Forty Verses*, Sri Bhagavan declares: **"When the mind, turning inward enquires *Who Am I?* and reaches its Source, that which is 'I' (ego) sinks crestfallen and the one (Self) appears — of its own accord — as 'I'-'I'. Though it appears as 'I' it is not the 'ego'; it is the 'Whole'. It is the Real Self."**

Sri Bhagavan shows the root of all problems, when He says: "With the rise of the 'ego' ('mind'), all things rise. If the 'ego' is not, nothing else is." (*Forty Verses*, v. 26.) "Liberation is the destruction of the 'ego'". – *Ibid*, v. 40.

So, the seeker has to let the ego 'die' and thus be 'reborn' in the Source and shine in It, as It.

"... as a result of enquiring who is the doer (*karta*) one knows oneself, the *kartrtvam* (the sense of being the doer) is lost, and one is set free from the three kinds of karma (*sanchita*, *agami* and *prarabdha*). The (resulting) State of Liberation is Eternal". (*Ibid*, v. 38) Such a one stands out amidst mortals, for, "He alone is born, who, after enquiring 'Who Am I?' is born in his source as 'THAT'. Know that he is ever-born and ever-fresh. He is the Supreme Sage". – *Supplement to Forty Verses*, v. 11

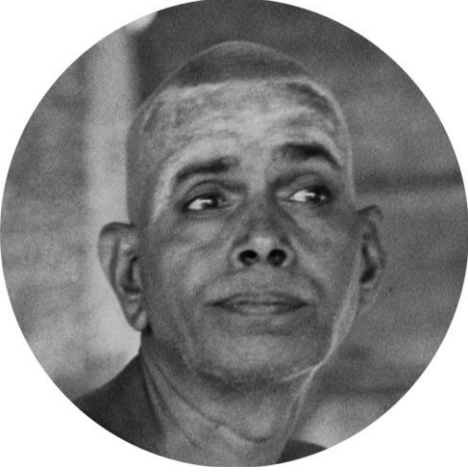
To be born in the Self, which means to realise the Self and to remain as 'IT IS' is the Supreme Truth taught by Sri Bhagavan.

Sri Bhagavan has shown us the way to Reality, to the Self, to ourselves. It is for us to walk the way. It is an inward way. In verse 44 of his '*Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*', Sri Bhagavan says, "'Look within, ever-seeking the Self with the inner eye. Only then will (It) be found.' Thus did'st Thou direct me, O beloved Arunachala!" The word 'ever' is important. Similarly, in verse 17 of his '*Upadesa Undiyar*', Sri Bhagavan says: "When unceasingly the 'mind' scrutinizes its own form; (it will see that) there is no such thing as the 'mind'. This is the Direct Path open to all."

To the earnest seeker after Truth, a firm grasp of the theory underlying both the problem and the approach to its solution is essential. But the job has hardly begun even then. It is vital to put into practice honestly, fearlessly and unremittingly what one understands to be the way to the Goal³. Humble study of a *Jnani's* life stirs from our depths the current of *mumukshutva*, the yearning for Liberation. The wonder and longing kindled by contemplation on the various aspects of a Sage's life, will reinforce our *sattvic* nature and enable us to proceed with Self-enquiry without remiss.

"He who sees himself by the eye of Wisdom (*Jnana*) to be without 'body' gives up that very instant all desires and thereby acquires the Poise of Bliss."
– *Devikalottara*, v.52.

³ At the end of the book the practical method to do 'Self-Enquiry' is given



Sri Bhagavan And Grace

பற்றிமால் விடம்தலை யுற்றிறு முனும் அருள்
பற்றிட அருள்புரி அருணாசலா!

– அருணாசல அக்ஷரமணமாலை, 64

"Grant me your Grace before the poison of delusion (ignorance) grips me and, rising to my head, kills me, Oh Arunachala!"

– *The Marital Garland of Letters*, v. 64

Going beyond thinking by *jnana*, beyond feeling by *bhakti*, beyond self-willed action by *karma marga* means going beyond that which arrogated to itself — from the very beginning — the 'thinking', 'feeling', 'acting' and in short the 'doership' – a 'false I'. It means more and no less than returning to the Source of Pure Consciousness.

Thereafter:

"Your efforts can extend only that far, then the Beyond will take care of Itself. You are helpless there. No effort can reach It!" (Talk 197).

Here we meet the Great Experience of Sri Ramana, the *Maharshi*, in its second aspect, as the pure Power of the Beyond, Sakti: "Some force, call it *atmic* power or anything else, rose within me and took possession of me. I became a new man." (*Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 22-11-1945)

This 'power of the Beyond' Sri Bhagavan calls elsewhere 'Grace' – among hundreds of other names for it. "Grace is ever-existing, ever-flowing ", says Sri Bhagavan. While adoring Arunachala, He says: "Ocean of Nectar, full of Grace". "Grace is the Self. You are never out of its operation. Grace is always there". "You are neck-deep in It and yet you cry for Grace. It is as if one neck-deep in water should feel thirsty!" That which exists is 'Grace', it is always there, it is available to all and it fills the entire Universe since it is

Existence Itself. That which eternally IS the I AM and it is the inmost nature of all and so is available to all, at all times. This pure I AM in every one of us is 'Grace'. Sri Bhagavan identifies 'Grace' with *Guru*. 'Grace' as *Guru* within, pulls you, while 'Grace' as *Guru* without, pushes you within into the Self. The transformation of the seeker into an adept is done by this operation of 'Grace' – both from within and from without.

The confluence takes place in the human Heart, which Sri Bhagavan calls both 'உள்ளது' and 'உள்ளம்', 'That which is' and 'What is within'. This Being is the Awareness ever there to embrace you into a Silence and Stillness which transcends all duality. "The highest form of 'Grace' is Silence. It is also the highest *upadesa*", says Sri Bhagavan.

This assertion of Sri Bhagavan is a great change from the age-old, common belief that 'Grace' is to be obtained after strenuous efforts, that it has to come from somewhere above and beyond, that one has to deserve it, that it has to "choose" one. And so on.

Sri Bhagavan asserts: "'Grace' is within every human being. It is the state of True Being, True Awareness, devoid of otherness. It is the Self."

Sri Bhagavan says that to make an effort to know one's real existence is due only to 'Grace': "Your very desire for 'Grace' is due to 'Grace' that is already within you". "'Grace' is that which always exists". The true 'I-I' is Pure Being, Pure Awareness and Pure Bliss. The *sat-chit-ananda* in one is nothing but 'Grace' itself. The *Aham sphurana* is 'Grace'; the *Aham swarupa* is 'Grace'; the *Hridayam* itself is 'Grace'!

Let us see how Sri Bhagavan deals with this 'Grace' in His written works.

In '*Five Hymns to Arunachala*', Sri Bhagavan uses profusely the word 'Grace', 'அருள்', and describes it in twenty different ways: "All-kindness, Love, Saving, Moon of Grace, Benign Treasure, Adornment, Mercy, Blessings, Divine Life, Grace-warfare, Grace-Love-Arrow, Grace-partner, net of Grace, cords of Grace, light of Grace, ocean of Grace, effulgence of Grace." Particularly in '*Aksharamanamalai*' He has used the word 'அருள்', 'Grace' 59 times! In '*Navamanimala*' thrice, in '*Padhikam*' 5 times, in '*Ashtakam*' twice and in '*Arunachala Pancharatna*' and '*Arunachala Mahatmiyam*' once each. 'Grace' is obviously everything for Him in the devotional hymns spontaneously written by Him, while up on the Hill, Arunachala.

Strangely, when we come to His philosophic treatises, like '*Upadesa Undiyar*' and '*Ulladu Narpadu*', He has not used the word 'அருள்' even once! His magnum opus — as far as His teachings are concerned — are '*Upadesa Undiyar*' and '*Ulladu Narpadu*', and imagine Bhagavan conveying His essential teaching in them without using this word 'அருள்', 'Grace', so pervasive in His devotional outpouring, '*Five Hymns to Arunachala*'!

Does it mean that there is any conflict between the *Bhakti* of the '*Five Hymns to Arunachala*' and the *Jnana* of '*Upadesa Undiyar*' and '*Ulladu Narpadu*'?

What are the key words in these two seemingly variant texts? In the *Bhakti granta*, it is 'அன்பு', 'அருள்' (Love and Grace) and in the *Jnana granta* it is 'உள்ளது', 'உணர்வு' (Being and Awareness). What do these four words mean? Love and Grace seem to belong to the warm realm of emotion and duality, while Being and Awareness belong to the bright realm of non-duality. At the superficial level the two worlds seem to differ.

The *bhakta*, like the blue lotus, basks in the cool moonlight of 'Grace', while the *jnani*, like the red lotus, rejoices in the fierce fire of non-duality. 'Grace' comes from surrender; *jnana* demands the effort of self-enquiry. Even 'Grace' seems hidden to the common man. Why? Sri Bhagavan says: "Grace is not manifest because of ignorance prevailing. With *sraddha* (perseverance) it will become manifest. *Sraddha*, Grace, Light, Spirit are all synonymous with the Self." (Talk 381).

Grace or Self appears in outer form as the *Guru*. For us Sri Bhagavan is the *Sat-Guru*, manifested in a human body for our sake; to guide and strengthen us and awake us to the Being that lives eternally in us as the Self. The *Guru* is like a mother. "*Guru's* Grace is like a hand extended to help you out of water, or it makes your way easier for the removal of ignorance." (Talk 398).

Sri Bhagavan explains clearly. "'Grace' is necessary for the removal of ignorance. But 'Grace' is all along there. 'Grace' is the Self. It is not something to be acquired. All that is necessary is to know its existence. For example, the Sun is brightness only. He does not see darkness. Whereas others speak of darkness fleeing away on the Sun approaching. Similarly, ignorance also is a 'phantom' and not real. Because of its unreality, its unreal nature being found, it is said to be removed. Again, the Sun is there and also bright. You are surrounded by Sunlight. Still if you would know the Sun you must turn your eyes in his direction and look at him. So also, 'Grace' is found by practice alone although it is here and now." (Talk 354).

Sri Bhagavan gives the master-key to obtain 'Grace'. "Surrender", "Self-surrender" – is that key. The sense of duality which doubts and demands proofs is stilled. The doubter, the mischief-maker, slowly disappears. In surrender, the mind which doubts is dissolved, as in its mother's lap; the mind which fears is lost in surrender!

Devotee : Is 'Grace' necessary for knowing the Truth?

Bhagavan: Yes.

D.: How to gain Divine Grace?

B.: By surrender.

D.: Still I do not feel 'Grace'.

B.: Sincerity is wanting. Surrender should not be verbal or conditional... Prayer is not verbal. It is from the Heart. To merge into the Heart is prayer. That is also 'Grace'." (Talk 318).

In another place, Sri Bhagavan emphasises: "Surrender will make one understand the Grace." (Talk 317). "That which is – is only 'Grace'; there is nothing else." (Talk 287). "'Grace' is both the beginning and the end. Introversion is due to 'Grace'; Perseverance is 'Grace'; Realisation is 'Grace'." (Talk 319). Sri Bhagavan quotes *Sri Bhagavad Gita*: "*mamekam saranam vraja*", "only surrender to Me". If one has entirely surrendered oneself is there any part left to ask for 'Grace'? He is swallowed up by 'Grace'!" (Talk 320).

A devotee appealed to Sri Bhagavan that when he remembered His form his 'mind' should be strengthened and that response should come from His side; and that he should not be left to his individual efforts which he knew to be very weak. Sri Bhagavan graciously replied: "'Grace' is the Self. I have already said: 'If you remember Bhagavan, you are prompted to do so by the Self ('Grace')'. Is not 'Grace' already there? Is there a moment when 'Grace' is not operating in you? Your remembrance is the forerunner of 'Grace'. That is the response, that is the stimulus, that is the Self and that is 'Grace'." (Talk 251). The very doubt "Will I have 'Grace'" is to be eschewed. Sri Bhagavan says this very doubt 'Can I have it' or the feeling 'I have not got it' are the obstacles. "Be free from these also," encourages Sri Bhagavan!

One may need further assurance to take the plunge of final surrender. And here it is: "The *Guru* is both within and without. So, he creates conditions to drive you inward and prepares the interior to drag you to the Centre. Thus, He gives a push from without and exerts a pull from within so that you may be fixed at the Centre. This is the Grace of the *Guru*." He further asserts: "God, *Guru* and Grace are really one and identical. He who has earned the Grace of the *Guru* shall undoubtedly be saved and never forsaken, just as the prey that has fallen into the jaws of a tiger will never be allowed to escape. Nevertheless, the disciple, for his part, must unswervingly follow the path shown by the Master."

Are surrender and Self-enquiry inconsistent with each other? "No", says Sri Bhagavan. "What the *bhakta* calls surrender, the man who does *vichara* calls *Jnana*. Both are trying to take the 'ego' back to the Source from which it sprang and make it merge there." Both surrender or *Bhakti* and strenuous Self-enquiry help to dissolve one's 'ego'. So, both by *bhakti* and *jnana* the final result of destroying the mischief-maker, the 'mind', the 'ego', is realised.

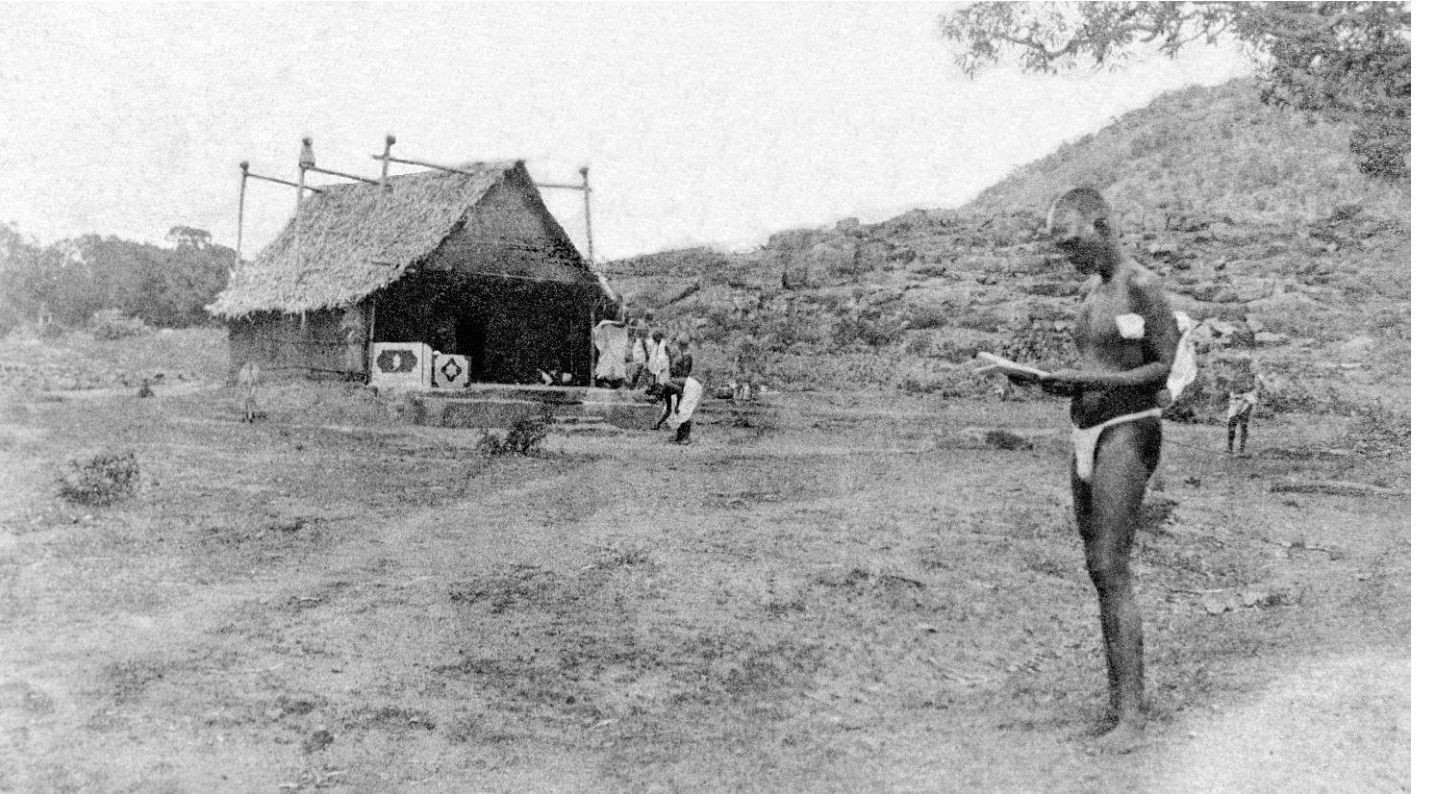
A devotee, even after much discussion and Sri Bhagavan's ample clarifications, had doubts about the grant of His Grace. Sri Bhagavan patiently but emphatically replied: "Are you asking this question without 'Grace'? 'Grace' is the beginning, middle and end. 'Grace' is the Self. Because of false identification of the Self with the body, the *Guru* is considered to be with 'body'. But from the *Guru's* outlook, the *Guru* is only the Self. The Self is One only. He tells that the Self alone IS. Is not then the Self your *Guru*? Where else will 'Grace' come from? It is from the Self alone. Manifestation of the Self is manifestation of 'Grace'. All doubts arise because of the wrong outlook and consequent expectation of things external to oneself. Nothing is external to the Self." (Talk 157).

Then, what is meant by Sri Bhagavan's 'Grace'? The answer is the counter-question: Is not Sri Bhagavan 'Grace' itself? Every word He spoke, every word He wrote, was 'Grace'. He was Himself "Ocean of Grace, Nectar Supreme"! His Light eternal guides His devotees from within, from His seat of Sovereignty, the Heart. "Arunachala Ramana is the Supreme Being sporting within the Lotus – Hearts of all beings."

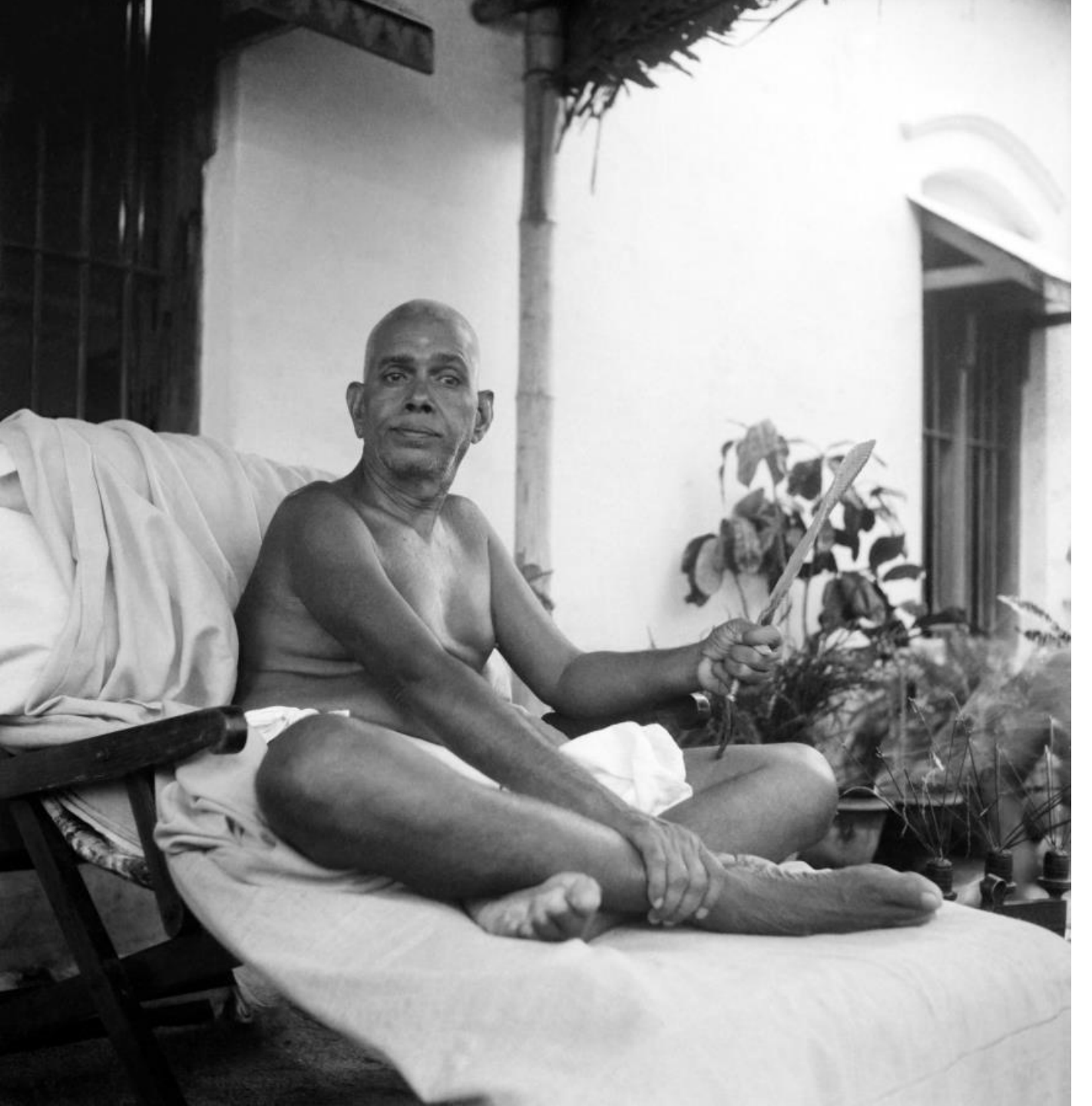
An elderly devotee wanted to express gratitude to *Sat-Guru* Ramana for having revealed to him the realm of the Self, by quoting a verse from '*Kaivalya Navaneeta*': "Lord, you are the Reality abiding as my inmost Self, ruling me during all my countless births! Glory to you who have put on this human form in order to redeem me through your *upadesa*, I do not see how I can repay your 'Grace' for having liberated me. Glory! Glory to your Holy Feet!" Sri Bhagavan claimed and took the repayment, by Himself quoting the next verse from the same text: "To stay fixed thus in the Self, without the three clouds (ignorance, uncertainty and wrong knowledge) obscuring your experience, is the highest recompense you can render to me!"

Oh Bhagavan! Thy Name is 'Grace';

Shower Thy Grace on us all !!



*"Sri Ramanasramam" in 1922 — a thatched shed over the Samadhi of Mother Alagammal.
Sri Bhagavan examining given to Him by a devotee*



Outside the Old hall near the Well — Very popular photo among Old Devotees in the earlier days

The Three Precious Gems

Tradition holds that a spiritual aspirant should equip oneself with three powerful aids so as to progress effortlessly in the Inner Journey to True Spiritual Perfection.

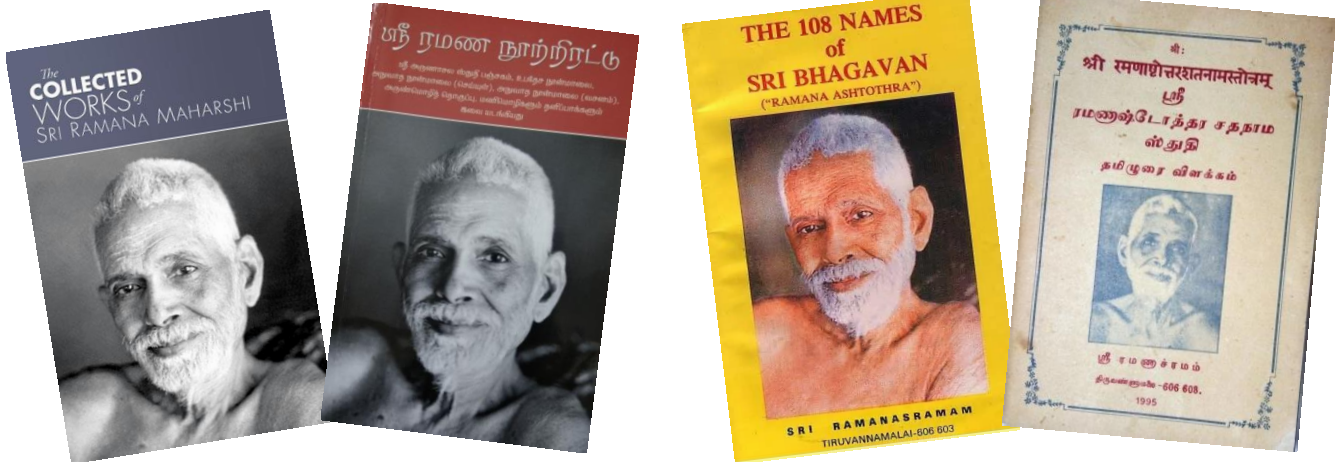
They are:

1. A *Sastra* (Scriptural Text)
2. A *Stotra* (a Prayer of Adoration)
3. A *Mantra* (Japa = incantation)

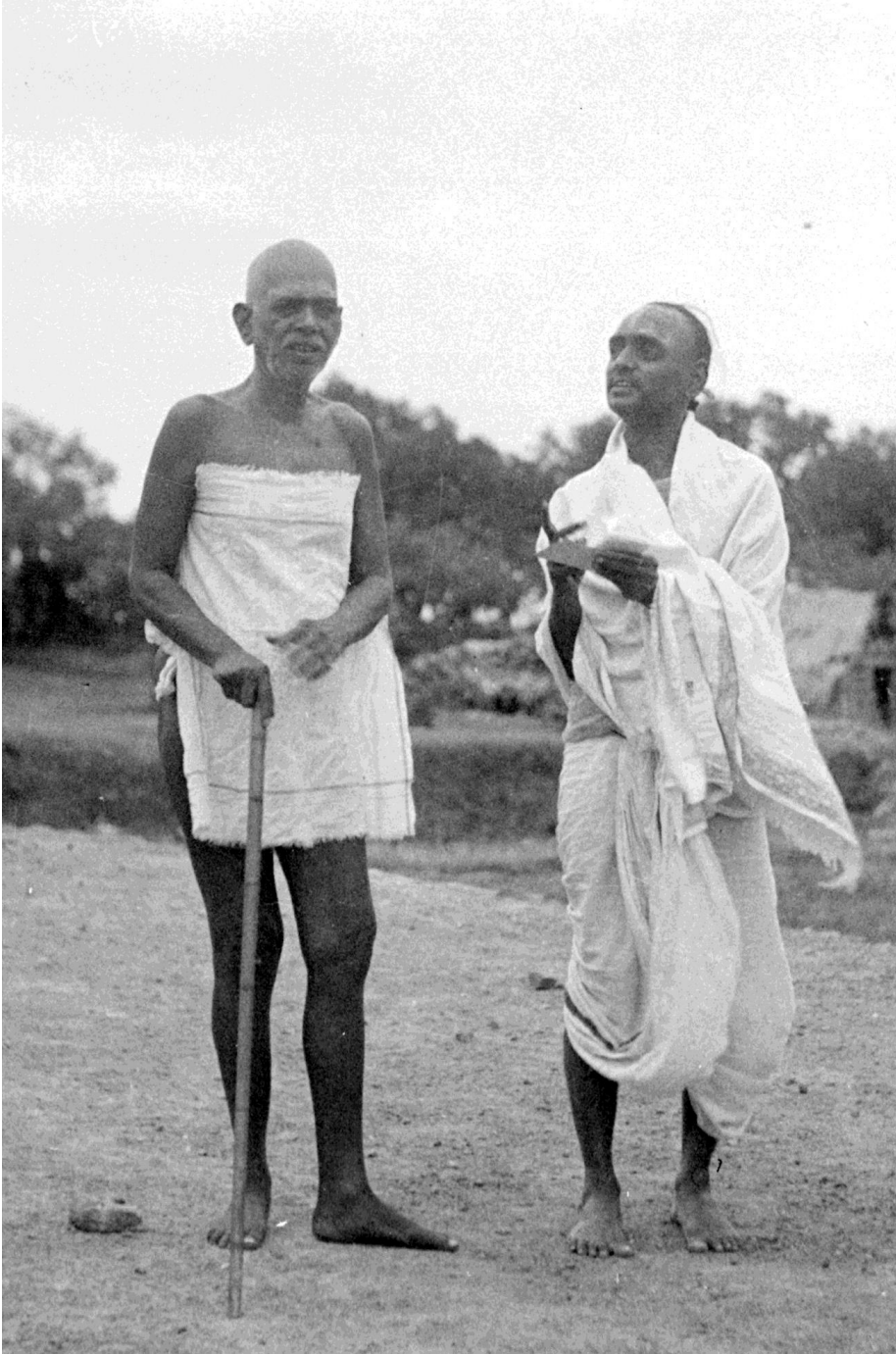
Usually, the Hindus hold on to "*Srimad Bhagavad Gita*" as the "*Sastra*" — the "*Vishnu Sahasranama*", "*Lalita Sahasranama*", "*Siva Puranam*", as "*Stotra*" and "*Om Namō Narayanaya*", "*Om Namassivaya*", "*Om Sri Ram Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram*", "*Harey Rama Harey Rama, Rama Rama Harey Harey*", as the "*Japa*" !

It will be made more clear when specific examples of the above three important aids, as they had powerfully helped Pundit T.K.Sundaresa Iyer — an important Old Devotee of Sri Bhagavan.

* * *



The *Sastra* (A Scriptural Text)



Sri Bhagavan affirms and approves of the Glory of the Sastra ("Nool Thirattu")

IT was about 1927 when Sri Bhagavan's *Nool Thirattu*¹ in Tamil was under preparation to be published. There was talk among the Ashram pundits that the book must have a Preface although the devotees of the Maharshi considered that nobody was qualified to write a Preface to His Collected works. The pundits proposed the writing of a Preface, but none of them came forward to write it, each excusing himself that he was not competent enough for the task. It was a drama of several hours as one proposed another for the purpose, and each declined the honour. Sri Bhagavan was watching all this quietly.

At about 10-30 in the night, as I was passing beside the Hall, Sri Bhagavan looked at me and said, "Why not you write the Preface yourself?"

I was taken aback at His proposal, but meekly said, "I would venture to write it only if I had Sri Bhagavan's blessings in the task." Sri Bhagavan said, "Do write it, and it will come all right."

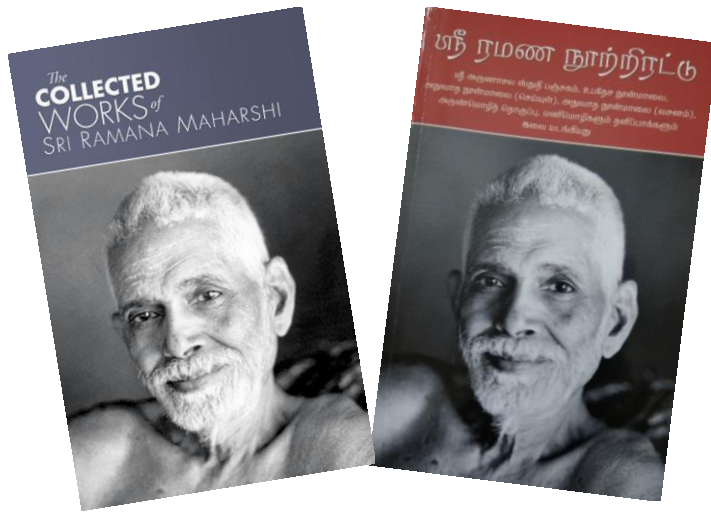
So I began writing at the dead of night, and to my great surprise within three quarters of an hour I made a draft as if impelled, driven by some Supreme Force. I altered not even a comma of it, and at 2 o'clock in the early morning I placed it at the Feet of Sri

¹ Published also as The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi in English.

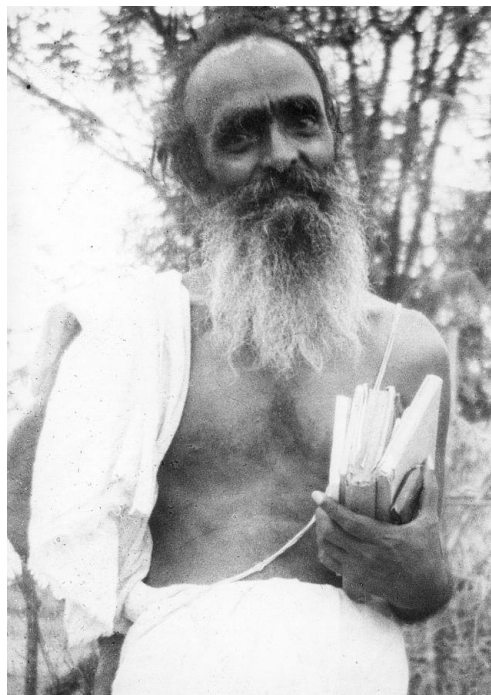
Bhagavan. He was happy to see how the contents were arranged and to note the simplicity of the expressions used. He passed it as all right and asked me to take it away.

But, as I had taken the written sheets of paper only a few steps away, Sri Bhagavan beckoned me to show them to Him once again. I had concluded the Preface in the following way: "It is hoped that this work in the form of Sri Bhagavan's Grace will give to all who aspire to eternal Truth, the Liberation in the form of gaining Supreme Bliss shaped as the taking away of all sorrow." The Maharshi said, "Why have you said '*It is hoped*'? Why not say '*It is certain*'?" So saying, He corrected with His own hands my '*Nambukiren*' (நம்புகிறேன்) into '*Thinnam*' (திண்ணம்).

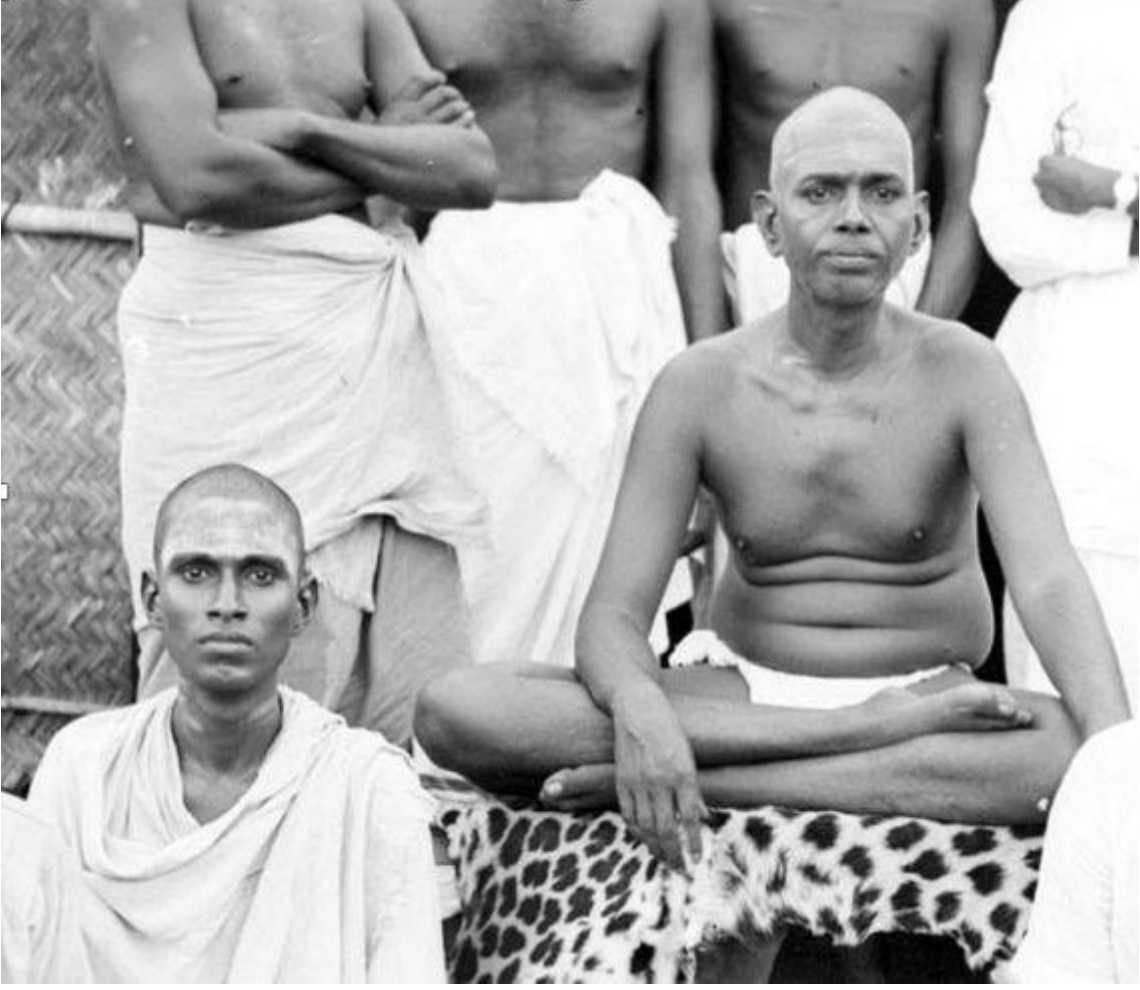
“பகவான் ஸ்ரீ மஹர்ஷிகளின் வசனாமிருதமாகிய இந் நூலால், உலகத்தில் ஆஸ்திகம் பெருகி, ஜீவர்கள் ஸர்வதுக்க நிவிருத்தி பரமானந்தப் பிராப்தி வடிவாகிய பரமைசுவரியத்தை யடைவது திண்ணம்.”



Thus Sri Maharshi set His seal of approval to the book, giving to His devotees that great charter of Liberation, in the form of His Teaching (*upadesa*) which leaves no trace of doubt about it in the mind.



The *Stotra* (A Prayer Of Adoration)



'Young' Viswanathan at the 'Feet of Sri Bhagavan'

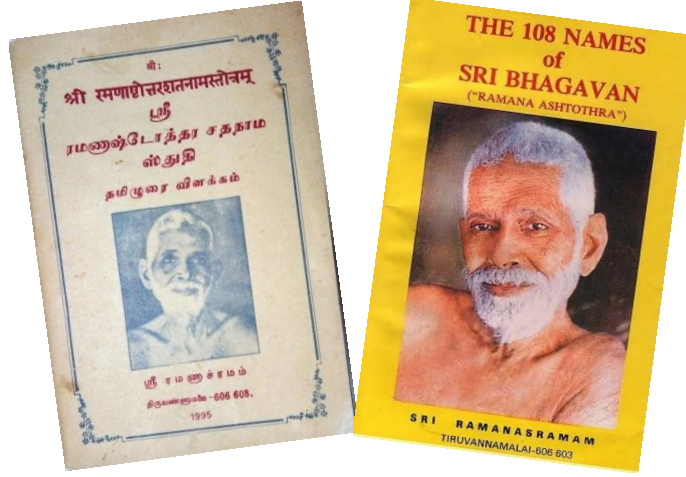
The relationship between the *Guru* and disciple was deepening and Sri Bhagavan perhaps felt that Viswanathan needed a firm rooting in scriptural studies. Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni was then staying up on the hill. So, in 1927, Sri Bhagavan sent Viswanathan to Kavyakantha to study the scriptures. Even when Kavyakantha came down in 1929 to stay in Palakottu, Sri Bhagavan specifically told Viswanathan, "Nayana is staying in a hut in Palakottu. Go stay with him, serve him and learn from him." Every day, Sri Bhagavan visited that hut. He would always enquire, "Nayana! How is Viswanathan?"

The *Guru* showed him the teacher and this encouraged Viswanathan. His study of Sanskrit scriptures helped him create verses extempore. Once, Viswanathan composed twenty *slokas* (verses in Sanskrit), containing the 108 Names of Sri Bhagavan, which are used in formal puja. As each Name is uttered by way of invocation, a flower is offered as a mark of worship. The first five verses he placed before Sri Bhagavan's feet. Sri Bhagavan read them and he said approvingly, "They are very good. Why don't you continue to write? But first, show them to Nayana and get them verified."

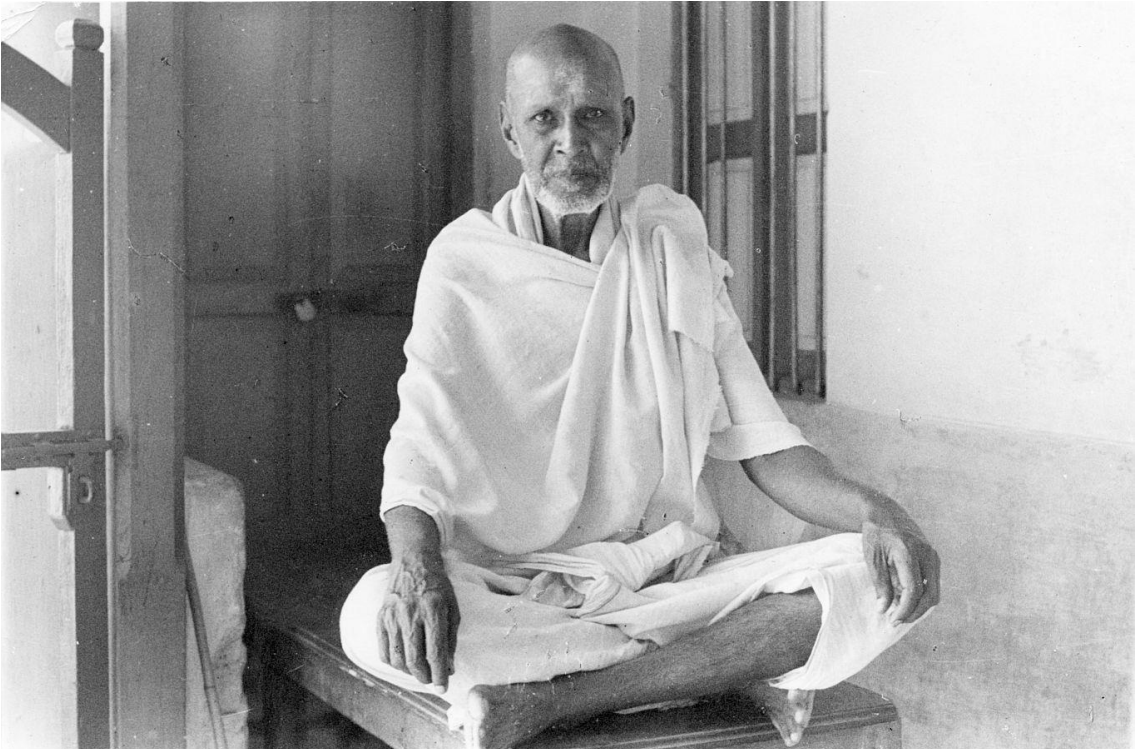
Both Viswanathan and Kavyakantha, thus worked together and put together the one Hundred and Eight Names of Sri Bhagavan, called *Sri Ramana Ashtottara*. It came from the hearts of Viswanathan and Nayana, and was approved by Sri Bhagavan, the

Heart and hence it is eternal. What is most evocative about the string of Names is the strong thread, the steady undercurrent, the creative mystery that binds together God and man, Heaven and earth, Spirit and matter, Purusha and prakriti. It is a treatise, an unfading sacred flower about which Viswanatha Swami later told me, "I was fortunate enough to place this at the Holy Feet, of Sri Bhagavan."

Viswanatha Swami continued his spiritual practice and the years rolled by. One who lives the truth, lives in and as the Eternal Now. To such a one, time doesn't matter because time is an illusion — Viswanatha Swami was in timeless ecstasy!

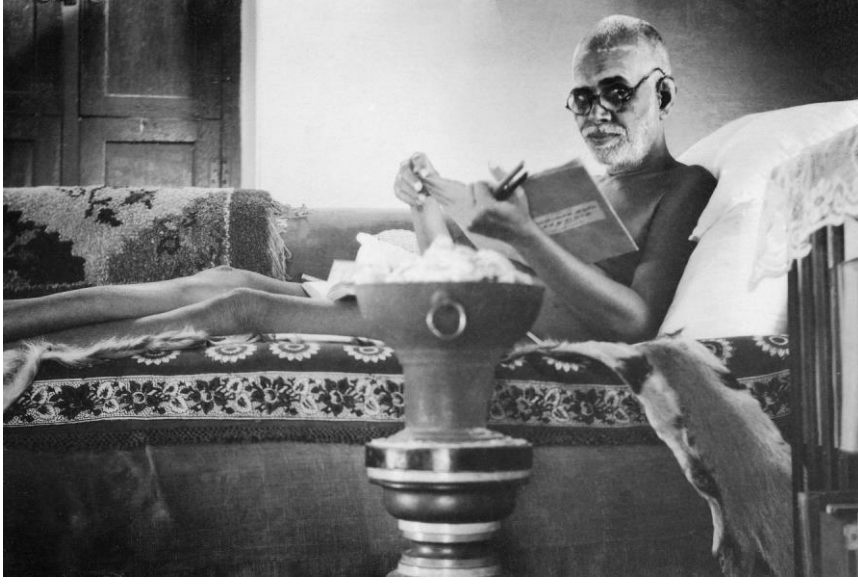


This *Sri Ramana Ashtottara* is much treasured by every devotee of Sri Bhagavan — they chant it every day in the morning, with in-built devotion and ecstasy. All over the World, it is the main chanting in all the *Ramana Kendras*, as the Prayer !



Sri Viswanatha Swami helping young aspirants with spiritual guidance.

The *Mantra* (*Japa* = Incantation)



THE ancient *mantra* “*Om namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*” fascinated me (TKS) greatly in my early days; it so delighted me that I had always a vision of Lord Krishna in my mind. I had a premonition that this body would pass away in its fortieth year, and I wanted to have a *darshan* of the Lord before that time. I fasted and practised devotion to Sri Vasudeva (Krishna) incessantly; I read Sri *Bhagavad Gita* and *Srimad Bhagavatam* with great delight.

Then when I read in the *Gita* “*Jnani tu atmaiva me matam*” (“In my view, the *Jnani* is my own Self”) I was greatly delighted. This line of thought came to me: “While I have at hand Bhagavan Sri Ramana, who is Himself Sri Vasudeva, why should I worship Sri Vasudeva separately?” Be it noted that all this was in my early days before settling with Sri Bhagavan at His Ashram.



This was the Ashram's official stamp emblem in the '20s' and '30s'



The Ashram's emblem proudly assimilates in its bosom: “Om Namoh Bhagavathe Sri Ramanaya”

So, I wanted one single *mantra*, a single worship (*devata*), and a single scripture, so that there might be no conflict of loyalties. Sri Ramana Paramatman became easily the

God to worship, His *Collected Works* easily became the gospel; as for the *mantra*, it struck me intuitively that "*Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya*" might be an exact parallel to "*Om Namo Bhagavate vasudevaya*."

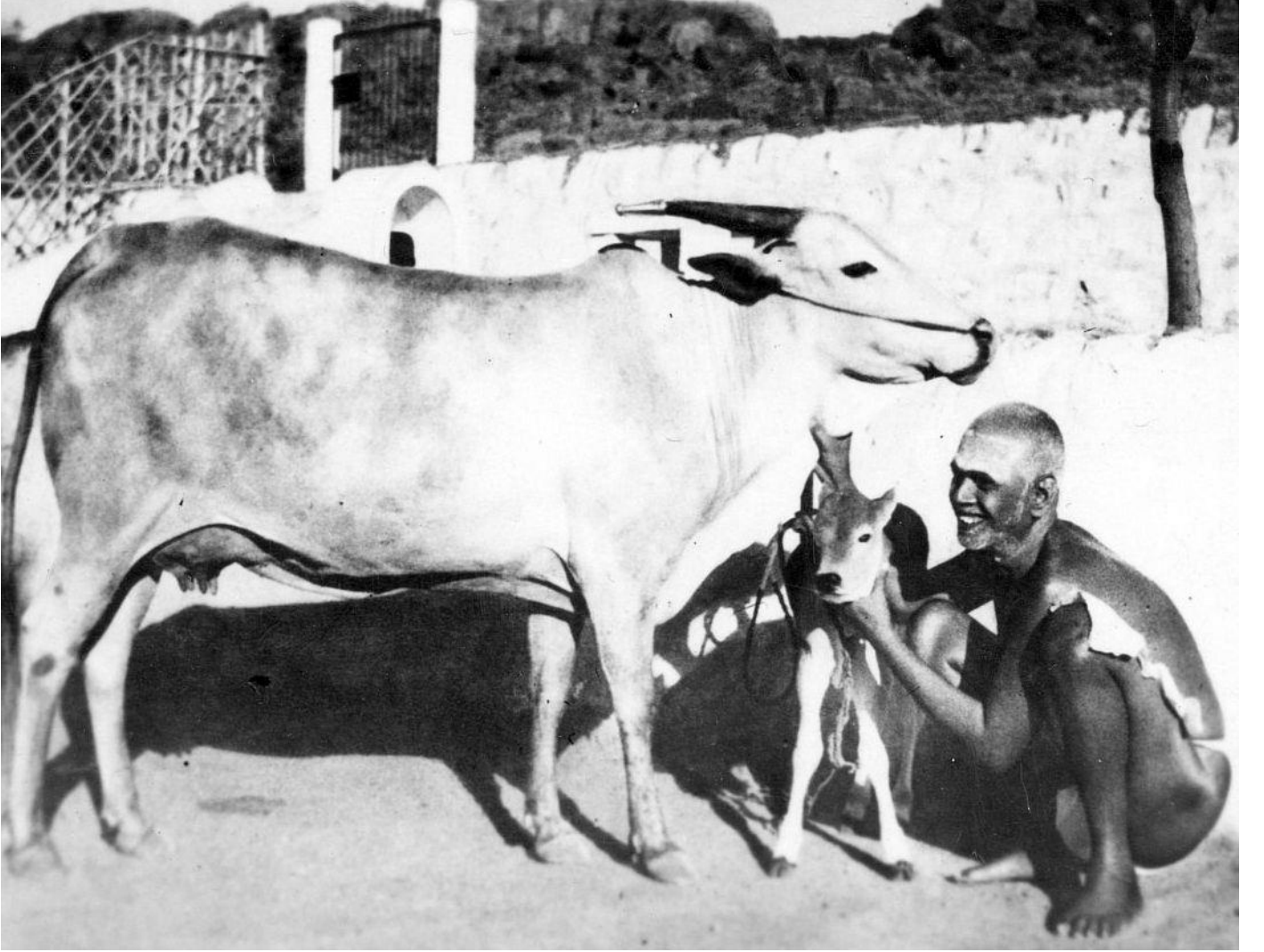
I counted the letters in this new *mantra*, and was very happy to find it also contained 'Twelve Letters'; I told this all to Sri Bhagavan, and He gave the *mantra* His approval.

Advanced practisers (*sadhaks*) and thinkers may laugh at this and say: "Why do you need a *mantra* while the Ocean of Bliss is there to be immersed into directly?" I confess that in this I was trying to conform to the traditional method of practice (*upasana*) which forms one of the main elements in *bhakti* (devotion). Sri Bhagavan has revealed His true nature as the All-Witness; yet there is the explicit injunction that "*Advaita* must be only in the attitude and never be interpreted in outer action".

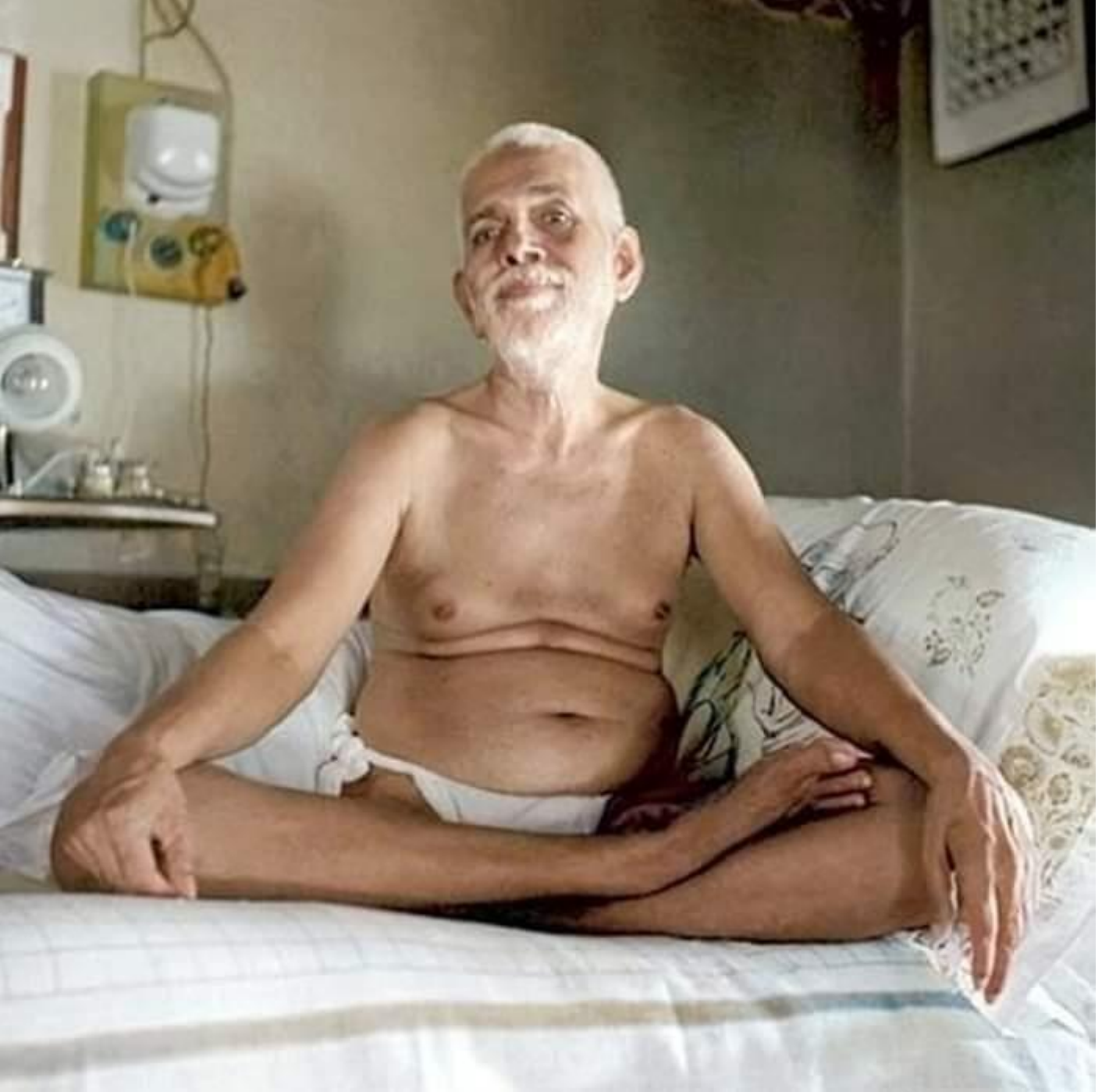
This *mantra* is now on the lips of every *Ramana Bhakta*, enhancing the depth of devotion in them!



TKS carries "Nool Thirattu" with him everywhere, even during the hours of immersion in meditation

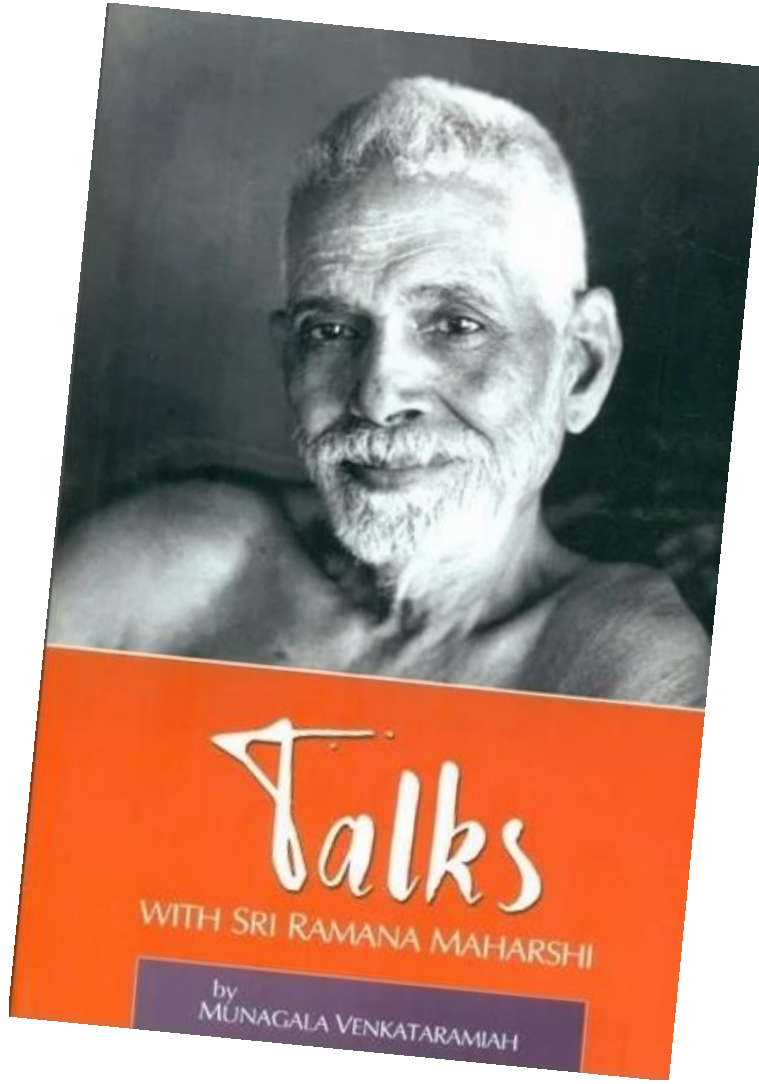


Cow Lakshmi proudly shares her 'baby' with Sat-Guru Sri Ramana



Inside the Old Hall, Sri Bhagavan In Padmasana at the request of Dr.T.N.Krishnaswami in the 1940s

“Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi” : An Authentic Recorded Truth



It is said that it is a great spiritual loss for the spiritual aspirants all over the World that the conversations, discussions and talks that were held between the direct disciples and the Buddha and Jesus Christ were never recorded; and thus were lost for ever !

We, the present — spiritual seekers — are extremely fortunate and gifted that the Sacred Words of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi were authentically recorded and made available to the yearning and earnest *sadhakas* in the book-form — thanks to 'M' (Mahendranath Gupta) and 'M' (Munagala Venkataramiah) !

They are:

- 1. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and**
- 2. Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi.**

With regard to the latter, it is worth mentioning that every word in "TALKS" was shown to the Maharshi and got corrected, if needed. All the "Talks" were written down in the immediate presence of Sri Bhagavan; and, then and there shown to Him.

The Maharshi insisted that the recorder showed it to the questioner and got his approval of correctness!

This Record — during Sri Bhagavan's lifetime — was referred to as the "Notebook" and was with Him in His roving library, next to His sofa. Sri Munagala Venkataramiah began this spiritual compendium on 15-5-1935. Every entry would be shown to Sri Bhagavan and He would meticulously read it; and, made changes, if were necessary! The important thing to be noted here is that Sri Bhagavan after verifying his portion of what was recorded, would make the Recorder get the question portion verified directly from the questioner himself/herself ! Hence, every line in "Talks" is blessed by the look of Sri Bhagavan.

Six typists typed the whole of the more than 600 written pages of this "Notebook" into typed form, which were properly put into readable and in book-form by the author Munagala Venkataramiah and T.K. Sundaresa Iyer and Major Chadwick.

When the typed form of whole of the written manuscripts of the "Talks" was ready and available, the then Ashram Committee of 17 members, took a typed copy to Chennai. They said they would give it to College English Professors so that it could be well edited before being sent to the Press to be brought out in book-form. After some time, the edited typed pages were received – to the surprise of all, pages and pages had been struck out as 'repetition' and much more so to see that Sri Bhagavan's words had been changed, deleted and altered ! When it was sent to Major Chadwick for perusal and approval — after a day — he came to the office extremely disturbed and angered; and literally shouted at the Ashram President: "Venkatoo! How dare these atrocities were allowed to be carried out in the name of 'editing done'. Not a word should be either deleted or edited. Every single word had been personally read and approved by Sri Bhagavan. We would be unworthy and ungrateful to the Master if this atrocities were permitted to take place..... !"

The then old devotees too fully agreed with Chadwick; and, we devotees now have been blessed with the unadulterated, unaltered, pure, original version only of this treasured divinity!

The first volume was brought out in 1955 covering the Talk No.1 to Talk No.240 covering the period 15-5-1935 to 20-7-1936.

The reception to its availability was tremendously welcomed by all, especially the Swamiji's of Sri Ramakrishna Mutt — all over the World! Responding to such overwhelming reception to the Vol. I, great efforts were made to bring out the rest of the manuscripts (upto 1-4-1939) in Vols. II and III within 1955 itself!

The full Bound Edition — containing all the THREE Volumes – for the first time was also brought out the very same year 1955 — thanks to the co-operation and munificence of the devotees!

"TALKS", now is treated with reverence equivalent to the "BIBLE" by those who follow and cling to the Sacred Feet of Sri Bhagavan; and, also more over by all the true spiritual aspirants, all over the World!

Major Chadwick further extolled the worth of this treasure of a publication :

"Thus, we may be sure that here we have the exact teaching of the Master, and reading them we once again sit at His Sacred Feet in the Old Hall.

"What more is there to say, but to advise that every devotee has to read this book and make it a part of himself? Not one word to be passed over lightly, or one conversation to be dismissed as superfluous. It is all pure gold. And here again we find the ever-living Sri Ramana Maharshi before us in person, teaching us in His own inimitable words for our benefit and delight."

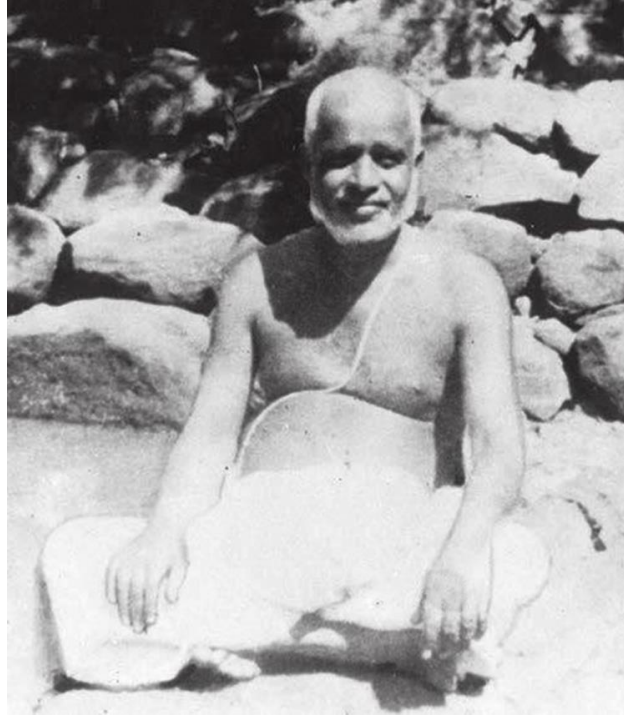
Further, when Chadwick was once asked by a devotee that why he was extolling Sri Bhagavan so high over and above all great Masters, his ever-calm face blossomed into a divine smile and replied : "Its true ! All Masters are Great! They 'solve' the problems of the aspirants! But my Master Sri Bhagavan "dissolves" the very problem itself !

* * *

For the immediate benefit of the readers, we reproduce THREE important sections of this Holy book.

May Sri Bhagavan bless us all !

* * *



***Munagala Venkataramiah –
the Author of "Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi"***

Talk No. 197.

Gul and Shirin Byramjee, two Parsi ladies of Ahmedabad, arrived this day. They spoke at night to Maharshi: "Bhagavan! We have been spiritually inclined from our childhood. We have read several books on philosophy, and are attracted by *Vedanta*. So we read the Upanishads, *Yoga Vasishtha*, *Bhagavad Gita*, etc. We try to meditate, but there is no progress in our meditation. We do not understand how to realise. Can you kindly help us towards realisation?"

M.: How do you meditate?

D.: I begin to ask myself "Who am I?", eliminate body as not 'I', the breath as not 'I', the mind as not 'I' and I am not able to proceed further.

M.: Well, that is so far as the intellect goes. Your process is only intellectual. Indeed, all the scriptures mention the process only to guide the seeker to know the Truth. The Truth cannot be directly pointed out. Hence this intellectual process.

You see, the one who eliminates all the *not-I* cannot eliminate the 'I'. To say 'I am not this' or 'I am that', there must be the 'I'. This 'I' is only the ego or the 'I-thought'. After the rising up of this 'I-thought', all other thoughts arise. The 'I-thought' is therefore the root-thought. If the root is pulled out all others are at the same time uprooted. Therefore seek the root 'I', question yourself "*Who am I?*"; find out its source. Then all these will vanish and the pure Self will remain ever.

D.: How to do it?

M.: The 'I' is always there — in deep sleep, in dream and in wakefulness. The one in sleep is the same as that who now speaks. There is always the feeling of 'I'. Otherwise do you deny your existence? You do not. You say 'I am'. Find out who is.

D.: Even so, I do not understand. 'I', you say, is the wrong 'I' now. How to eliminate this wrong 'I'?

M.: You need not eliminate the wrong 'I'. How can 'I' eliminate itself? All that you need do is to find out its origin and abide there. Your efforts can extend only thus far. Then the Beyond will take care of itself. You are helpless there. No effort can reach it.

D.: If 'I' am always — here and now, why do I not feel so?

M.: That is it. Who says it is not felt? Does the real 'I' say it or the false 'I'? Examine it. You will find it is the wrong 'I'. The wrong 'I' is the obstruction. It has to be removed in order that the true 'I' may not be hidden. The feeling that 'I have not realised' is the obstruction to realisation. In fact it is already realised; there is nothing more to be realised. Otherwise, the realisation will be new; it has not existed so far, it must take place hereafter. What is born will also die. If realisation be not eternal it is not worth having. Therefore what we seek is not that which must happen afresh. It is only that which is eternal but not now

known due to obstructions; it is that we seek. All that we need do is to remove the obstruction. That which is eternal is not known to be so because of ignorance. Ignorance is the obstruction. Get over this ignorance and all will be well.

The ignorance is identical with the 'I-thought'. Find its source and it will vanish.

The 'I-thought' is like a ghost which, although not palpable, rises up simultaneously with the body, flourishes and disappears with it. The body-consciousness is the wrong 'I'. Give up this body-consciousness. It is done by seeking the source 'I'. The body does not say 'I am'. It is 'you' who say, 'I am the body!' Find out who this 'I' is. Seeking its source it will vanish.

D.: Then, will there be Bliss?

M.: Bliss is coeval with Being-Consciousness. All the arguments relating to the eternal Being of that Bliss apply to Bliss also. Your nature is Bliss. Ignorance is now hiding that Bliss. Remove the ignorance for Bliss to be freed.

D.: Should we not find out the ultimate reality of the World, individual and God?

M.: These are all conceptions of the 'I'. They arise only after the advent of the 'I-thought'. Did you think of them in your deep sleep? You existed in deep sleep and the same you are now speaking. If they be real should they not be in your sleep also? They are only dependent upon the 'I-thought'. Again does the World tell you 'I am the World'? Does the body say 'I am body'? You say, "This is the World", "this is body" and so on. So these are only your conceptions. Find out who you are and there will be an end of all your doubts.

D.: What becomes of the body after realisation? Does it exist or not? We see realised beings acting like others.

M.: This question need not arise now. Let it be asked after realisation, if need be. As for the realised beings let them take care of themselves. Why do you worry about them?

In fact, after realisation the body and all else will not appear different from the Self.

D.: Being always Being-Consciousness-Bliss, why does God place us in difficulties? Why did He create us?

M.: Does God come and tell you that He has placed you in difficulties? It is you who say so. It is again the wrong 'I'. If that disappears there will be no one to say that God created this or that. 'That' which is, does not even say 'I am'. For, does any doubt rise that 'I am not'? Only in such a case should one be reminding oneself 'I am a man'. One does not. On the other hand, if a doubt arises whether he is a cow or a buffalo he has to remind himself that he is not a cow, etc., but 'I am a man.' This would never happen. Similarly with one's own existence and realisation.

* * *



Sri Bhagavan inside the Old Hall

Talk No.198.

Some ladies asked if there is rebirth of man as a lower animal.

M.: Yes. It is possible, as illustrated by Jada Bharata — the scriptural anecdote of a royal Sage, having been reborn as a deer.

D.: Is the individual capable of spiritual progress in the animal body?

M.: Not unlikely, though it is exceedingly rare

D.: What is *Guru's* Grace? How does it work?

M.: *Guru* is the Self.

D.: How does it lead to realisation?

M.: *Isvaro gururatmeti* ... (God is the same as *Guru* and Self ...). A person begins with dissatisfaction. Not content with the World he seeks satisfaction of desires by prayers to God; his mind is purified; he longs to know God more than to satisfy his carnal desires. Then God's Grace begins to manifest. God takes the form of a *Guru* and appears to the devotee; teaches him the Truth; purifies the mind by his teachings and contact; the mind gains strength, is able to turn inward; with meditation it is purified yet further, and eventually remains still without the least ripple. That stillness is the Self. The *Guru* is both exterior and interior. From the exterior he gives a push to the mind to turn inward; from the interior he pulls the mind towards the Self and helps the mind to achieve quietness.

That is Grace.

Hence there is no difference between God, *Guru* and Self.

* * *

Talk No.199.

The ladies later asked several questions relating to their present inability to realise the already realised, eternal Self. The sign of Realisation would be Bliss, which was absent.

Maharshi said: There is only One Consciousness. But we speak of several kinds of consciousness, as body-consciousness, Self-consciousness. They are only relative states of the same Absolute Consciousness. Without Consciousness, time and space do not exist. They appear in Consciousness. It is like a screen on which these are cast as pictures and move as in a cinema show. The Absolute Consciousness is our real nature.

D.: From where do these objects arise?

M.: Just from where you rise. Know the subject first and then question about the object.

D.: It is only one aspect of the question.

M.: The subject comprehends the object also. That one aspect is an all-comprehensive aspect. See yourself first and then see the objects. What is not in you, cannot appear outside.

D.: I am not satisfied.

M.: Satisfaction can be only when you reach the source. Otherwise restlessness exists.

D.: Is the Supreme Being with or without attributes?

M.: Know first if you are with or without attributes.

D.: What is *Samadhi*?

M.: One's own true nature.

D.: Why then is effort necessary to attain it?

M.: Whose is the effort?

D.: Maharshi knows that I am ignorant.....

M.: Do you know that you are ignorant? Knowledge of ignorance is no ignorance.

All scriptures are only for the purpose of investigating if there are two Consciousnesses. Everyone's experience proves the existence of only One Consciousness. Can that One divide itself into two? Is any division felt in the Self? Awakening from sleep one finds oneself the same in the wakeful, as well as in the sleep states. That is the experience of each one. The difference lies in seeking, in the outlook. Because you imagine that you are the seer separate from the experience, this difference arises. Experience shows that your being is the same all through.

D.: From where did ignorance come?

M.: There is no such thing as ignorance. It never arises. Everyone is Knowledge itself. Only Knowledge does not shine easily. The dispelling of ignorance is Wisdom which always

exists - *e.g.*, the necklace remaining round the neck though supposed to have been lost; or each of the ten fools failing to count himself and counting only the others. To whom is Knowledge or ignorance?

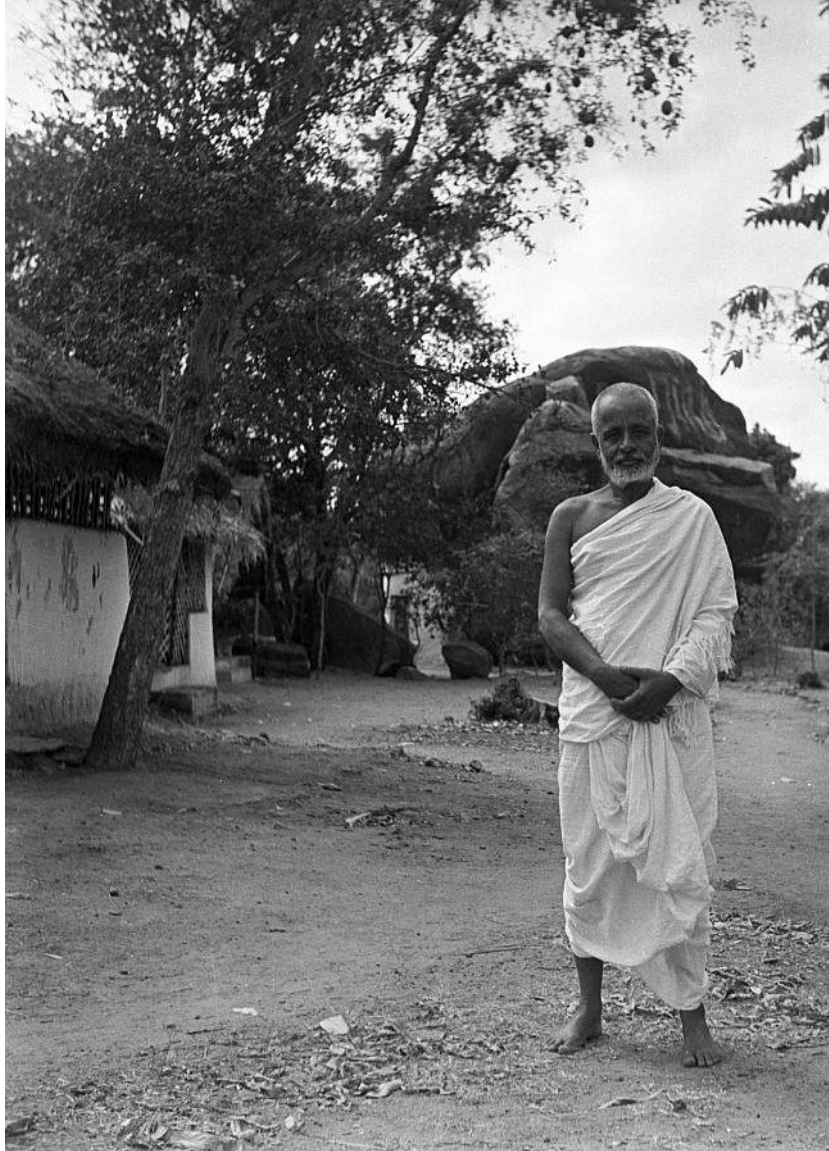
D.: Can we not proceed from external to internal?

M.: Is there any difference like that? Do you feel the difference — external and internal — in your sleep? This difference is only with reference to the body and arises with body-consciousness ('I-thought'). The so-called waking state is itself an illusion.

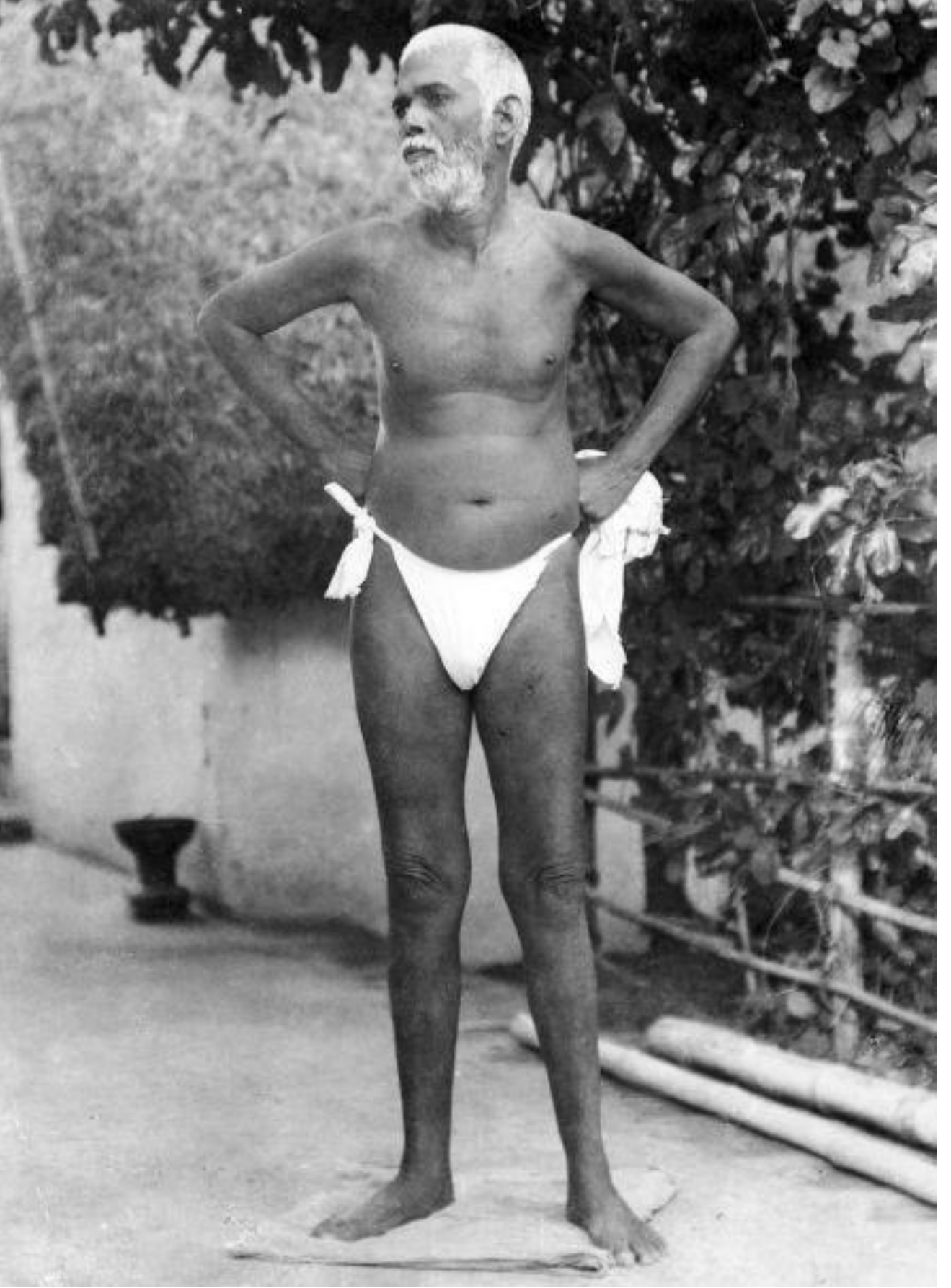
Turn your vision inward and then the whole World will be full of Supreme Spirit. The World is said to be illusion. Illusion is really Truth. Even the material sciences trace the origin of the Universe to some one primordial matter — subtle, exceedingly subtle.

God is the same both to those who say the World is real and to their opponents. Their outlook is different. You need not entangle yourself in such disputations. The goal is one and the same for all. Look to it.

— from "*Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi*"



Munagala Venkataramiah standing in front of the 'Stone Cave' at Palakottu wherein he was often immersed in meditation

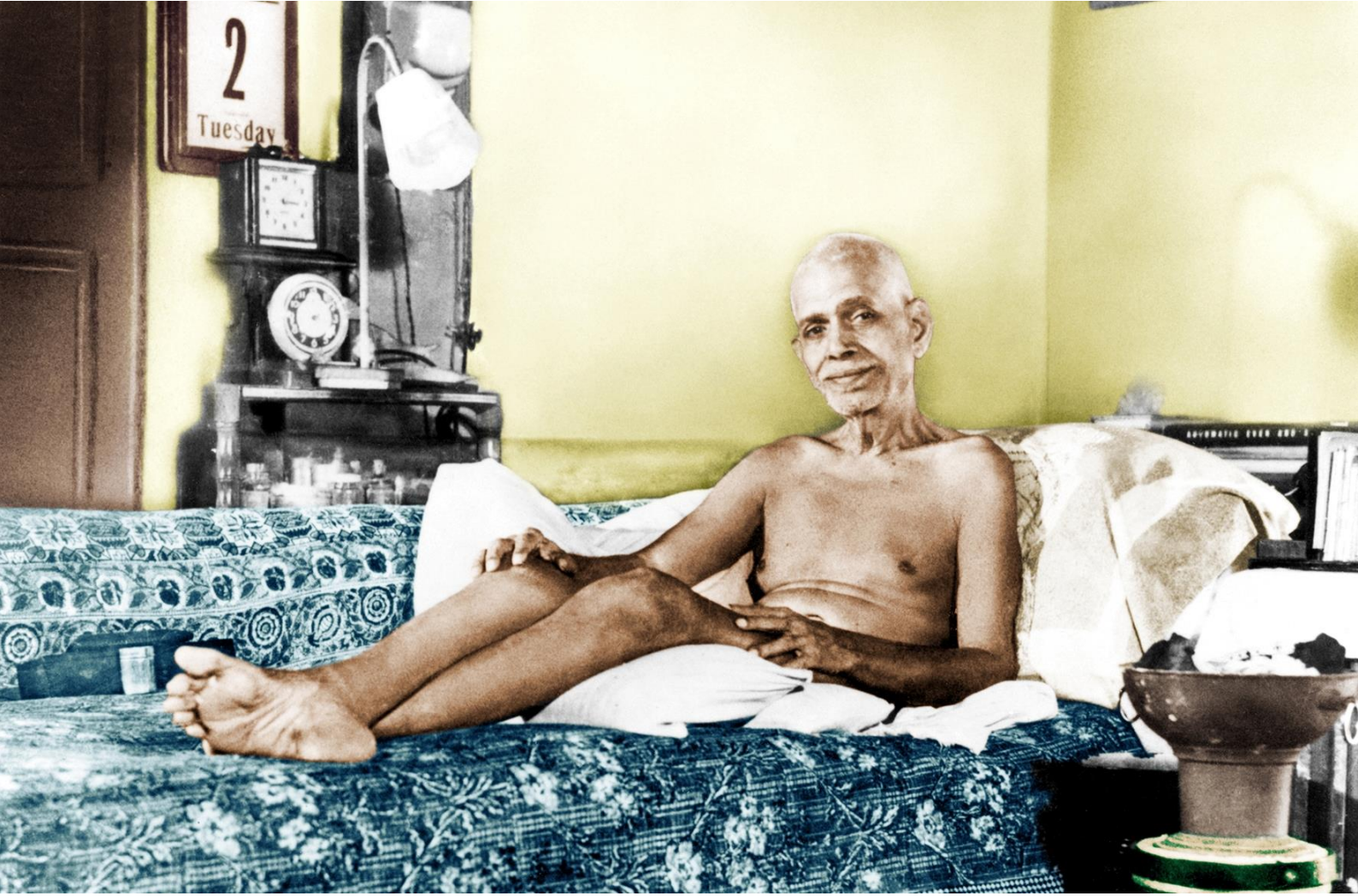


The very first photo of Sri Bhagavan, taken by the Medical College student T.N.Krishnaswami (Dr.)

Ati Ashramis

Every opportunity in the events of the daily life of Sri Bhagavan was marked with spiritual depth and fulfilment of a spiritual aspirant's yearning prayer to be exposed to the Spiritual Treasure that Sri Bhagavan remained then and remains complete and full even NOW.

Efforts are made here to introduce the spiritual aspirant to the wealth of resources to Spiritual Treasure of the ancient tradition.



[When Sri Ramana Maharshi was asked to name Sages who had lived in the exalted state of *Atiasrami* (beyond the four stages of life — *brahmacharya*, *grahastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasi*), he referred to *Jada Bharata*, *King Rishabha* and *Sage Suka*.*

Given here is the brief story of Jada Bharata together with his profound teaching of *Brahma Vidya*.]

Jada Bharata's Teaching



".....He was so much attached to it"



Bharata, a pious King, renounced his kingdom and was doing penance in the forest. One day his penance was disturbed by the roar of a lion chasing a pregnant deer.

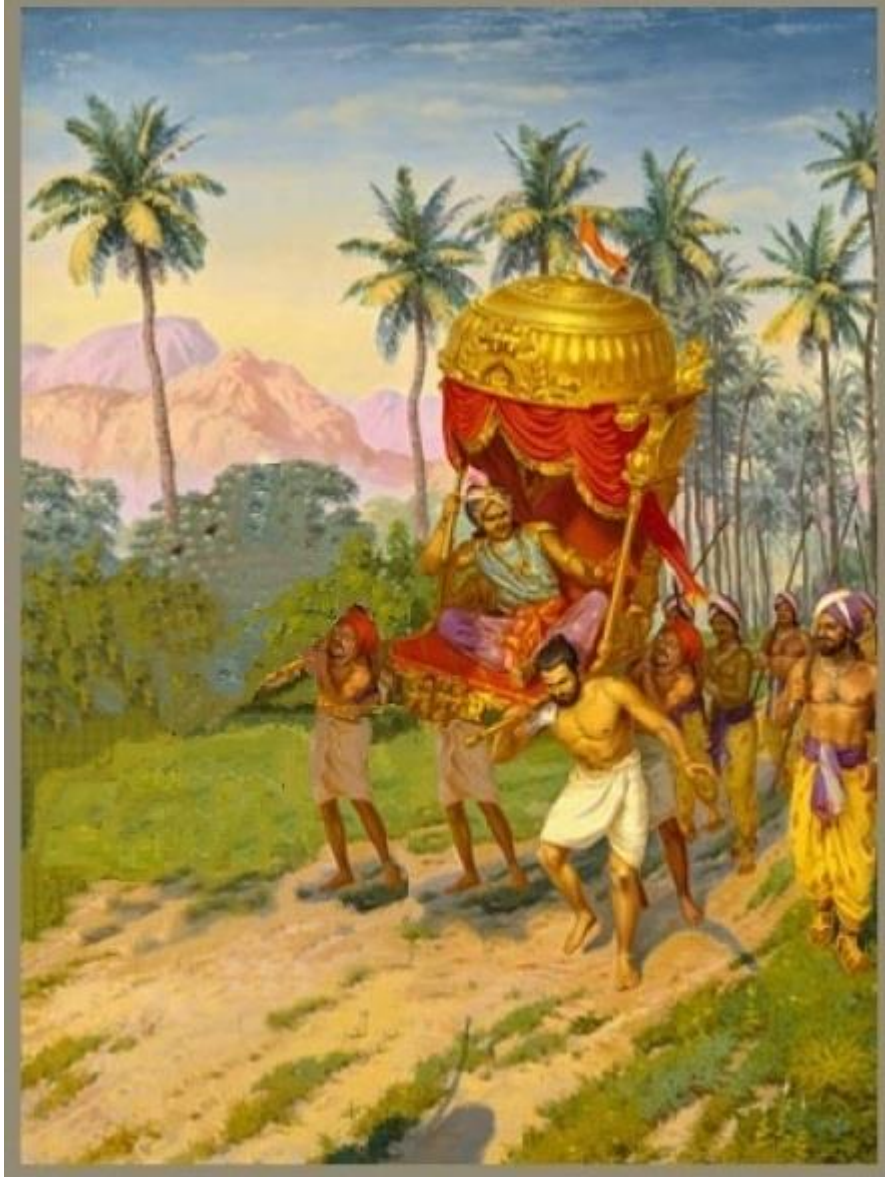
He then saw a deer jump across the nearby river, escaping from the lion, but it fell dead because of the impact. However, the baby deer slipped alive from its womb and fell into the water. Bharata took it out and reared it all his life. He was so much attached to it that in his next birth he was born as a deer.

However, because of the intense penance in his previous birth, he did not waste time, but spent most of it in the company and proximity of Sages and Saints in their Ashrams.

While giving up the deer's body, he prayed for Liberation in his next birth. He was born again in a pious *Brahmin* family.

In this birth also, he was blessed to remember his previous births, and the follies he had committed. Now, he remained uninterested in any movement, physically and mentally. Disappointed with his inertia, his parents named him *Jada* Bharata (inert Bharata). But actually, he was all the time immersing himself in the Presence of the Truth (I AM) within. His body was, however, well built and sturdy.

One day, while he was seated on a rock, King Rahugana, a proud person, was passing by in a palanquin carried by four servants. Since the King was in a hurry, the palanquin bearers sought the help of the stocky *Jada* Bharata to carry the palanquin faster.



“.....the King warned him of severe punishment.....”

Jada Bharata obliged, but jumped now and then to avoid hurting the ants on the road. This annoyed the King, who warned him of severe punishment if he did not stop his dancing.

***Jada* Bharata looked long and silently at the King. For the first time after his birth, without raising his voice, without any rancour, *Jada* Bharata spoke, thus:**

"You are angry with me because you think that I am not carrying your palanquin properly. You spoke with sarcasm when you said that I have been carrying the burden too long and that I am tired. Your meaning is that I am not one bit tired by this burden. In a way, your words are true.

"But your desire to hurt me with your sarcasm is, I am afraid, pointless. It does not hurt me. Shall I tell you why? You are under the impression that this body of mine is real and that the burden it has been carrying all the while is also real.

"If this is true, then your words should certainly have hurt me. But then, how can you be sure that these two are real? I cannot prove that this body of mine is real, nor can I prove that the burden it has been carrying is also real. Under the circumstances, how can it be possible to hurt a person or a thing which is non-existent? The real 'I' in ME has absolutely no connection with this so-called body of mine; and insults to this body or injustices heaped on this body do not affect ME in the least.

"You said that I have been carrying the burden alone for a long distance and that I am tired. You meant to insult me, I know, but I do not choose to be insulted. The reason is this: If it is true there is a distance to be covered; if there is a purpose to be achieved by covering that distance; and if these two factors have anything to do with ME, then and only then, should I be affected by your remarks. But then, I am not sure of the existence of either of these things or my connection with them. And, so I am not affected by your words.

"You said that I am not big but emaciated. The words are meaningless considering that 'I' am formless and the qualifications 'big' and 'small,' 'lean' and 'fat' do not apply to it. These words are for describing the body, the Home of the *Atman* and not the *Atman* itself. Fatness or leanness, diseases of the mind and the body, hunger, thirst, fear, quarrelsomeness, desire, old age, sleep, lust, avarice, pain — all these affect one who thinks that he has a body and not me who knows the Truth about myself (as 'I AM'). This body is short-lived, limited, while the 'I AM' is endless, eternal.

"You called me a walking corpse. So are you and so is every man and animal on the earth. O King, the processes of birth and death do not confine themselves to me alone. All things which are undergoing change are liable to birth and death. Every moment there is birth and there is death. If, by any chance, wealth and the owning of wealth are permanent, then this command of yours and this threat of yours that you will punish me will all be possible. But it is not so.

"The difference between a King and a servant arises because of the sense of duality and I cannot find any other reason for it. There is no such thing as a superior person and there is no one inferior to him. But you do not seem to realize it.

"Tell me what I should do now. I have realized the Truth. I do appear to be a stupid man; a deaf man without any feelings; a fool. But really, the things of the World do not affect me, not in the least. How then is your punishment going to affect me since I know that I am far away from all these? It will be like kneading flour which has already been kneaded. It will have no effect on my behaviour."

Jada Bharata bent down to place the palanquin once again on his shoulders. Drained of all pride and arrogance by the sacred words of Bharata, King Rahugana fell at his feet and spoke in a voice choked with tears born of shame.

He said: "My pride has been destroyed by you. Forgive me for my impertinence and please grant me a boon. Please be gracious enough to tell me who you are. I am the ruler of Sindhu and Sauvira and they call me Rahugana. I was on my way to the great Sage, Kapila, to sit at his feet and learn *Brahma Vidhya* (Science of Truth) from him. But you seem to be Kapila himself who has come to me on his own accord to save me. To what good actions in my previous births do I owe this great good fortune that has befallen me? Please initiate me into the Science of Truth."

Jada Bharata was filled with pity for the King, who seemed to be really eager to learn. He said: "I will try to help you and you will find the path to Salvation. Listen to me very carefully while I explain it all to you."

Jada Bharata began his discourse on the steps to be taken to attain the Highest State in life.

"It is the 'mind' of man which causes him either to fall into the morass called *samsara* or to find freedom from it. It is the mind which should be subdued. When the 'mind' is tainted with the three *gunas* — *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, its path is set in the World of objects. It will have to keep on performing actions — good and bad; and, the cycle of births and deaths will be endless.

"It will acquire desires and, according to the desires, its progress will be towards the higher or towards the lower, as the case may be. Pleasure and pain will affect the life of man and there will be no end to it. So long as the 'mind' is attached to the things of the world it can never glow on its own accord.

"Take the example of a little lamp. It has a wick and the wick is fed by a quantity of ghee. When it burns, the flame will be colored because of the quality of the ghee which is feeding it and the smoke and light emanating from it, will all have the quality of the ghee. If, however, the ghee is all exhausted the wick will then burn on its own accord with a color and glow which is natural; and, it will, eventually be converted to 'nothingness'.

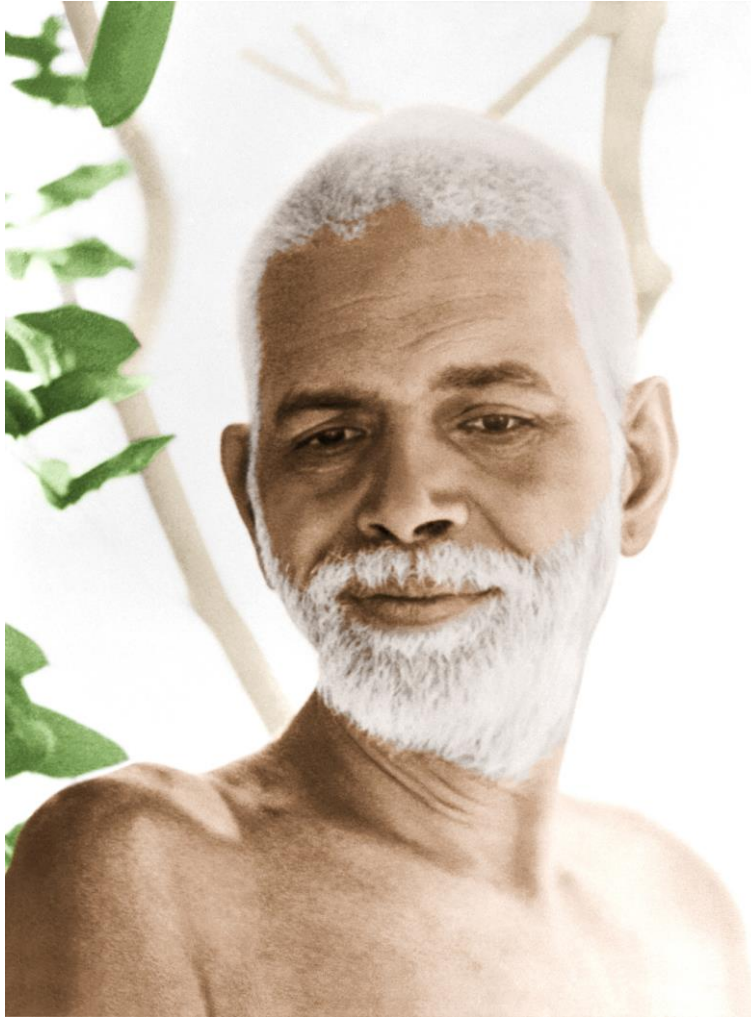
"Even so, the 'mind'. So long as it is fed by the *gunas*, it will become colored by them and act accordingly. When the *gunas* leave the 'mind', it will soon reach a stage when it will have no existence. Just as the wind pervades the entire space, the Lord pervades the entire Universe.

When the 'mind' is subdued and *jiva* sheds all attachment, conquers the six enemies and illuminates itself with the Lamp of Wisdom, then the *Jiva* will be freed. But till then he will have to go through the pain of being born again and again into this World.

"O King! Learn to renounce everything. Be compassionate towards all living beings. Sever the bonds of attachment to everything. With a mind pure and free, you will soon reach the other shores of this immense ocean called *samsara* and I assure you, you will not come back, again."

Rahugana prostrated before Bharata and said: "My Lord, being born as a man is the greatest of blessings granted to the *Jiva* by the Lord. I am not jealous of the Gods at all, since it is not given to everyone, not even the Gods, to have the good fortune of coming across Great Souls like you. I have had that unique privilege.

"By your company for just a *muhurta* (a few minutes) all my ignorance has been driven away. I am rid of my pride and ego. You have taught me that there is only one duty for man and that is to 'surrender to the Lord'. I bow before you, again and again. There is no other way in which I can express my gratefulness to you."



Sri Bhagavan looking with interest some photos shown to Him by Guy Hague

The Teaching of King Rishabha



".....King Rishabha in an exalted state....."

[Given here is the brief story of King Rishaba and his teaching on Self-realisation. Rishabha means, "He who excels all others."

Once, King Nabhi prayed to the Lord that he should be blessed with a son, who is 'equal to the Lord Himself.' The Lord consented to it by saying, "There is no equal to Me. And, therefore, I shall be born to you, as your son." This illustrious son was King Rishabha.

King Nabhi went to the forest and was absorbed into Nature. Rishabha ruled the country in an ideal perfection. He had one hundred sons. All became Self-Realised, being initiated into the 'Science of Truth'.

The essence of it is given below.]

"When a man engages in activity from the desire to pamper the senses, he falls unwarily into 'sin'. As this body, which, though ephemeral, is the cause of suffering, is itself the result of (past) 'sins', it is foolish and wrong to let oneself in for such 'sins' again. So long as a man does not realize — by proper inquiry — the Truth of the Self, he continues to mistake the body for the Self, due to ignorance. Activity is the cause. And, as long as he engages in action, his mind is inclined to activity. And, the proneness of the 'mind' to activity is the cause of the *Jiva's* being saddled with a body and the consequent bondage of *samsara*. When the Light of the *Atman* is hidden by nescience, the 'mind' impels him to persist in activity. And, so long as he does not come to have loving devotion to Me — Lord Vasudeva — he is not freed from the connection with the 'body'. When a man, though capable of discrimination, is so careless of his own interest that he fails to see that the activities of the 'senses' are unreal and not the promptings of his true Self, he forgets that Self, and becomes absorbed in the domestic life, where the pleasures of the 'senses' are the chief attraction; and, the foolish man thus comes to experience endless misery.

"Spirit of Surrender: He should work skillfully with resolution and untiring effort, guided by discrimination, to free himself from the 'ego' that conditions the *jiva*. This means he should employ in this behalf devotion to Me, the Immaculate Lord and Teacher of men, in a spirit of self-surrender; renunciation of all desires; patient submission to the pairs of opposites; the vivid realization that suffering is the lot of creatures in all the Worlds; investigation of the Truth of the Self and the renunciation of works prompted by desires; the dedication of all work to Me.

"Using these means strictly in accordance with the teaching of the *Guru*, one should vigilantly strive to rid oneself of that subtle body in which are stored the residual impressions of *karma*, and which is itself the 'knot of the Heart' produced by ignorance. And, when that has been accomplished, one should cease using the means too.

"When the 'mind' which had been firmly knotted by accumulated *karma* gets loosened, one shakes oneself free from all forms of entanglements; and then, thus destroying the root-cause of all evil (the ego), one is Liberated, and attains the Supreme State."

Sage Suka's counsel to King Parikshit "Realize Truth of Atman"



"Realize Truth of Atman" — Sage Suka blesses King Parikshit

[King Parikshit is to die, within seven days, of snake bite. Before that he avows to know the Truth of Existence. Seeing the earnestness of the King, the great Sage, Suka, expounds *Srimad Bhagavatam* (stories of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu) to him. Without a break, day and night, the King 'listens' totally and wholly. The Sage is pleased and gives him the final instructions. The King's response, too, is fruitfully revealing.]

Sage Suka:

O King! Abandon the feeling that you are going to 'die' — a feeling that befits only animals (*pashu buddhi*). The body, a previously non-existent thing, seems to be existent now, but will cease to exist. However, 'you' are not the body; you will never be destroyed. (12-5-2)

Nor will you, having lived, come into being again — in your son, grandson, and so on, like the sprout from the seed — since you are entirely different from the 'body' (like the fire, which, though seen in association with wood, is not its product and is entirely different from it). (12-5-4)

As one can see the cutting of one's own head in a dream (and in reality is not at all affected), so is one's death to the *Atman*, which is pure Witness. The Self, which is unborn and immortal, is a pure Witness to the death of the body. (12-5-4)

When a pot is broken, the space inside the pot merges with the infinite space. Similarly, when the body perishes through *Jnana*, the *jiva* becomes one with *Brahman*; the body (and so forth) will be clearly known as entirely non-existent, and only *mahakasa* or *chidakasa* will exist. (12-5-5)

The mind projects the adjuncts — like the bodies (subtle and physical), *gunas* and *karmas*. *Maya*, which is the Lord's power that entangles the *jiva* in the trap of becoming, is just the mind. (12-5-6)

O Noble One! Thus, through profound intelligence, pregnant with spiritual intuition and constant surrender to Lord Vasudeva, grasp the Self by the Self (that is, abide in the Self through the Self). (12-5-9)

If the Truth of the *Atman* is realized, the serpent Takshaka will not consume you under the promptings of the Sage's son's curse. The cause that brings about the death will not even touch you, who are one with the Lord of Death, the *Isvara*, in fact, the death of Death Itself. (12-5-10)

Parikshit! This should be your only meditation: 'I AM' *Brahman*, the Supreme Abode. Only *Brahman* is 'I AM.' This is the Supreme state of Truth experience. In this way, know your Real Nature, and collect yourself and offer it into the *Atman* ('I AM'-ness) that is without any division. In that State of Oneness, you will see Takshaka, extending his tongue and belching with poison, only as *Atman* — the 'body' as the *Atman*, and the entire Universe as the *Atman*. You will not behold anything other than *Atman*. You will not stand apart because you are *Brahman*. (12-5-11)

O dear one! I have imparted to you whatever you wanted to know about the *leelas* of the Self of the Universe, Lord Hari. Now, become established in the Self. Are there any more questions? (12-5-13)

King Parikshit:

I have indeed attained the Blessed Truth. Blessed I Am. From your mouth, I have been able to hear about the deathless, beginningless, Supreme Truth, Lord Hari. You, the Supremely Compassionate One, have really blessed me. (12-6-2)

O Holy One! Now, I do not fear Takshaka or any other form of Death. I have entered the State of *Brahma Nirvana*. You have revealed to me the State of Fearlessness. (12-6-5)

O Holy One! Please bless me to depart. Let me offer (gather inward) my 'senses' and the 'mind' to the Lord, who is the innermost Source of my being. I will give up my *pranas*, and the 'mind' drained of all desires, by entering into the Self. (12-6-6)"

My ignorance is completely removed through this constant exposure to *Jnana* by burning it in the Fire of Contemplation (*Vijnana*). Lord! You have pointed out to me the abode of Supreme Blessedness, the Abode of the Lord. (12-6-7).



L to R: Guy Hague, Attendant Krishnaswami, Young Ramanathan (Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer's eldest son), Elenor Pauline Noye, Lakshman Joo, (prominent expounder of "Kashmiri Savisim" in Kashmir), a Muslim vendor devotee

Upanishad Stories

Sri Munagala Venkatramaiah, author of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, was a chemistry professor. In addition, he was a prolific inventor with many patents to his name. Before coming to Sri Bhagavan, he had a traditional *guru* who initiated him into reading the 108 *Upanishads* in Sanskrit, as his daily *sadhana*.

After I got him to stay in the Ashram, whenever I went to his room to see if there was anything I could do for him, he would be engrossed in reading these volumes. Being quite naive and young, I could not understand why such a staunch and senior devotee of Sri Bhagavan should daily read the *Upanishads* every day.

His calm response to my asking Him was truly enlightening: “Ganesan! I too had the same doubt when I stood in front of Sri Bhagavan for the first time and He compassionately asked me what *sadhana* I was doing. When I told him about my previous *guru*’s instruction, He exhorted me with a warm smile, “Continue to do it — read the *Upanishads* daily!” Being also Sri Bhagavan’s commandment to me, I do it daily without fail! “

Not convinced, I persisted, “What is so great about the *Upanishads*? I fully accept the *Vedas* are of paramount interest to spiritual aspirants! What is there in the *Upanishads*?”

Recognising my immaturity, he condescended to come down to my level and narrated a few stories from the *Upanishads* that thrilled me and changed my viewpoint forever.



Arunachala – View from Draupadi Amman Temple

Satyakama: The Seeker of Truth

Chandogya Upanishad, 4.4 – 4.8

One day a young boy came to the *ashrama* of Sage Haridrumata Gautama and said, "Revered Sir, I desire to live under you as a *Brahmacharin*. Please accept me as your student."

The sage asked, "Dear boy, of what *gothra* or lineage are you?"

When Satyakama, in obedience to *Guru's* commandment, went home and asked his mother what their "*Gothra*" was. She narrated: After my giving birth to you, suddenly your father passed away. Even during marriage, I did not dare ask him of the "*Gothra*". The very few relatives also dispersed and I could not get from any one what your "*gothra*" was. Please tell your *Guru* this fact ".

On hearing it, the Rishi Haridrumata Gautama smiled and said, "No one who is not a *Brahmin* can speak thus. Dear boy, bring the sacrificial fuel. I shall initiate you as a *Brahmacharin*, for you have not deviated from truth." Thus was Satyakama Jabala initiated into the life of a *Brahmacharin*.

The *Guru* was immensely pleased that the mother said the truth. That the very truth has been uttered did purify Satyakama. Though the tradition permits the *Guru* his own "*Gothra*" to be given to such "*Gothra*-less" students, the *Guru* ignored it and honoured the mother by creating a new *Gothra* in her name "*JABALI*" (her name was *Jabala*). All *Gothras* originate from the names of a *Rishi* (Male). The first time a lady's name was given to a *Gothra*! And, the *Jabali Gothra* even today is in prevalence !

After a few days, Rishi Haridrumata Gautama sorted out four hundred lean and weak cows and said to Satyakama, "Dear boy, take these cows to the forest and graze them."

Satyakama bowed down with submission and while driving the cows said, "Sir, I shall not return till these cows multiply into a thousand."

Satyakama lived in the forest and looked after the cows.

Years went by. The number of cows increased to a thousand.

One day towards evening a bull came to Satyakama and spoke to him, "Dear boy! Now we are a thousand in number. Take us to the house of the teacher". Also, the bull said to Satyakama, "I shall teach you one quarter of the *Brahman* or God. He is *Prakashavan* or the 'Radiant'. He who meditates on *Brahman* as the 'Radiant', becomes Radiant in this World." Thus having spoken the bull told Satyakama that *Agni*, the God of Fire, will teach him more later.



At dawn, Satyakama drove the cows towards his *Guru's ashrama*.

In the evening when the cows came together, he kindled a fire there, added fuel to the fire, penned the cows and sat down near them behind the fire, facing east. Then the Fire addressed him and said: "Dear boy, I will teach you one quarter of the *Brahman*. He is *Anantavan* or the 'Endless'. One who knows Him to be thus and meditates upon him as 'Endless', becomes endless in this World". Then the fire told him that a swan was going to tell him about the third quarter of the *Brahman*.

At dawn, Satyakama continued to drive the cows towards the *Guru's ashrama*. Towards evening when the cows came together, he kindled a fire there, added fuel to the fire, penned the cows and sat down near them behind the fire, facing east. All of a sudden a swan came flying and said, "Satyakama! I shall teach you the third quarter of *Brahman*. He is called *Jyotishman* or the 'Effulgent'. One who knows him thus and meditates upon him as the 'Effulgent', becomes effulgent in this World." Then, the swan told him that a waterfowl would teach him the last part of the *Brahman*.

On the following day, once again, Satyakama drove the cows in the direction of his *Guru's ashrama*.

Towards evening when the cows came together, he kindled a fire there, added fuel to the fire, penned the cows and sat down near them behind the fire, facing east. Then, a waterfowl came before him and said, "Satyakama! I shall teach you the fourth and last part of *Brahman*. He is *Ayatanavan* or the 'All-supporting'. One who knows him thus and meditates upon him as the 'All-supporting', becomes That in this World."

When Satyakama reached the *Guru's ashram* with the thousand cows, the *Guru* asked him, "Dear boy, your face shines with the Knowledge of *Brahman*. Who taught you that?"

Satyakama told him about his four teachers and said, "Sir, I now request you to expound it to me personally. Because I know that the Knowledge received directly from one's own *Guru* becomes perfect."

Then Rishi Haridrumata Gautama, the revered teacher of Satyakama, taught him the same thing again by adding more meaning to all that Satyakama had learnt. Thus, Satyakama got the full Knowledge of *Brahman* from his *Guru* and later, he himself became a great teacher.

* * *

A Dialogue with the God of Death

Kathopanishad

Vajashravas was a Sage. Once, he decided to perform a great sacrifice in which he wanted to give away all that he had. He had a son by the name *Nachiketa* who was still a boy but extremely intelligent and very pure in mind and Heart. He saw that his father was giving away the lean and weak cows that were unable to give milk. My father is not doing the right thing by giving the old cows in charity, said *Nachiketa* to himself so he went near his father and asked, "Father, I have heard that the kind of *Yajna* that you are performing, one has to give up all that one possesses. This being the case to whom will you give me?" Vajashravas did not give any reply. After some time *Nachiketa* asked again the same question, but in vain. He did not get any response from his father. Again for the third time, *Nachiketa* repeated the same question. Vajashravas could not control his temper; he burst out saying to his own son, "I will give you *Yama*, the God of Death."

Nachiketa followed the words of his father and went to the Kingdom of Death. However, during that time *Yama* was not present. None dared to admit *Nachiketa*. So he waited near the gate for three days and three nights without taking even a drop of water. When *Yama* returned and found *Nachiketa* at his doorstep he felt sad for keeping a *Brahmin* waiting for three days and three nights. He ordered his attendants to fetch holy water to invite and welcome *Nachiketa*. After the hospitality offered to *Nachiketa*, *Yama* told *Nachiketa*, "Dear child, I have not done good by keeping you waiting for three days. So I request you to ask for three boons."

Nachiketa answered to *Yama* by saying, "O Lord, let my father not be anxious about me, and let his anger against me vanish. When I go back to Earth, let him recognize me and receive me back gladly."

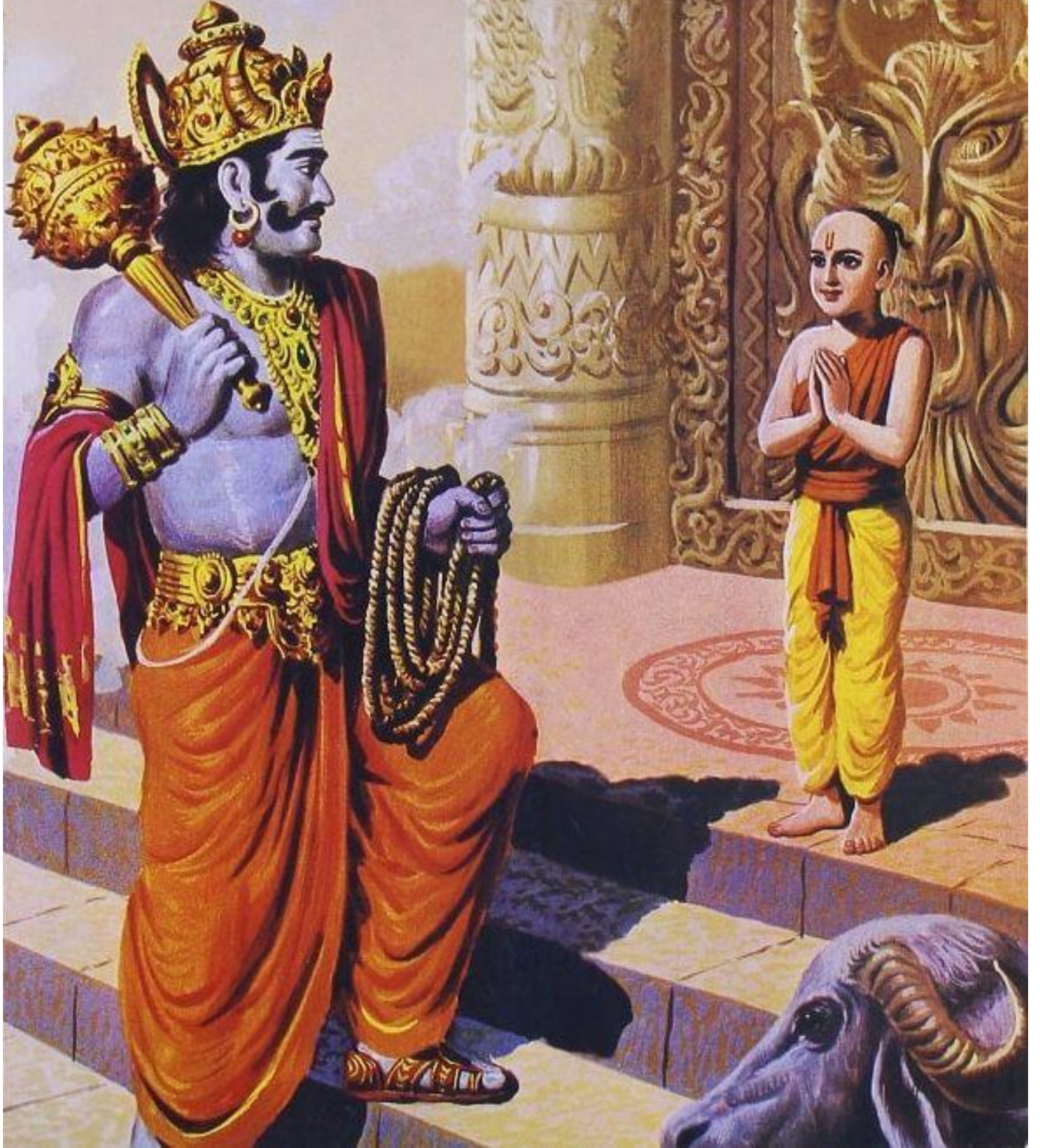
"Granted son," said *Yama*. "Ask your second boon."

"Dear Sir, teach me the proper ritual for the fire sacrifice. This I ask for my second boon" said *Nachiketa*.

Yama agreed and taught *Nachiketa* the proper ritual for the fire sacrifice. Then he said, "*Nachiketa*, what is your third boon?"

Nachiketa said, "Is there indeed a Life beyond death? Some say there is; others say Life ends with this Life. What is the Truth?"

Yama said, "Boy, do not ask me about matters of Life and death. Even the Gods are not clear on all points. Ask me something else. I will grant all your wishes other than this."



Nachiketa persisted and said, "O Yama, I only wish to know about the mysteries of Life and Death, and nothing else."

Yama tries to offer Nachiketa worldly pleasures so that he may change the nature of his request for the third boon, but Nachiketa insists by stating that all the worldly pleasures are short-lived and do not render long lasting happiness. Nachiketa was bold enough saying that one can never reach the eternal through the worldly possessions. Therefore he has renounced all desires for worldly pleasures and have come here with the hope of wining the Eternal through the instructions of the God of Death.

It was too difficult for Yama to change the mind of young Nachiketa. So finally, he agreed to tell Nachiketa about the mysteries of Life and Death with the following words:

"The Self is Immortal. It was not born, nor does it die. It did not come out of anything, neither did anything came out of it. Even if this body is destroyed, the Soul is not destroyed."

"The one who thinks that he is the slayer and the one who thinks that he is slain, both are ignorant. For the Self neither slays nor is it slain."

"Smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest, the Self is living in all beings."

"This Knowledge about it can neither be obtained by discussion, nor by brain power, nor even by much learning. It reveals itself to the deserving one."

"This body is the chariot, intelligence the driver, the senses are the horses, conscience the rein and the Soul is the lord of the chariot. The Self is superior to body, mind and senses."

"Greater than the individual soul is the enveloping Super Consciousness, the seed of everything in the Universe, still greater is the Ultimate Person than whom there is nothing greater. He is the Goal of our aspiration. Once That (Supreme Self) is realized, Death loses all its terrors, and the one who has Realized becomes Immortal."

"The Path to Realization is long and difficult, like the razor's edge, narrow and sharp. Therefore, there is no time to be lost."

"Awake, arise, bestir yourself, and do not stop until the Goal is reached."

* * *

Shvetaketu

Chandogya Upanishad, Chapter 6

Shvetaketu was the only son of Rishi Uddalaka. When he turned twelve, he was asked by his father to go and get his education from a *Gurukula*. When Shvetaketu returned from the *Gurukula* after finishing his twelve years of rigorous training in all the branches of Knowledge, his father Uddalaka found arrogance in his expression.

Once Uddalaka called him by his side and asked him, "Shvetaketu, my boy, have you, ever sought out the Knowledge of that by which the unheard can be heard, the unseen can be seen, the unknowable can be known?" Shvetaketu was shocked. He had no idea about what his father had asked. So he requested his father to give him this knowledge.

Uddalaka told Shvetaketu, "Son, by knowing one lump of clay you may learn about everything made of clay; the only difference between such things is the name, a result of speech. But the Truth is that all such things are of the same substance. Likewise, by knowing one chunk of gold, you may learn about everything made of gold; the only difference between such things is the name, a result of speech. But the truth is that all such things are of the same substance. And the same is true for even the simplest tools made of iron. This, my son, is the knowledge of which I speak."

Uddalaka thus continued saying, "Dear child, in the beginning of things there was Pure Being, One without a second. It willed to become many. Then, it manifested itself in the form of fire and from fire came water and from there came food. This way this rich variety of things came into existence by permutation and combination of these forms. Then Life appeared, and among the living beings there came 'man' with his varied powers and functions."

Shvetaketu stopped his father from going ahead and asked him to explain what a man would do during sleep.

"The man becomes one with the Spirit, the Eternal Being. Man's mind is like a beast tied to a peg by a long rope. It turns round and round and can not get away. When a man dies his power of speech is merged into his 'mind', his 'mind' is absorbed in the 'prana', the 'prana' is merged into the Light, and the Light merges in the Power beyond. That Power is subtle. It pervades the Universe. That is the Truth. That is the Spirit. That Thou art, O Shvetaketu."

Shvetaketu was not satisfied and wanted to know more about that all-pervading Power. Here Uddalaka explains to him beautifully about the One and the many by giving examples.

He says, "Dear child, bees bring droplets of honey from various flowers and store in the hive. Once in the hive, do the droplets know from which flower they came? Need they know it? So too all these beings when merge into the Ocean of Being, they know not whence they came. All become one when they have merged in the Ocean of

Consciousness, of the One Being. That is subtle. That pervades everything. That is the *Atman*. That thou art, O Shvetaketu."

Then Uddalaka gives the example of all rivers merging into the Ocean and losing their individual identity. Then he gives another example in which he explains that by cutting a part of the tree the whole tree does not die. Only that part which is cut dies. Thus that which is deprived of its life dies but the life itself does not die. The power by which Life lives eternally is the Spirit. That thou art O Shvetaketu."



तत् त्वं असि।



Shvetaketu listened to his father attentively and said: "My respected teachers must not have known this, for if they had, they surely would have told me. Won't you please give me more of this Knowledge, Father?" And Uddalaka agreed to do so. And we see further dialogues between Uddalaka and Shvetaketu in the following manner.



Uddalaka: "Bring me a fruit from the banyan tree."

Shvetaketu: "Here is one, Father."

Uddalaka: "Break it open."

Shvetaketu: "It is broken, Father."

Uddalaka: "What do you see there?"

Shvetaketu: "These tiny seeds."

Uddalaka: "Now break one of them open."

Shvetaketu: "It is broken, Father."

Uddalaka: "What do you see there?" Shvetaketu: "Nothing, Father."

Uddalaka: "My son, you know there is a subtle essence which you do not perceive, but through that essence the truly immense banyan tree exists. Believe it, my son. Everything that exists has its Self in that subtle essence. It is Truth. It is the Self, and you, Shvetaketu, are That (*tattvamasi*)."

Shvetaketu further pleaded with his father to teach him more, and Uddalaka continued:

Uddalaka: "Bring a pinch of salt my son."

Shvetaketu: "Here, I have brought the salt Father."

Uddalaka: "Place this salt in water, and come back to me in the morning."

The son did as he was told.



Uddalaka (in the morning): "Bring me the salt you put in the water last night."

Shvetaketu (after looking): "Father, I cannot find it."

Uddalaka: "Of course not; it has dissolved. Now taste the water from the surface. How does it taste?"

Shvetaketu: "It's salty."

Uddalaka: "Taste the water from the middle of the bowl. How does it taste?"

Shvetaketu: "It's salty."

Uddalaka: "Now taste the water from the bottom. How does it taste?"

Shvetaketu: "It's salty."

Uddalaka: "Go, throw it away and come back to me."

Shvetaketu did so, and returned.

Shvetaketu: "But, father, although I have thrown it away, the salt remains."

Uddalaka: "Likewise, though you cannot hear or perceive or know the Subtle Essence, it is here. Everything that exists has its Self in that Subtle Essence. It is Truth. It is the Self, and you, Shvetaketu, are That (*tattvamasi*)."

What is presented here is just a glimpse of the entire teachings of Uddalaka to Shvetaketu in which he gives a very comprehensive idea about the *Brahman* and how to realize That.

The Story of Indra and Virochana

Chandogya Upanishad, Chapter 8.7-12

Once Prajapati, the Creator of the Universe announced, "The Self is the sinless, ageless and deathless One; it has no sorrow nor hunger nor thirst. The goal of all its desire is the Truth, Truth is the one thing worthy of its resolve. It is this Self that has to be sought after, it alone one should seek to know. And one who seeks after the Self and knows it, gains possessions of all the Worlds, wins all that is desirable."

Both the Gods and the demons heard this announcement and thought, "We must know this Atman or Self and seek this Knowledge that promises all worlds." Hence, Indra, the King of the Gods and Virochana, the leader of the demons, approached Prajapati with all the humility of a disciple and requested him to impart this Knowledge to them. Prajapati accepted them as his disciples and asked them to stay with him for thirty-two years.

Both, Indra and Virochana, stayed on living the life of a *Brahmachari*. At the end of that period, Prajapati called both of them and said, "Dear ones, the person visible in the pupil of the eye is *Atman*. This *Atman* is the *Brahman*, the Immortal and Fearless. Go and see yourself in a pan of water and then tell me what you saw."

Next day when Prajapati asked both of them to narrate their experience they both said, "Lord, we saw the Self entirely as we are, the very image even to the very hairs and nails."

"Go and adorn yourself and then look into the pan of water and tell me about your experience" said Prajapati to both of them.

Happy, they went and adorned themselves, looked into the pan of water, came back and replied to Prajapati, "Revered Sir, we saw ourselves well dressed, well groomed and well adorned."

"Very good, this is *Atman*, the Immortal and Fearless, the *Brahman*" thus confirmed Prajapati to them.

Both Indra and Virochana, went happy and very much satisfied in their Geart. Prajapati saw them going away and exclaimed to himself, "Whether they are Gods or demons they will inevitably perish if they are satisfied with the mere reflection of the Reality."

Virochana went to the demons and taught them this knowledge by saying that this bodily self is all that we need to know and serve and glorify. This is the Supreme Knowledge by which one obtains the World here and hereafter.

Indra was different from Virochana. He realized that something is wrong with what he has just learnt about the *Atman*. He felt uneasy. He thought to himself that as the water reflects a well adorned body so does it reflects a blind man if he is blind, a defective man

if he is defective. If a body is destroyed or dead, then there is no reflection of a living body. How then could the body or its reflection be said to be the deathless *Atman*?

He went back to Prajapati and said, "Lord, I see really nothing worthy in this body or in its reflection. Please give me the True Knowledge about the *Atman*." Prajapati was happy with Indra and asked Indra to stay with him for another thirty-two years. At the end of that period Prajapati called him and said, "That which moves about in dreams is *Atman*."

Indra seemed to be satisfied and made his way to the Abode of Gods. But as he went along, again doubt crept into his mind and he thought, "How can the dream self be *Atman*? In dreams one suffers, one is wounded, one weeps when afflicted. The fearless and sinless *Atman* cannot be subject to such happenings. This does not seem to be the Truth. Even this time also something again is wrong with what I have learnt." He came back and prostrated himself before Prajapati requesting him to explain the Truth of *Atman*.

As usual, Prajapati told him to stay with him for another period of thirty-two years. Indra was all prepared. At the end of this period, Prajapati called Indra and said: "The self who is fully pleased and is in a happy mood in deep sleep is the *Atman*."

Indra was satisfied and went home. But before he reached his place, again doubt overwhelmed him and he said to himself, "In a dreamless sleep, the self does not know itself. It is not conscious of its own existence. How then can the unconscious self be *Atman* when it is described as the Ever-Luminous One, ever Conscious One?" He came back again to Prajapati and reported to him about his difficulties. This time Prajapati was more pleased with Indra and told him to spend five more years with him.

After the period was over Prajapati called Indra beside him and said: "O Indra, you have deserved the knowledge of the Highest Truth by your persistent effort and intense inquisitiveness." Saying this Prajapati revealed that part of the Highest Knowledge to Indra for which he was ready at that point of time.

"This body is subject to death yet it embodies the Deathless and Bodiless *Atman*. This embodied Self falls into the trap of all dualities like pleasure and pain, but the bodiless *Atman* is not touched by any duality. So long as the *Atman* resides in the body and attaches itself to them, he seems limited and restricted, but again when freed from the body, becomes one with the Infinite Spirit. When the *Atman* leaves the body, goes wandering freely in the Infinite Worlds. The eye, the ear, the senses, the mind are there only in order that the *Atman* may see and hear and think. It is on account of *Atman* and in the *Atman* that the things and beings exist. He is the Truth and the Final Repository of all Existence."

This time when Indra went back to impart this Knowledge to the Gods, he had no doubt. The Gods received the True Knowledge and therefore live in the full Knowledge of their Self. And because Virochana was satisfied with the knowledge of body as self, the demons, even today live in the ignorance taking body as Self.

The Light of the Lights

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.3

There have been many occasions when Yajnavalkya and King Janaka have met with each other and discussed at length about things related to the *Brahman* and about the knowledge of the Self. King Janaka was very fond of Yajnavalkya and whenever he found a chance to meet him, he would keep asking him several questions for which he himself had no complete answer. And Yajnavalkya would not receive any gift from King Janaka until he has given him the Complete Knowledge.

King Janaka was an adept in *Vaisvanara Vidya* or the Knowledge of the Universal Self. On one occasion a discussion took place between Janaka, Yajnavalkya and other students on this subject of the worship of the Universal Self. Every question asked to Janaka was promptly answered then and there by him. Yajnavalkya was highly pleased with the Knowledge of Janaka, and said, "Ask for a boon." Then Janaka said, "May I be permitted to ask questions whenever I please, whenever I want to ask." That was all that he asked for.

On another occasion when Yajnavalkya met Janaka, he thought that he would not speak, that he would keep quiet. It seemed as if Yajnavalkya was in the fullness of his Soul. But Janaka, as usual did not want to miss the chance. It was then that he drew upon the boon that he had got from Yajnavalkya and there was no other way for the Sage but to answer the questions of King Janaka. When the Sage agreed to speak then King Janaka asked him a very relevant and important question related to the knowledge of Self ,

"O Revered Sage, what is the Light that illumines a person, the light that awakens and impels him to perform all that he does?"

Yajnavalkya gave a very straightforward answer by saying, "The Sun, O king, for it is the Sun alone that is the source of all light and it is for this light that man sits, moves about, does all his work and returns."

"That's right O Venerable Sage, but when the Sun has set, what is it that helps man as light?"

"The Moon; it is the Moon that is the light of the man when the Sun is not there", was the reply of Yajnavalkya.

"All right, I agree, but when the Sun is not there, the Moon is also not there, then what is it that guides man as his light?" thus asked Janaka again.

Then Rishi Yajnavalkya replied, "When the Sun has set and the Moon is not there, 'Fire' is our light, for by that we sit, work, go out and come back."

"I am all in agreement with you", said Janaka and continued asking "but what then is the light when there is no Sun, no Moon and no Fire?"

"Speech, indeed, is the light when all these are absent. Even though we cannot see our hand in the dark we can hear the voice and move towards the sound."

Janaka was happy but had still one more question. He asked, "O Revered Sage, when Sun sets, Moon is not there, Fire is absent and there is no 'speech', then what is the light?"

"The Self, indeed, is our Light O king, for by that we sit, move, work, go out and come back."

Janaka was deeply touched by this but wanted to know from Yajnavalkya more about the Self that he referred to as the Light of all lights. Yajnavalkya continued to impart the Knowledge of the Self to king Janaka. He kept unraveling the mystery after mystery of the Self and the whole teaching is given in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* at length, but the essence of all that Yajnavalkya spoke to King Janaka about the Self is like this:

"The Self is the Pure Awareness that shines as the Light within the Heart, surrounded by the senses. It is this Self that is one with the Sole Reality, the *Brahman*. This Self is free from desire, from evil and from fear. The man who is union with the Self sees without seeing, smells without smelling, tastes without tasting, speaking without speaking, hears without hearing, touches without touching, thinks without thinking, knows without knowing, for there is nothing separate from him. This state of not having another is the State of Unity, one without a second and that is the World of *Brahman*. This is the Supreme Goal of Life, the Supreme Treasure, the Supreme Joy."



Yajnavalkya teaching King Janaka

Da! Da! Da!

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 5.2

Once all the three descendants of Prajapati — the Gods, the men, and the Asuras, lived with him for some time as students.

One day, the Gods approached Prajapati and said, "Teach us, Sir!"

In reply, Prajapati uttered one syllable, '*Da.*' Then he said, "Have you understood?"

They answered, "Yes, we have understood. You said to us, *Damayata* — Be self-controlled."

"Yes," agreed Prajapati, "you have understood."

Then the men went to Prajapati and said, "Teach us, Sir."

Prajapati uttered the same syllable, '*Da.*' Then he asked the men, "Have you understood?"

They answered, "Yes, we have understood. You said to us, *Datta* — Be charitable."

"Yes," agreed Prajapati, "you have understood."

Finally it was the turn of the Asuras. They went to Prajapati and said "Teach us, Sir."

Prajapati uttered the same syllable, '*Da.*' Then he said, "Have you understood?"

They said, "Yes, we have understood. You told us *Dayathvam* — Be compassionate."

"Yes," agreed Prajapati, "you have understood."

Every time the storm cloud thunders it says '*Da! Da! Da!*' And that reminds us to be self-controlled, to be charitable and to be compassionate.

For the Divine Part in each individual, the law given by Prajapati is to be self-controlled. Without self-control one gets caught up by the splendors and riches and becomes egoistic. For the human part in each individual the law given is to be charitable, be generous and self-giving. Without this one gets completely caught up by one's limitedness. For the demoniac part in each individual the law given is to be compassionate. Without this one becomes the slayer of oneself.

Self-control, self-giving and compassion, indeed, are three essential disciplines of spiritual progress.

* * *



Lord Brahma teaching 'Human being', 'Asura' demon and 'Deva' Celestial being

Dialogue between Gargi and Yajnavalkya

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3:8

It was the court of King Janaka. Yajnavalkya received questions from all learned Sages and seers assembled there, and he kept offering answers to all of them. Among them was a female Sage Gargi, the daughter of Vachaknu. Addressing the assembly, she said, "Revered Brahmins, I shall ask Yajnavalkya two questions. If he is able to answer them, no one among you can ever defeat him. He will be the great expounder of the Truth of Brahman."

Yajnavalkya said, "Ask, O Gargi."

Gargi said, "Yajnavalkya, that which they say is above Heaven and below the earth, which is between Heaven and Earth as well, and which was, is, and shall be — tell me, in what is it woven, warp and woof?"

Yajnavalkya said, "That of which they say, O Gargi, that it is above Heaven and below the Earth, which is between Heaven and Earth as well, and which was, is, and shall be — that is woven, warp and woof, is the ether. "Ether (*Akasha*) is the subtlest element. So subtle that it is often indistinguishable from Consciousness. Without it nothing can exist. Yet there is more".

Gargi said, "Thou hast answered my first question. I bow to thee, O Yajnavalkya. Be ready now to answer my second question."

Yajnavalkya said, "Ask, O Gargi."

Gargi said, "In whom is that ether woven, warp and woof?"

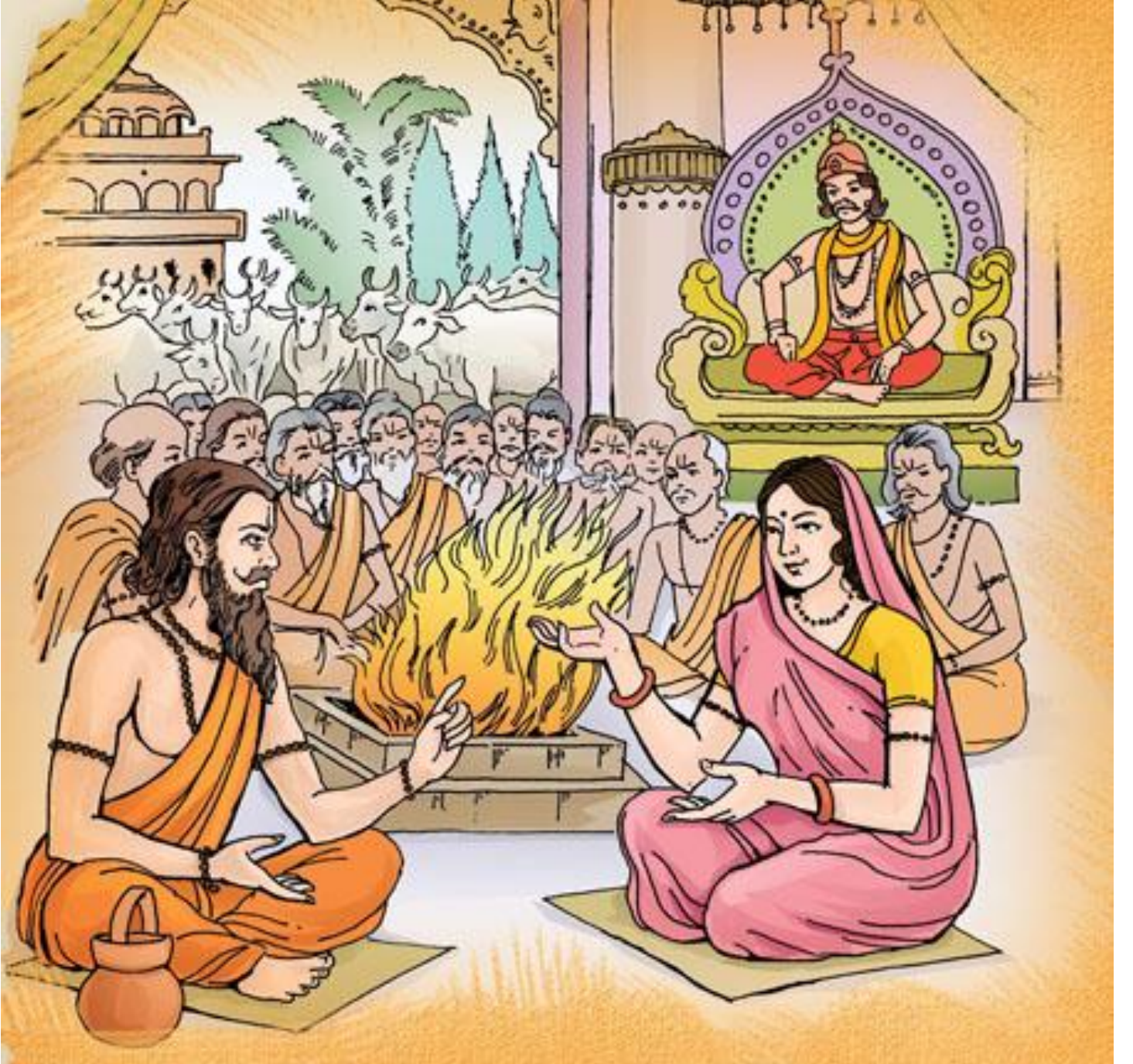
Yajnavalkya replied, "The seers, O Gargi, call him *Akshara* — the Immutable and Imperishable Reality. He is neither gross nor fine, neither short nor long, neither hot nor cold, neither light nor dark, neither of the nature of air, nor of the nature of ether. He is without relations. He is without taste or smell, without eyes, ears, speech, mind, vigor, breath, mouth. He is without measure; he is without inside or outside. He enjoys nothing; nothing enjoys him.'

"At the command of that Reality, O Gargi, the Sun and Moon hold their courses; Heaven and earth keep their positions; moments, hours, days and nights, fortnights and months, seasons and years—all follow their paths; rivers issuing from the snowy mountains flow on, some eastward, some westward, others in other directions.'

"He, O Gargi, who in this World, without knowing this Reality, offers oblations, performs sacrifices, practices austerities, even though for many thousands of years, gains little: his offerings and practices are perishable. He, O Gargi, who departs this life without knowing the Imperishable, is pitiable. But he, O Gargi, who departs this life knowing this, is Wise."

"This Reality, O Gargi, is unseen but is the Seer, is unheard but is the Hearer, is unthinkable but is the 'thinker', is unknown but is the Knower. There is no seer but he, there is no hearer but he, there is no thinker but he, there is no knower but he. In *Akshara*, verily, O Gargi, the ether is woven, warp and woof."

Hearing these words from Yajnavalkya, Gargi again looked at the assembled *Brahmins* and said, "Revered *Brahmins*, well may you feel blest if you get off with bowing before him! No one will defeat Yajnavalkya, expounder of the Truth of *Brahman*."



Yajnavalkya answering the questions of Gargi

The Story of Upakosala

Chandogya Upanishad, 4.10

Upakosala was the son of one Kamala. He dwelt as a *brahmacharin* with Satyakama Jabala, living with and studying from Satyakama for twelve years. At the end of his study, when he was about to leave the house of Satyakama he was not allowed to depart. He became very sad when he came to know that all his friends were allowed to go.

The wife of Satyakama was very kind towards Upakosala, and she pleaded with her husband to allow Upakosala to go home like the rest of his disciples, but Satyakama not only refused to do so but also went off on a journey. At this point Upakosala was so sad and sick at heart that he could not eat. The teacher's wife treated him with tender affection, offered him food, but to no avail. She kept insisting that he must take food otherwise he would not survive. At last the boy cried out to her saying, "O mother, my heart is still so impure; I am too unhappy to eat!"

Satyakama knew that Upakosala had not yet learned all that was necessary for him and was not ready to lead the life of a householder as per *dharma*. Upakosala too was aware that his was not an academic failure, but rather one of interior disposition. He kept saying to the wife of Satyakama that in him there were many desires which tend towards many things and he was filled with those. Upakosala understood that the desires may not be negative or foolish, yet they pull one in many directions, whirling one around and confusing one's mind and consuming all of one's life energies. Only when the mind is fixed on the One can the many be safely attended to. Upakosala kept aspiring for attaining this oneness with the One.

One day he heard a voice from the sacred fire *Brahman* or *Agni* saying to him, "This life is *Brahman*, the sky is *Brahman*, Bliss is *Brahman*, know thou *Brahman*!"

To this Upakosala replied, "I know that life is *Brahman*, but that the sky is *Brahman* or that Bliss is *Brahman* I do not know."

Again came the voice from out of the 'Fire', this time explaining that by 'Sky' was meant the 'Lotus of the Heart', wherein dwells *Brahman*, and that by "Bliss" was meant the "Bliss of *Brahman*". "Both" said the voice, "refer to *Brahman*", and continuing it taught Upakosala thus, "Earth, food, fire, Sun — all these that you worship — are forms of *Brahman*. He who is seen in the Sun — that One Am I. He who dwells in the east, in the north, in the west, and in the south, he who dwells in the Moon, in the stars, and in water—that One Am I. He who dwells in the sky and makes the lightning his home—that One also Am I. Know well the true nature of the World that it may never do you harm."

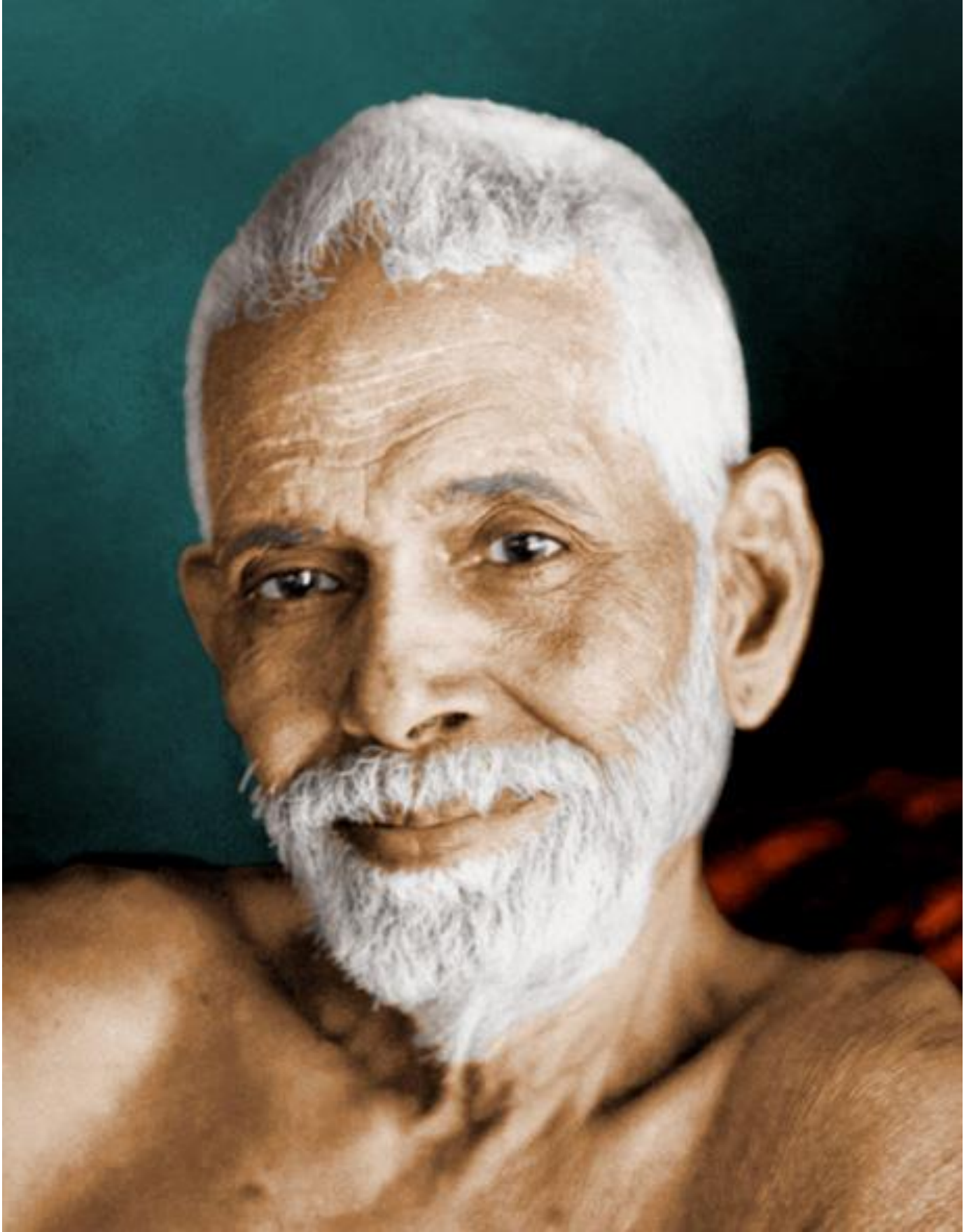
Thereupon the fire, which had been only an earthly fire with which to prepare sacrifices, assumed a new aspect and became the Lord Himself. The earth was transformed; life was transformed; the Sun, the Moon, the stars, the lightning—everything was transformed, and deified. And thus it was that to Upakosala the true nature of all things was revealed.

In due time Satyakama returned home. When he saw Upakosala, he said, "My son, your face shines like one who knows *Brahman*. Who has taught you?" "Beings other than men" replied Upakosala. Then said Satyakama, "My son, what you have learned is true. True also is this that I teach you now. Lo, to him who knows it shall no evil cling, even as drops of water cling not to the leaf of the lotus. He who glows in the depths of your eyes — that is *Brahman*; that is the Self of yourself. He is the Beautiful One, he is the Luminous One. In all the Worlds, forever and ever, he shines!"

Thus saying, Satyakama explains to Upakosala more about the *Brahman* and finally declares him as a worthy disciple of his.



Again came the voice from out of the 'Fire', this time explaining that by 'Sky' was meant the 'Lotus of the Heart', wherein dwells *Brahman*, and that by "Bliss" was meant the "Bliss of *Brahman*".





SRI ARUNACHALESWARA : The Holy Hill and the Divine Temple

The Divinity of Arunachala

Sri Bhagavan removes the last traces of devotees' doubts about the divinity of the Holy Hill of Arunachala.

The call of Arunachala brought Sri Bhagavan to Arunachala. He surrendered completely to His Lord, never leaving His abode. For Him, the Hill was not an ordinary Hill, but a manifestation of Lord Siva. It was His home; His Spiritual Father had pulled Him here as He had pulled Sages and Saints from time immemorial.

Many devotees who came to Sri Bhagavan could not understand in the beginning how a hill of mud and stones can be called the manifestation of Lord Siva. They had doubts, and Sri Bhagavan patiently cleared them by giving appropriate answers to suit the understanding of the devotee.

The following are answers from Sri Bhagavan to remove some of the doubts of His devotees. The devotee Sulaiman Samuel Cohen records in his book that Ramakrishna Swami, a long-time resident disciple who served Sri Bhagavan fervently and faithfully, asked Sri Bhagavan the meaning of '*Twaiyarunachala Sarvam*', the second stanza in Five Stanzas to Sri Arunachala (*Arunachala Pancharatnam*).

Sri Bhagavan explained it in detail:

The Universe is like a painting on a screen, the screen being the Red Hill, Arunachala. That which rises and sinks is made up of what it rises from. The finality of the Universe is the God Arunachala. Meditating on Him or on the Seer, the Self, there is a mental vibration 'I' to which all are reduced. Tracing the source of 'I', the primal 'I-I' alone remains over, and it is inexpressible. The seat of Realization is within and the seeker cannot find it as an object outside him. That seat is Bliss and is the Core of all beings. Hence it is called the Heart. The only useful purpose of the present birth is to turn within and realize it. There is nothing else to do.

— *Guru Ramana*

Once a doubt arose in devotee Sri Devaraja Mudaliar, a government pleader, who raised various questions about the various statements made in *Arunachala Mahatmya* (The Glory of Arunachala).

Sri Devaraja Mudaliar referred to "*The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi*", particularly to the verse:

"I ordain that residence within a radius of three *Yojanas* of this Hill shall by itself suffice to burn off all defects and affect the union with the Supreme even in the absence of initiation."

Bhagavan smilingly turned to Mudaliar and said, 'Mudaliar! This is the verdict from the Supreme Court itself. We cannot do anything but accept and obey it!' Bhagavan referred to Lord Siva as the 'Supreme Court' and this pleased the lawyer devotee!

— *Moments Remembered*

Devotee Lucia Osborne, wife of Sri Arthur Osborne, records in the book, '*The Silent Power*' that when mention was made one day of the tank adjoining *Sri Ramanasramam* (Palakottu) being called *Agastya Thirtam*, Sri Bhagavan was asked if the Sage *Agastya* ever visited the Hill. Sri Bhagavan remarked, "Yes, of course, everyone must come here eventually," meaning that everyone must eventually return to the source — Arunachala. Even Goddess had to come to Arunachala, to do *tapas* and finally merge with Her Lord Arunachala.

The intimate devotee Dr. Hafiz Syed, wrote that most of the time Sri Bhagavan sat silently transforming the Hearts and 'minds' of those who were privileged to be near Him. Once he asked Sri Bhagavan, "Why should anyone attach any particular importance to this Hill?"

Dr. T. N. Krishnaswamy, a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan, spent all of his spare time with Sri Bhagavan. He records what Sri Bhagavan once told him:

The whole Hill is Sacred. It is Siva Himself. Just as we identify ourselves with a body, so Siva has chosen to identify Himself with this Hill. Arunachala is pure Wisdom (*jnana*) in the form of a Hill. It is out of compassion to those who seek Him that He has chosen to reveal Himself in the form of a Hill visible to the eye. The seeker will obtain guidance and solace by staying near this Hill.

— *Arunachala Ramana*

Occasionally, when devotees asked Sri Bhagavan about the greatness of the Hill, He would sit in silence. These exhibitions of *mouna* [silence] were answers to their questions. At other times, when He was more willing to talk, He would tell the devotees scriptural stories of the greatness of Arunachala.

Sri Annamalai Swami reminisced about his days with Bhagavan in the following way: The greatness of this Hill is spoken by different people in many different ways. In the *Puranas* it is said that inside of this Arunachala, is in the form of a cave. And also it is said that many *siddhas* and ascetics live in this cave. *Guru Namasivayar* has sung about the greatness of the Hill, in one of his verses he says that the Arunachala Hill summons those who are intensively practising *jnana-tapas* [austerities meant to bring about wisdom].

Once, when Professor G.V. Subbaramayya was walking with Sri Bhagavan on the Hill, the sky was clouded, so they forgot the passing of time. Roaming here and there, they were delayed. Sri Bhagavan remarked, "This Hill is like my own home."

— *Sri Ramana Reminiscences*

Professor K. Swaminathan writes:

When an earnest devotee took the liberty of challenging Sri Bhagavan and asked, 'Bhagavan! I do not want any metaphysical arguments. Give me some tangible evidence. Is there a God? Can you show me God?' Sri Bhagavan gave a broad smile and said, 'What else do you think it is?' pointing His hand towards the Holy Hill, Arunachala.

— *Editorial in The Mountain Path, July 1988*

Once while Sri Bhagavan was telling His devotees about the greatness of the Holy Hill of Arunachala, Sri Annamalai Swami who was there reported Bhagavan's words:

This Hill is not which was formed at certain time and which will be destroyed at some other time. It is *Swayambhu Lingam*. The word lingam can be divided into '*ling*' means union, '*gam*' means 'that which forms'. There are many other meanings for the word such as God, Atman, form, and Siva. This Hill is not really on the earth. All the heavenly bodies are attached to it. The name of which is both arising and subsiding is Lingam.

While Bhagavan was reminiscing in this way, He commented on some other *Puranic* stories. The stories in the *Puranas* say that the God collects the dust of the feet of His devotees in a box. Then, wrapping the dust in a silk, He is said to do puja to it. He does this to show that He is the devotee of His devotees. He says, 'I praise him who praises Me in this World.'

— *Living by the Words of Bhagavan*

Arunachala Ramana remains in the Hearts of His devotees, giving solace and removing their doubts. With His Grace, He guides them on the path to the Final Goal of Life: Freedom from misery and Ultimate Happiness.

To be with Arunachala Ramana and to think of Him, one should have His Grace.



"Arunachala Stambha" — the Infinite Column of Light

The Glory of Arunachala is spoken of in hoary Sanskrit texts like *Skanda Mahapurana*, *Siva Rahasya*, *Siva Mahapurana* and *Skanda Upapurana*, and in Tamil texts like *Arunachala Mahatmyam*. According to them, Lord Brahma, the Creator and Lord Vishnu, the Sustainer came into existence from a tiny part of the Effulgence of Lord Siva, but forgot their Source, and became egoistic with each claiming supremacy over the other. Then, Lord Siva rose as a "*Stambha*", an Infinite Column of Light between them. Humbled by the fact that they could neither find the column's top nor its base, they then prayed for Grace.

Then, at their behest, the "*Stambha*" — Lord Siva — took the Form of this Mountain called 'Arunachala', 'Arunadri', 'Arunagiri' and 'Sonadri' in Sanskrit, and 'Annamalai', or the 'Unattainable,' in Tamil. Since then, this Effulgent Column of Light in the form of the Holy Hill, has been worshipped by the ninety-six previous manifestations of Lord Brahma, the Creator. This means that ninety-six dissolutions had already taken place, which in fact, is in consonance with the Geological finding that put the age of Arunachala as 3.8 billion years.

* * *

It was the Sacred Maha Sivaratri night of 1982! Every *Maha Sivaratri* has been very special for me. As is the Sacred Night of the *Karthigai Deepam*. For on these two nights, I have seen and felt shimmering silver waves flowing from the Holy Hill, spreading out and engulfing everything. It was my practice to join a group of young visitors and residents and start *Giripradakshina* between 8 and 9 p.m. The aim was to be on the *Giripradakshina* path at the stroke of midnight and look at the Sacred Mountain, at the same moment — '*yaamatthu*' — when according to mythology, the Column of Light turned into the Mountain of Stillness!

That year was very special, as the children of '*Ramana Bala Kendra*' had visited from Bangalore. I had been connected with '*Ramana Bala Kendra*' from its inception and every child of that batch was very dear to my Heart. They had studied the Life of Sri Bhagavan for a whole year. In order to make this learning process come alive, from time to time, the children were encouraged to enact the different scenes from His Life. These scenes were finally put together as an hour-long play called '*The Ramana Evening*'.

That *Maha Sivaratri*, as part of the celebration of *Ramana Bala Kendra*'s first annual day, the children were hosted by the Ashram. After dinner, all the devotees gathered in the Old Dining Hall for the play being enacted by the children. They acted so well that they lost themselves in their roles and brought before our eyes the scenes of Sri Bhagavan's birth, His childhood, His Enlightenment at Madurai and His arrival at Holy Arunachala. It culminated with Sri Bhagavan embracing the Lord in the form of *Arunachala Linga* inside the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Temple and declaring: "*Father! I have come at Thy bidding. Thy Will be done!*"



Arunachala Stamba — Huge of Column of Light blessing Lord Maha Vishnu and Lord Brahma

A few hours later, around eleven, the children bade us goodbye boarded their bus back to Bangalore. It was an emotional parting and there were tears in my eyes too! It was in this heightened emotional state that I started for the *Giripradakshina* — this time all alone. In those days, I used to go round the Holy Hill almost every night. It took me only a little more than two hours to complete the circumambulation. I would walk chanting the 108 verses of Sri Bhagavan's "*Marital Garland of Letters*", repeating its refrain after every couplet. Usually, I would complete singing this *Bakthi* soaked hymn three times by the time I re-entered the Ashram premises.

That sacred night, perhaps, after that uplifting time with children re-living Sri Bhagavan's Glorious Life, my chanting was surcharged with a sublime spiritual fervour. By the time I reached a bend in the road near Adi Annamalai temple, from where I could see the tip of the Temple's tower, I was chanting the hymn for the second time. I distinctly remember even now, as if it happened just yesterday, that I was singing verse 32 at that time: "சூது செய்தென்னைச் சோதியாது இனி உன் ஜ்யோதி உருக் காட்டு, அருணாசலா!" "*Arunachala! Do not test me with Your deceptive tricks. Instead, graciously reveal your Real Form of Supreme Effulgent Light so that I may directly perceive You!*" At that time, I was looking at the tip of the Temple tower, with the Holy Mountain in the background.

Lo! A huge Effulgent Column of Light appeared, piercing through the sky above and boring down into the Earth! Everything else disappeared! My Heart pulsated with a Sacred Presence which affirmed in Silence that what was being revealed was the same Infinite Column of Light that has been described as the very Origin of Arunachala! Without beginning and end, enveloping all things of the Universe in its Brilliance — below and above — encompassing the Earth and the Skies!

How can one see that which is Limitless? No eyes of the flesh could have beheld such a sight! Therefore, I can never say, "I saw the Light!" Nor could the 'mind' have envisioned such Glory! Yet, Grace revealed IT at that moment and thus the impossible became possible. The Divine Vision bestowed on the Great Gods — Brahma and Vishnu — had been bestowed on 'me', without my asking! As I had not sought it, there was no thought about IT until the very moment of that Illimitable Blessing. I cannot say how long the Divine Vision lasted, for, "'Time' was not when the 'Light' was!" Untold Bliss coursed through me! And, after IT disappeared, as seamlessly as IT had appeared !

Not able to contain my exhilaration, I almost ran all the way home to my mother — Nagalakshmi Ammal, my unfailing guide and best friend in my inner spiritual journey. I softly called out to her in the manner that had been arrived at by us mutually, so as not to disturb my father. She opened the door and let me in. We both lay down, cuddling together and I softly whispered in her ears what all had taken place with great excitement. She answered laconically, "*Hum, hum, so what? Now, what of it? Go to the Ashram and continue with your 'Maha Sivaratri'*" night routine. Give up thinking about it." I felt completely deflated and discomfited. Was not the Divine Vision a tremendous and rarest of the rare one? Had it not been a Great Blessing beyond imagination? Why was my mother pooh poohing it?

I asked her outright. My mother replied with supreme love and compassion, "Ganesa! In your exhilaration, if you narrate this incident to others, some will disbelieve you and others will glorify you. You will be disappointed by the former and this will water down the magnitude of the Glory that you witnessed. If they praise you, it will bloat your ego and make you feel that you are great on account of it. Have you come here to glorify your ego? Or glorify *Guru Ramana*? Yes, the Divine Vision is indeed auspicious. But, has not Sri Bhagavan told us that all visions are only in the 'mind'? So, do not think about it any further." I asked her, "Mother! Then, why did it happen to 'me' who is lesser than the dust of Arunachala's Feet?" She gave me a 'pat' on my back and replied: "It is just like this: Arunachala Ramana is giving you a pat on your back to encourage you by emphasising, 'My, child! You are on the right track. March ahead, without turning back!'"

Hail Arunachala!

Hail Arunachala Jyoti'!

Hail *Sat-Guru Ramana*!

Hail *Mathru Tattva* Mother Nagalakshmi Ammal!

* * *

"Lingashtakam"

One night in the 1970s, after completing all my Ashram work, when I was doing *Giripradakshina* alone as was my daily wont, I heard someone chanting "*Lingashtakam*" in a stentorian voice behind me. Only the previous evening, I had heard a portion of it being chanted inside a house in the town where I had to go on Ashram work by bicycle. I was mesmerised by it and longed to listen to all of it.

You can now imagine how thrilled I was to hear it again that night while doing *Giripradakshina* around holy Arunachala! The person who was chanting it overtook me and continued walking. He had a perfect Yogic body, lithe and as if chiselled out! Wanting to see his face I started walking faster. But to no avail, for the Yogi walked at an even brisker pace, And, on reaching Adi Annamalai, disappeared into one of its streets.

I literally ran the rest of the distance and reached home at the dead of the night. Waking up my mother, who was also my *upaguru*, I narrated the whole incident. My mother was ecstatic on hearing about it and exclaimed, "Who else was He but Lord Arunachaleshwara Himself! Is not one of His names "*Asutoshi*", meaning 'one who satisfies the devotee's smallest of desires'!"

* * *



Lord Siva with a Perfect Yogic body

"Lingashtakam"

The "Lingashtakam" is one of the most popular "Ashtakams" (a *Stotram* — a prayer — with 8 verses) dedicated to Lord Siva which praises Him in the abstract "Lingam" form.

I bow before that Lingam, which is the eternal Siva, which is worshipped by Brahma, Vishnu and other Devas, which is pure and resplendent, And which destroys sorrows of birth.

I bow before that Lingam, which is the Eternal Siva, which is worshipped by great Sages and Devas, which destroyed the God of Love, which showers mercy; and, which destroyed the pride of Ravana.

I bow before that Lingam, which is the Eternal Siva, which is anointed by perfumes, which leads to growth of Wisdom; and, which is worshipped by Sages, Devas and Asuras.

I bow before that Lingam, which is the Eternal Siva, which is ornamented by gold and great jewels, which shines with the snake being with It; and, which destroyed the Yagna of Daksha.

I bow before that Lingam, which is the Eternal Siva, which is adorned by sandal paste and saffron; which wears the garland of lotus flowers, and which can destroy accumulated sins.

I bow before that Lingam, which is the Eternal Siva, which is served by Gods and other beings, which is the doorway for devotion and good thought; and, which shines like billions of Suns.

I bow before that Lingam, which is the Eternal Siva, which is surrounded by eight petals; which is the prime reason of all riches, and which destroys eight types of poverty.

I bow before that Lingam, which is the Eternal Siva, which is worshipped by the Teacher of Gods, which is worshipped by the best of Gods; which is always worshipped by the flowers, from the Garden of Gods; which is the Eternal Abode, and which is the Ultimate Truth.

Any one who chants this Holy Octet of the Lingam, In the Holy Presence of Lord Siva, would in the end reach the World of Siva; and, keep Him company.

"Arunachala Mahatmya"

A passage from *Arunachala Mahatmya* (the Glory of Arunachala) was read out on 5th March 1938 at the Old Hall. It is related to *Pangunni*, a lame Sage who had his legs made whole by the Grace of Sri Arunachala.

Sri Bhagavan then related the story of a man called *Kuppu Iyer* whom he had seen when staying in Gurumurtham: "Kuppu Iyer's legs were severely deformed and he could not walk. He was once on the *Girivalam* path, sitting and dragging himself along on his way to Vettavalam,. An old man suddenly appeared before him and told him, 'Get up and walk. Why do you move around like this?' Without any volition on his part, Kuppu Iyer's body stood up and he found himself walking normally! After walking a short distance, he turned around to look properly at the 'stranger' who had miraculously made him walk. But he could not find anyone. He narrated the incident to all those who were surprised to see him walk normally for the first time in their lives. Any old man in the town can bear witness to Kuppu Iyer regaining the use of his legs."

"Thiruvoodal"

Thiruvoodal Festival is celebrated in the Tamil month of *Thai*, approximately around January 16th during '*Pongal*' which has to do with the apparent movement of the Sun from the southern to the northern hemisphere. Legend has it that the Lord — in accordance with a promise given to Mother Parvati — appears on this Holy Day of *Uttarayana* to dance on one foot when the Sun rises.

The word '*thiru*' signifies deity, sacred, holy and prosperity, and the word '*voodal*' actually means 'tiff' or 'petty quarrel'. It represents the friction that invariably happens between the male and female in an intimate relationship.

The '*Thiruvoodal* Festival' is enacted by the *utsava murthis* of Lord Siva and Mother Parvati to convey to Their devotees that Their tiffs should last only for a brief while and not be prolonged as the reason they have been brought together is to live together in Bliss. It takes place inside the compound of Sri *Arunachaleswarar* Temple, on the streets delineating the perimeter of the temple, and on the *Girivalam* path itself. '*Thiruvoodal*' Festival is regarded in such high esteem that one of the perimeter roads has earned the special name Thiruvoodal Street.

Sage Bringi

Once, in order to give *darshan* to the Sage, Bringi, Lord Siva set off on a *Giripradakshina* of Arunachala. This enraged Mother Parvati who was angry with the Sage for his refusal to worship Her. Mother Parvati's anger created a *Maya Swarupa* from which emerged thieves who stripped Lord Siva of His ornaments and clothes, even as He was performing *Giripradakshina*. During the '*Thiruvoodal*' Festival, this stripping of Lord Siva is enacted yearly upon the Idol that is being carried around the Hill at the same spot on the *Giripradakshina* path.

Lord Siva then sent His emissary Sage Sundarar to assuage Mother Parvati with His message: "In order to satisfy the desire of My devotees, I have taken a vow to appear in this Form so that they may worship Me to their Heart's content. It is in accordance with this vow, that I have given *darshan* to Bringi." He further tells his emissary Sage Sundarar to convey to Mother Parvati; "You know Mother Shakti can never be separated from Lord Siva in just the way the mud pot can never be separated from the mud. You can't say, "Give the pot without the mud. Likewise, Lord Siva and Mother Shakti are never separate and can never be separated. It is only in keeping with the understanding of devotees that I am appearing in this Form. Recognising this, my dear Parvati, call off this tiff."

Sage Bringi considered Lord Siva as the ultimate Source of all Existence. He was such an ardent votary of Lord Siva, that he worshipped Him to the exclusion of every other deity, including Mother Parvati! To the extent that during his daily worship, he would circumambulate only the Lord and ignore Mother Shakti, with a flashing spark of arrogance.

Wanting to enlighten the Sage, the Divine Couple then assumed the unique form of "*Ardhanarishvara*" — Shiva and Shakti in one unified and inseparable Form. Even then, the egotistic Sage took the form of a bee — '*bringa*' is Sanskrit for bee — and tried to pierce through the form of '*Ardhanarishvara*' so that he could go around just Lord Siva's half of it.

In every human body the static force of Lord Siva constitutes the bone and the skin, and the dynamic force of Mother Shakti triggers the blood and flesh. Goddess Shakti, being the Power as the name indicates, pulled out her energy from Bringi's body. Now he was a mere skeleton, unable to even stand. The Lord pacified Mother Parvati and gave the Sage one more leg to stand on. The Sage soon realized his folly and understood that Life becomes complete only by the "fusion of both Grace and Force" which are not contradictory but complementary to each other.



Lord Arunachaleswara and Mother Apeethakuchambal

I used to spend hours with T.K.Sundaresa Iyer. Most of the time, he would be silent. He would sometimes take me around the Hill or up the Hill to Skandashram. On the rare occasions that he spoke, he would say things of tremendous interest. He once told me, "Ganesan, when I was with Sri Bhagavan, He once told me, '*Siddhapurushas*' living in Tiruvannamalai, elsewhere in India and around the World, all come to Arunachala to go around the Hill. Sometimes, they come in the Form of Light." Sri Bhagavan told TKS and some others that He had seen this Light and if one had true devotion, one could see this Light. TKS continued, "Many of us Old Devotees have seen that Light moving around Arunachala. Long for it, Ganesa, but do not expect and do not put a time frame just long for It with humility and a prayerful attitude. Rest assured, It will reveal Itself."

I would like to share with you that I have seen this Light not once, but three times.

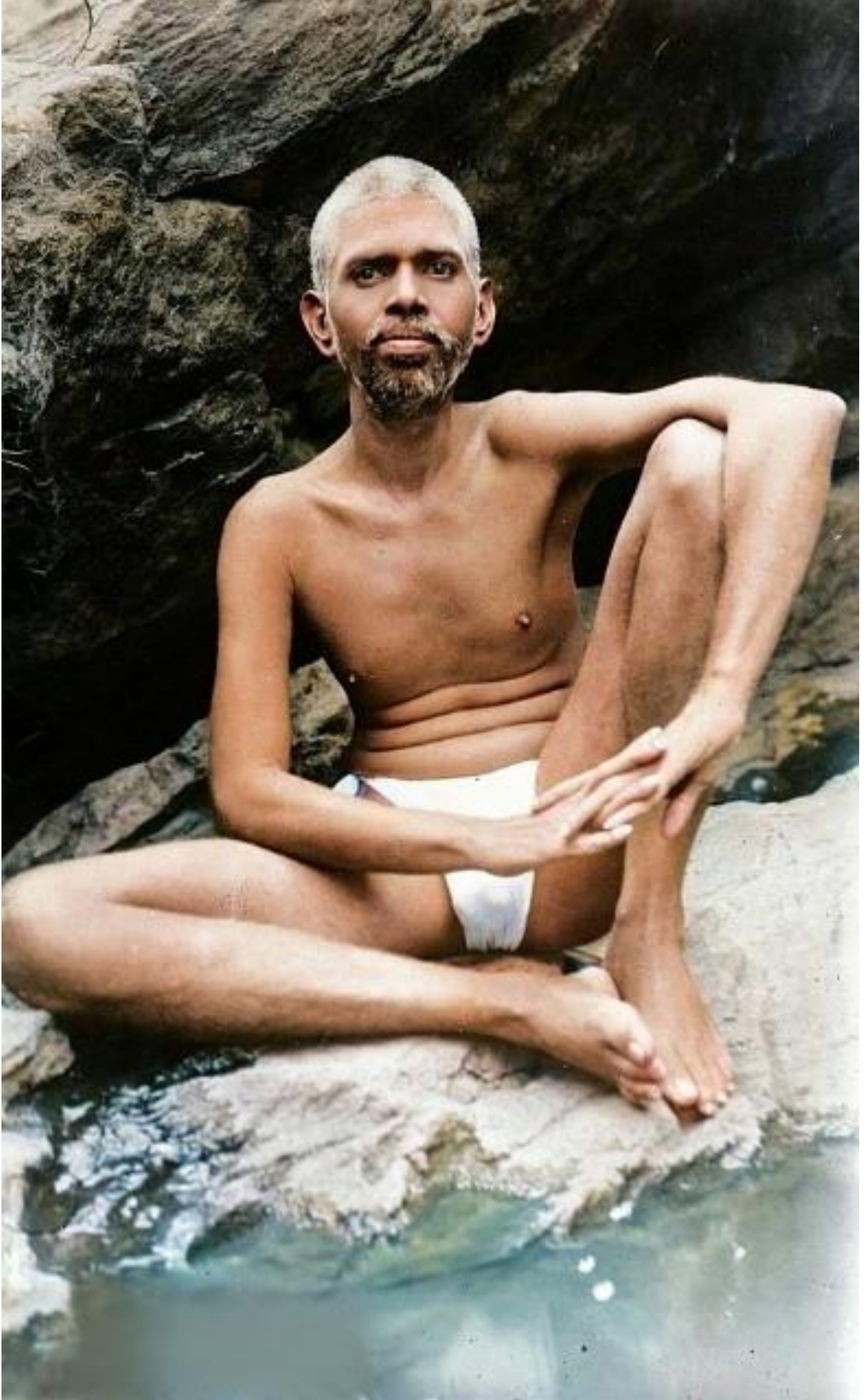
The first time, I was alone. The second time, I was with a group of Japanese devotees. On sharing with them about this light, they sincerely asked, "Can we also see it?" I looked, and there it was! All of them saw it and all of us prostrated before it. The third time was in 2003. It was around 6.30 p.m. when I was going round Arunachala with a group of sixty devotees from Madurai, Nochur Ramana and a few others. As we were approaching the "*Panchamukha Darshan*" spot, we decided to sit on a rock. As we sat, the Madurai devotees, realizing that it was getting late for dinner at the Ashram, took leave and proceeded on their way.

Sitting on that rock, I suddenly remembered that *T.R. Ramachandran*, a close friend of mine and Editor of "*Tattva Loka*", used to chant the "*Shivopasana Mantra*" (...*sadyo jaatam prapadyaami sadyo jaataaya vai namo namah...*) whenever we sat on this rock. I asked Nochur Ramana whether he could chant that. After listening to his sublime chanting, we prostrated and got up!

And as we looked up, there it was, that Divine Light for all of us to see. We all felt blessed!



With the first White Peacock



Sri Bhagavan seated at Skandashram behind the 'spring' in the middle of the Rock that He touched and water gushed out

Sri Viswanatha Swami Reminiscences

In the 1960's, visitors coming to stay in the Ashram were very rare. But, after the release of *The Mountain Path* in 1964, spiritual aspirants started coming. As I was given the role of receptionist by the Ashram President, I had the opportunity to move closely with them, arrange their stay in the Ashram, take them up and around the Holy Hill, and accompany them to the Big Temple. There was a steady increase in young seekers flocking to the Ashram, especially from abroad.

I was given a tiny room near the office and under the Ashram water tank, close to the entrance to the kitchen. Those young aspirants who had come to stay in the Ashram for a few days and who were keen to learn and practise Sri Bhagavan's Direct Teaching of *Atma Vichara*, would come to me and we would sit on the steps leading to the entrance to the kitchen discussing Sri Bhagavan's Teaching.

Once, while wanting to emphasise the rational aspect of Sri Bhagavan's Teaching, I brought in, for comparison, incidents that took place in the lives of other well-known Saints and how these had, in my opinion, glaring flaws. "For instance," I said, "In the life of Moses, when he led the Israelites across the desert, they became very thirsty and appealed to Moses to find water to drink. Moses was then resting in the shadow of a huge rock. In response to their plea, Moses tapped the rock with his staff and water started gushing out from the middle of it. All of them drank it and their thirst was quenched. This is the story according to the Bible." Pausing dramatically, I continued, "This is why even good devotees dislike the ancient texts. They could have plainly written, 'Moses pierced the earth with his staff and a spring came bubbling up.' That is believable. But water from the middle of a rock in a desert? How is that possible?" Before I went any further, I felt a firm hand on my back. It was my most revered Viswanatha Swami! Even though he did not utter a word then, I knew from the pressure of his hand on me, that he wanted me to get up and follow him.

He took me up the Hill, straight to Skandashram, all the way, without a word. He then led me to a big rock there and made me bend down and stretch my hand underneath the rock. Wonder of wonders, I felt cool water flowing from the middle of the huge rock onto my upturned palm! Thrilled by this, I looked up at him. Holding me in a steady, affectionate gaze, he said, "Ganesan! Be very careful while talking about Sages and Saints who lived in the past or are living in the present!" He continued, "When Sri Bhagavan came down from Skandashram to live here, I was enthusiastic, naive and just as excited to meet young spiritual aspirants — like you are now!" Once, after breakfast, when I was talking to a small group about a particular Saint. I remarked how illogical it was for that Saint to have said what he said, Suddenly, I felt the pressure of a soft palm on my back. I

turned and saw it was Sri Bhagavan. He started walking silently and I followed him. He took me to Skandashram as it happened to you today, and made me bend down and feel the water flowing from the middle of the rock. Then he cautioned me, “Viswanatha! Be careful and respectful while talking about Sages and Saints — past or present!” After a few moments, He elaborated: “In the early days of our stay at Skandashram, the Mountain spring you see underneath to dry up completely during very hot and long summers. Visitors rarely came up. But those few who stayed with me, had to go down to *Mulaippal Theertham* further down on the Hill and carry up water for their use. Two of the *sadhus* who always stayed there, fretted on seeing more visitors come up: “Oh, no! We now have to go down and get more water!” Hearing their frustration, I responded, “Why? There should be a spring of water here itself!” Then, I took them and put my hand in a small cleft in the middle of the rock. From that moment onwards, there has been no dearth for water at Skandashram!”

I listened spell bound and then, fell at the feet of Sri Viswanatha Swami and begged his forgiveness. He embraced me, gave a benign smile full of Grace and continued, “Listen to another interesting teaching Sri Bhagavan imparted to me here, right where we are sitting. He called me one day and said, ‘Viswanatha! When you take youngsters to the top of Arunachala, have you noticed the two Sacred Feet of Father Arunachala engraved on the top-most spot?’ On indicating that I had not, Sri Bhagavan told me, “When you go there next, make sure that you do *puja* to Them. Arunachala, as you know, is ‘அடிமுடி காணா, அண்ணாமலை?’ the single, solid, complete Divinity without distinction between head and feet. It is to demonstrate this Truth that Arunachala’s Feet are engraved on top of His Head. While His head is at the foot of the Hill, inside the temple!”

Sri Viswanatha Swami then concluded, “Ganesan! Next time you take youngsters to the top, make sure that you take some offering and do *puja* to Arunachala’s Sacred Feet just as Sri Bhagavan told me to. Then, chant *Aksharamanimalai*, (*The Marital Garland of Letters*) and distribute the *prasad* to all who came with you”

In the 1970’s, young spiritual aspirants started flocking at the Ashram in large numbers — from across India as well as from abroad. I was exceptionally happy meeting with them and sharing with them the Glory and Grandeur of Sri Bhagavan and His Teachings. This meant not just talking to them but also taking them to places in Arunachala that Bhagavan had stayed in and been to – *Patala Linga*, *Gurumurtham*, *Virupaksha Cave*, *Skandashram*, the *Seven Springs* and to the peak, to mention those of importance..

The first time I went up to the peak after Sri Viswanatha Swami shared with me the significance of the Lord Arunachaleswara's Engraved Feet, I did *puja* to Them as he advised me. After offering *idlis* and bananas, I was about to begin chanting *Akshramana Malai* when I noticed a thick bush bearing beautiful and fragrant Hill Jasmine flowers! (There are three types of jasmine – the common garden variety, the Forest Jasmine and the highly regarded Hill Jasmine.) I was thrilled! To me, this was a sign that Holy Arunachala had blessed me to complete the *puja* with the ritual offering of His own flowers. After that, every time I went to the top, alone and also accompanied by other devotees, the bush would generously have 4 or 5 flowers for me to offer to Arunachala's Sacred Feet.

Once, on the way to the peak with a group of seekers from across the World, I narrated to them about my first *puja* that culminated with the Hill Jasmine flowers. When we reached the top, everyone was interested to see the bush and the flowers. But to their disappointment, there was not a single flower on the bush. Feeling guilty, I went straight to the Holy Feet, fell on Them and cried, "Please forgive me, oh, Arunachala! Pardon me for flaunting my ego!" I was shedding copious tears, when two of the group, both Westerners, who were still going around the bush searching for flowers, suddenly shouted: "All of you come here! Look at the miracle of Arunachala! Come, come!" When we all ran to the bush, to our astonishment we saw five or six fully blossomed Hill Jasmine flowers, freshly plucked and placed on a large plucked leaf! Prostrating to the jasmine bush, we took the flowers, rushed to the Holy Feet and prayerfully offered them! All of us were ecstatic!

After the excitement over the mysterious and miraculous appearance of the flowers had abated, the two young Westerners confessed, "When you were narrating about your experience with the jasmine flowers on our way up, we both wondered if such a wondrous thing would ever happen to us. Yes, that it can happen to a ripe seeker like Ganesan we could accept. But, what about immature ones like us? Ganesan! It seems Arunachala heard us! And made us the ones who discovered the plucked flowers first! The sheer thrill of it is still giving us goosebumps, Ganesan!"

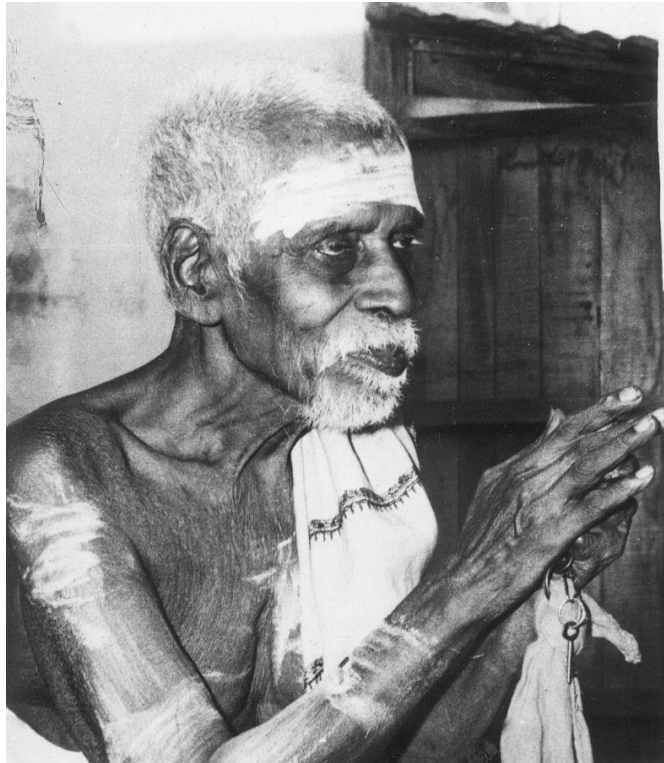
ANNAMALAIKKU AROHARA !

* * *



***Sri Muruganar and other senior Old Devotees used to affirm:
"This is how Sri Bhagavan's 'Glance of Grace' pushed in our mind into our Heart!"***

Old Devotees



*Sri Venkatesa Shastri (known as 'Sastrigal Mama'
– refer to page 93 in the book 'Ramana Periya Puranam')*

Droplets from the Cascade of Sri Ramana Jnana

“புணர்ந்த பாவமெலாம்பரி பூரண
முணர்ந்த ஞானி விழிபட வோடுமே.”

- சசிவன்னபோதம்

(பதசாரம்.) தனது சங்கற்பத்திலுண்டான ஜீவ ஈஸ்வர ஜகத்து முதலிய கற்பித மனைத்தினின்கூடுதலைப் ‘புணர்ந்தபாவமெலாம்’ எனவும், அச்சங்கற்பந் தன்னிற் கரைந்து யாவுந் தானாக விளங்குவதைப் ‘பரிபூரண முணர்ந்த ஞானி’ எனவும், இவ்விளக்கப்பார்வையாற் சகல கன்மமும் நசித்தலை விழி பட வோடும் எனவுங் கூறினார்.

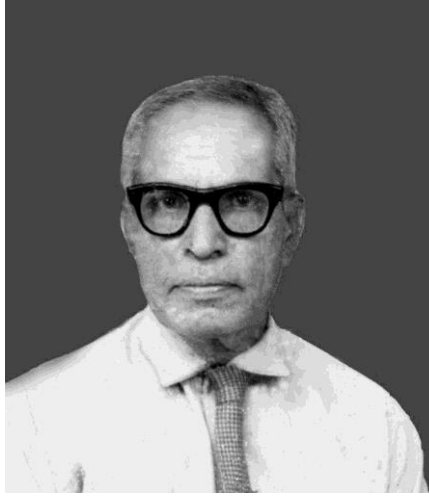
When Venkatesa Sastrigal, later known as ‘Sastrigal Mama’, first came to Skandashram after living many years in the deep South, he felt he would be looked upon as a ‘stranger’. But, no, at once recognised by Mother Alagammal! The lingering doubt whether Sri Bhagavan would recognise him, also vanished when Sri Bhagavan in reply to His mother’s question, “Does *Bhagavan* recognise this person who has just arrived?” answered, “I saw him and recognised him right away, even while he was climbing up! Is he not our Subbukutti’s son?” Sri Bhagavan’s recognising meant that His Grace had been bestowed on Venkatesa Sastri with “one look”.

The purpose of Venkatesa Sastri’s visit was to receive *Jnana* from Sri Bhagavan. Sastrigal Mama later used to say “Sri Bhagavan erased the sins of the devotees accrued through many, many births in just one moment, with a single Glance of Grace.” He remained with Sri Bhagavan for the rest of his life. There is something interesting to be noted here. Sri Bhagavan often used to speak highly of *Mathruthva*, the Greatness of the Mother Principle. Here, though *Jnana* was transmitted to Sastrigal Mama through a ‘single gaze’, the actual credit goes to the *Mathruthva* of his mother, Subbukutti!

Many more are the illustrious devotees who were blessed by Sri Bhagavan through his Glance of Grace! *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana treated all equally — *pundits*, scholars, ignorant and illiterate villagers, uncared for widows and the least of spiritual aspirants. And, He blessed them with the highest spiritual attainment of Inner Perfection. Many of them were those who were unrecognised, unnoticed and not referred to even by their names! Yet, the Fullness of His Grace flowed, unreservedly towards them. Like bees finding nectar, seekers are sure to benefit by reading about how they were transformed into fully “Blossomed Flowers”.

* * *

M.G. Shanmugam



M.G. Shanmugam, one of the early devotees of Sri Bhagavan, was so modest that he always refused to be drawn into the lime light! His book on the Tamil biography of Sri Bhagavan concluded with the early days of happenings at the present Ashram, that is, within 1930s. It is a pity that he did not complete it. Sri Bhagavan liked his version in Tamil so much that it is unfortunate no one persuaded him to complete it.

When I was fortunate to meet him, a few times, M.G. Shanmugam was not at all good in health. However, to please me he did give a few notes in Tamil on Sri Bhagavan, His teachings and his own observations on spiritual *sadhana* — which are now preserved in the Ashram archives — I quote a few passages.

* * *

"During my 24 years of personal association with Bhagavan, I have noted that He seldom preached elaborately. He would give hints which keen seekers had to absorb carefully and follow faithfully in their *sadhana*. By close observation of Him and His actions and from occasional words and terse expressions, one could definitely learn and safely follow His teachings.

"Sri Bhagavan once said categorically: 'For practicing *Atma Vichara* (Self Enquiry) every day is auspicious and every moment is good — no discipline is prescribed at all. Any time, anywhere it can be done, even without others noticing that you are doing it. 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 with ease simultaneously attend to other activities also. Besides, *Atma Vichara* being a purely internal movement one does not also distract others around; whereas, in *sadhanas* like *puja*, others do notice you. One-pointed perseverance alone is essential in Self-enquiry and that is done purely inwardly, all the time. Your attention on the Self within alone is essential. '

"Some of Bhagavan's personal instructions to me:

- (1) If you observe the breathing one-pointedly such attention will lead you spontaneously into *kumbhaka* (retention) — this is *Jnana Pranayama*.
- (2) The more you humble yourself, the better it is for you, In all ways.
- (3) By withdrawing the mind within, you can live anywhere and under any circumstances.
- (4) You should look upon the World only as a dream.
- (5) Do not allow your mind to be distracted by objective things and by thoughts. Except attending to your allotted duty — work in life, the rest of your time should be spent in *Atma Nishta* (meditation on the Self); Do not waste even a second in inattention, lethargy.
- (6) Do not cause even the slightest hindrance or disturbance to others. Also, do all your work yourself.
- (7) Both likes and dislikes should be equally discarded and eschewed.
- (8) With attention focused on the first person and on the Heart within, one should relentlessly practice 'Who am I?' When this is done one-pointedly, one's breathing will subside of itself. During such controlled practice, the mind might suddenly spring up; so, you have to vigilantly pursue the *Atma Vichara*: 'Who am I?'

To remain silent without thoughts is the 'Whole'!

To remain without thoughts is 'Nishta'!

To remain without thoughts is 'Jnana'!

To remain without thoughts is 'Moksha'!

To remain without thoughts is 'Sahaja'!

Therefore, the state without any trace of thoughts is the Final State of Fullness, indeed!"



From M.G. Shanmugam's personal diary (in Tamil) the following interesting incidents are gathered:

"When we were living at Darapuram and I was seven years old, I was initiated into *Linga puja*. Such traditional bringing up gradually involved me in the study of *shastras*(scriptures), *bhajans*, *saguna & nirguna dhyana* and regular *puja* three times a day. During this period I also had three *gurus*. I also came to the conviction that the highest human attainment was the state of *Jivanmukti*. I was at Tiruchengode during 1921-1925, and was studying in the college. When I was 18 years old, I fervently prayed that I should meet a *Jivanmukta* and receive his blessings.

"My prayers were soon answered! My father, a Police Officer, was transferred to Tiruvannamalai. I came to know of Bhagavan Ramana living there. I gave up my studies and rushed to Arunachala. While travelling in the train towards Tiruvannamalai, at Katpadi, I had a remarkable vision of Sri Bhagavan: thus my *Sat-Guru* came to me and absorbed me even before I could have His physical *darshan*!

"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: (i) 'When did you come' and (ii) '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 this serious deformity. How did Sri Bhagavan know about it? And, what an affectionate concern He showed! After Bhagavan enquired about it, my sense of inferiority about the defect totally disappeared.

More than these, 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 the one I have always cherished it as the first and foremost *Prasad* and blessing received from my *Sat-Guru*. That day, I understood the purport of the statement: "The *Sat-Guru* ever gives unasked !" That moment I knew I had been accepted into His Fold. This strong bond He allowed me to enjoy till His *Mahasamadhi* in 1950, and even after.

"Daily I would go to Him, by 2 in the afternoon and return home only at 8 p.m. My father, who was a staunch devotee, was instrumental in constructing, in a remarkably short time the Old Hall where Sri Bhagavan was to stay for more than twenty years. Sri Bhagavan would quote from *Ribhu Gita*, *Kaivalya Navaneeta*, *Jnana Vasistha* and other *Advaitic* texts and explain to me their greatness. All the while I was aware that, I was in the blissful presence of a *Brahmajnani* — so highly extolled in all our Scriptures.

"He was a *Sarvanja* (all-knower) ! I got many proofs of it, though I never demanded them. A daily pocket-money of three annas was given to me by my father. I bought for that amount *sambrani* (incense powder) which was burnt in the presence of Sri Bhagavan. One day I did not get the amount, so I could not buy the *sambrani*; I refrained from going to Sri Bhagavan. The next day when I went, Sri Bhagavan remarked, graciously: "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 Sri Bhagavan would be denied. We vented our grievance to Him; He gave me a benign smile. A few days after, strangely, the transfer order was cancelled! Apart from greatness of Sri Bhagavan's Presence and the tremendous Power of His Silence, I noticed the strange way the doubts in one's mind got answered through some one else present in the Hall. The doubt you had, somebody in the Hall would express to Sri 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?' Sri 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!

"After getting the approval of Sri Bhagavan — in the form of a nod — I was married in 1930. I came straight to Sri Bhagavan with my wife and Sri Bhagavan arranged a feast for the newly wedded couple — this was an extraordinary act of Grace! We stayed for two weeks. Sri Bhagavan also was gracious enough to be in a group photograph with my family. He was compassion incarnate. He knew I would be immensely pleased to be photographed, along with my newly wedded wife, with Him! Such a great *Brahma Nishta* coming down to my level of craving and arranging for a photo being taken. How Gracious!"



Outside Old Hall – M.G. Shanmugam seated to the right of Sri Bhagavan. To His left are seated Niranjanananda Swami and B.V.Narasimha Swami. Behind M.G.Shanmugam is his wife and to her right is his sister.

Sundarammal



"Sundarammal belonged to a wealthy Telugu family of Madras. She married young but lost her husband soon after. As a widow she continued to live at home, surrounded by the love of her parents and brothers. She rarely went out, and when she did, it was always with her father.

"One day, her father took her to the neighbouring temple to hear a talk given by a *sadhu*, who was a devotee of the Maharshi. He narrated to the audience – with religious fervor – details of how the Sage's spiritual transformation at the tender age of sixteen took place at Madurai, His disappearance from home, His resort to the Mountain of Arunachala and how serene His presence is, showering Peace and Bliss on all who visit his Ashram at the foot of the Holy Hill.

Sundarammal was deeply moved. She begged her father to allow her to accompany some pilgrims to Arunachala. He refused, but promised that he would soon take her there himself.

"But the promise was not fulfilled. Sundarammal passed the time thinking of Sri Ramana and praying to Him. She soon lost her appetite and was unable to sleep. Her father always had some especially urgent work which prevented him from taking her to Tiruvannamalai.

"One afternoon, about four o'clock, she seemed to see Sri Ramana coming down the Mountain and approaching her. 'Sundarammal, have no fear!' He said to her. 'It is I. Enough of this weeping and not eating or sleeping. Come, I am expecting you.' Her heart was filled with joy. Once more she appealed to her father, and once more he put off the pilgrimage to another day.

"Some weeks later, she was alone one night in her room, weeping and calling on the Maharshi. Then, quite worn out, she fell asleep. Suddenly, she felt a blow on her side and

awoke with a startle. It was about three o'clock in the morning. There was the Maharshi standing by the head of her cot.

'Come,' was all he said.

"She followed Him downstairs, crossed the hall and came out on the verandah. Hardly had she reached it when to her alarm she found herself alone. The Maharshi had disappeared. She sat down uneasily. Soon, a rickshaw appeared, and the rickshaw-puller asked, 'Is this Number 12, and are you Sundarammal? An old sadhu told me to come here and take you to the Bus Stand. Get in.' Sundarammal thought quite simply, 'It is Sri Bhagavan, the Maharshi,' and, got into the rickshaw.

"At the Bus Stand, she and the rickshaw-puller were both surprised not to find the old sadhu. However, she asked for the bus going to Tiruvannamalai and got in. Somewhere on the way, her bus passed another one from which someone alighted and then entered the Tiruvannamalai bus. 'Are you Sundarammal?' he asked. 'Yes, I am' she replied. 'Good. Sri Bhagavan has sent me to look for you.'

"In the evening, she reached Tiruvannamalai and retired for the night to one of the large halls reserved for pilgrims. She prepared a cake to offer to Sri Bhagavan and fell asleep full of joy. The next morning, she went to the Ashram and fell at the feet of Sri Bhagavan. 'Here you are at last. Did it take so long to reach me?' He said to her. Sundarammal felt blessed and was in ecstasy. She was in the immediate Presence of her *Sat-Guru* Ramana!

"Some days later, her brothers arrived, unable to understand how this child, who, by herself, had never set outside her home, could have managed to reach Tiruvannamalai. But, Sundarammal was so deeply absorbed in Sri Ramana's Presence that she never even noticed her brothers, either in the Hall or at midday in the dining hall.

Only in the evening were they able to approach her. They told her how upset everyone was at home and begged her to return. If she wanted, they would build her a hermitage in their garden. But nothing moved her, and the brothers even spoke of taking her home by force. 'If you do, I will throw myself into a well,' she said.

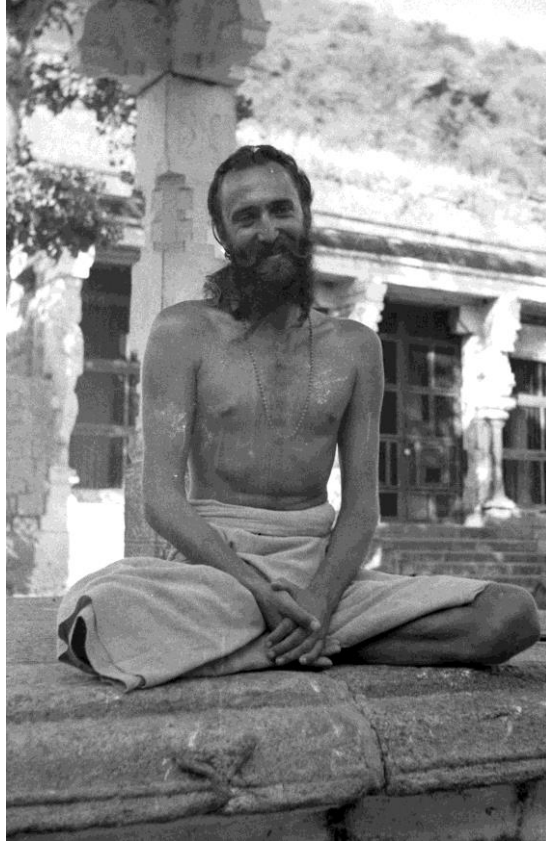
Her brothers had to yield, but they soon returned with their father. They found her in a cottage near the Ashram and arranged for her continued stay there. During the fifteen years that remained of the Maharshi's life, Sundarammal never left Tiruvannamalai even for a day."

Sundarammal in due course, passed away and her Samadhi was raised opposite to the Ashram — in between the road and Ashram's *Morvi Guest House*!



Frank Humphreys's first darshan of SRI BHAGAVAN at Virupakasha Cave in 1911

Swami Ramanagiri



Swami Ramanagiri was born into an aristocratic Swedish family in 1921. Though he was related to the King of Sweden, it was the 'Royal' yoga of Patanjali that finally claimed him. In his youth he came across Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* and found he had an immediate affinity with the subject matter. He studied the book and began to practise the techniques it prescribed. Realising that he needed a teacher to guide him, he came to India in 1945 and began to study philosophy at Benares Hindu University. He soon discovered, though, that academic philosophy held little attraction for him. Feeling a strong urge to pursue his Yoga full time, he gave up his studies, renounced property worth more than eight million dollars and took *sannyasa*.

At the time of his initiation his *diksha guru* at Benares stipulated that he should never ask for anything himself, and only accept what was offered to him. On the day following his initiation he passed by a friend's house, but his friend failed to recognise him because of his shaved head and orange robes.

When he saw the *sannyasin* he shouted to his wife, 'A mendicant is going by! Give him the rotten bananas!' This was his first *bhiksha*.

On the following day he was walking in front of the Palace of the Raja of Benares when a soldier accosted him and asked him to step inside.

'Why?' asked the Swami.

The soldier replied that it was the practice of the Raja to offer food daily to the first *sannyasin* he saw walking in front of the Palace gates. So, on that day, he was taken in, accorded a Royal reception, and given a feast, personally served by the Raja himself.

When he later narrated both of these incidents to his *diksha guru*, he was told that both should be treated with equal indifference, as food is only for physical sustenance. For the rest of his brief life he never asked for anything and never handled money.

Shortly afterwards he set off on a pilgrimage to visit some of India's holy places. With the Fire of liberation burning inside him it was perhaps inevitable that sooner or later he would end up at the feet of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Though he had a natural inclination for *Raja Yoga*, Swami Ramanagiri felt an immediate attraction to *Atma Vichara*, the Path of Sri Ramana. He practised intensively for forty days in Sri Bhagavan's presence and was rewarded, on *Maha Sivaratri* day 1949, with a direct experience of the Self. When asked later about what happened on that momentous day, he would usually say, 'On that day I became a fool'. For the rest of his life he referred to himself in the third person as 'this Fool'. Speaking of the effect this 'experience' had on him, he wrote in one of his notebooks:

*"I don't know anything,
And that 'I' which knows is
Nothing but an ignorant fool.
I think, when I don't think,
That I have no end and no beginning.
That which thinks has to take thousands of births.
When there is 'I',
He is not;
When He is, I am not."*

How did he practise *Atma Vichara*? It was his own method, combining classical *vichara*, *pranayama*, a little *neti-neti*, and some imaginative visualisations. Some interesting insights into his method can be gleaned from the following long letter which he wrote to a devotee who was seeking guidance on the path:

"In the course of *sadhana*, *maya* comes to a sincere soul first in the form of worldly troubles, second in the form of desires, and third in the form of dear friends who keep him away from the quest.¹ Our own mind is the greatest cheater in the World. It will make thousands of different excuses to go its own way. There are three ways of handling this 'cheat', who is nothing but a bundle of thoughts creeping in the conscious mind.

¹ He had trouble with this himself. Elsewhere he wrote: "Three years ago I found that letters from my previous family became an obstacle on the spiritual quest, so when any letter came I never opened it or read it, and I experienced that the divine was on my side in spite of my improper action".

"First, to treat him as a 'friend' and give him full satisfaction. This is a very long and tiresome way because he is never satisfied.

"Second, to treat him as an 'enemy' and with all force try to get rid of him. This is only possible by the Grace of the Divine because the 'mind' has got two very powerful weapons — the discriminating 'intellect' and the 'imaginative' faculty. These two fellows can convince even God Himself that black is white.

"The third way is the 'way' taught by Sri Ramana in the days of silence at the foot of Sacred Arunachala. This way, which has been adopted by this 'Fool', is to treat the 'mind' as a 'patient', or rather several patients who are coming to a doctor to complain about their various ailments. Just as a doctor sits in his room receiving different kinds of patients, this Fool imagines himself sitting in the Sacred Cave of the Heart and receiving the different 'thought patients'. You know that a sick person likes to babble for hours about his complaint. In the same way, a 'thought' likes to multiply itself, but the doctor always cuts it short, saying, 'Very good. Take this medicine. Thank you very much.' And then he calls for another patient.

"This is how this Fool decided to meditate. First the Fool slows down the 'breath' as much as possible, but only to the point where there is no discomfort. To this Fool, two breaths per minute is the proper speed, but that may not be possible for you because this Fool has practised for a long time. You may be able to decrease your breathing to 8-10 per minute in the beginning. Don't get to a level where you are uncomfortable, because that discomfort will give rise to thoughts.

"This Fool then decided to receive twenty patients before closing the dispensary of the Heart. He calls out 'Number one!' and he waits for 'thought patient' number one to come. The thought patient may say, 'Smt such-and-such is not well. Sri so-and-so is worried.'

"Then this foolish doctor says, 'Oh, you are number one. Very good. The name of Lord Murugan will cure you. Thank you very much.'

"Then he calls for number two, and he waits till the second patient is entering the room. 'Mr So-and-so may get *mukti* this life,' he says.

"Very good. You are number two. The whole World is benefited if one soul gets Liberated. Thank you very much.' Numbers three, four, five, etc. are dealt with in the same way.

"When all the twenty 'thought patients' have come and gone, the doctor closes the room to the Heart and no one else is allowed to come inside. Now he is alone. Now there is time for *Atma Vichara*. He asks himself, "To whom have all these 'thoughts' come?" Three times he slowly repeats the same question, along with the outgoing breaths. Then he, in that same slow manner, answers, 'To me, to me, to me'. 'Then *Who am I?* Then, *Who am I?* Then, *Who am I?*' All questions and answers are repeated twice, very, very slowly.

""This "I" is not a 'thought'. This "I" is not a 'thought'. This "I" is not a 'thought'."

"Then who is the receiver of the thought? Then who is the receiver of the thought? Then who is the receiver of the thought?"

" "I" - "I" - "I" '. Now the mind is centralized in the Source itself.

"Then, *Who am I?* Then, *Who am I?* Then, *Who am I?*"

"Now the breath comes to an end and the attention is concentrated 100% on the sound caused by the palpitation of the Heart, as if the sound would give the answer to our questions. This is nothing but the *pranava* itself. If, during this time, the *sakti* which was static is converted to movements or becomes dynamic, then trance will occur. If the primal energy reaches the space between the eyebrows, *savikalpa samadhi* will occur. That is, God with form will be seen. If the energy rises up to the top of the head, *nirvikalpa samadhi* will occur, which is nothing but the Self itself.

"But you should also know that even if the doctor has closed the dispensary door, some patients may come and peep in through the window to complain about their ailments. At the beginning of *Atma vichara* the patients at the window are many. In the same way, although the door to the Cave of the Heart is closed, some 'thoughts' may occur at the time of *dhyana*. For example, a 'thought' may come: 'Mr Iyer's *sushumna nadi* has opened up.' Since the patient has not come at the proper time, the doctor doesn't attend to him. Instead, he continues the quest: 'To whom has the thought of Mr Iyer come?'

"To me, to me, to me."

"Then *Who am I?* – Then, *Who am I?* – Then *Who am I?*"

"Dearest 'S'. In all humility this Fool has babbled something about how he tries to establish himself in the experience of *Ananda*, which is no different from the Self itself.

"With all my love to you,
Ramanagiri in Him
Om"

After Sri Bhagavan's *Mahanirvana* in April 1950, Sri Bhagavan appeared before Swami Ramanagiri in a vision and directed him to go and stay in the Sirumalai Hills, about twenty miles from Madurai. He spent most of his time there, continuing his practice of Yoga and Enquiry, and frequently became absorbed in ecstatic or blissful states, so much so that he had little awareness of his body or its needs. Of one experience he wrote:

"The whole night

Nothing but Fire, Light, Bliss and Pranava.

O Father! O Father! What happiness!

No thoughts, only the enjoyment and the enjoyer.

O Father! How near I was to losing myself completely in Your Embrace.

***O Father, why do You turn me back to the state of 'mind'
Where I suffer from 'thoughts' and where I am tormented by an 'ego'?"***

In a more sober and reflective mood he made the following assessment of the blissful states he was experiencing through his *pranayama* and *Atma vichara*:

Bliss is not a product of fantasy, but the most convincing experience we are capable of. If this experience would be a product of the imagination, the hair would not stand on end, nor would tears of happiness come in streams from the eyes, nor would the nose start flowing, nor would there be any shivering of the body, the skin would not turn red-hot, and there would be no levitation of the body. How many times I have found the 'body' at another place in the room after having enjoyed Mother's Bliss? In *Padmasana* the body is not capable of moving.

Swami Ramanagiri eventually contracted tuberculosis a disease which claimed him at the young age of thirty-four, in 1955. He spent his final days in the Perundurai Sanatorium. Though his body was lean and emaciated, his spirits were high.

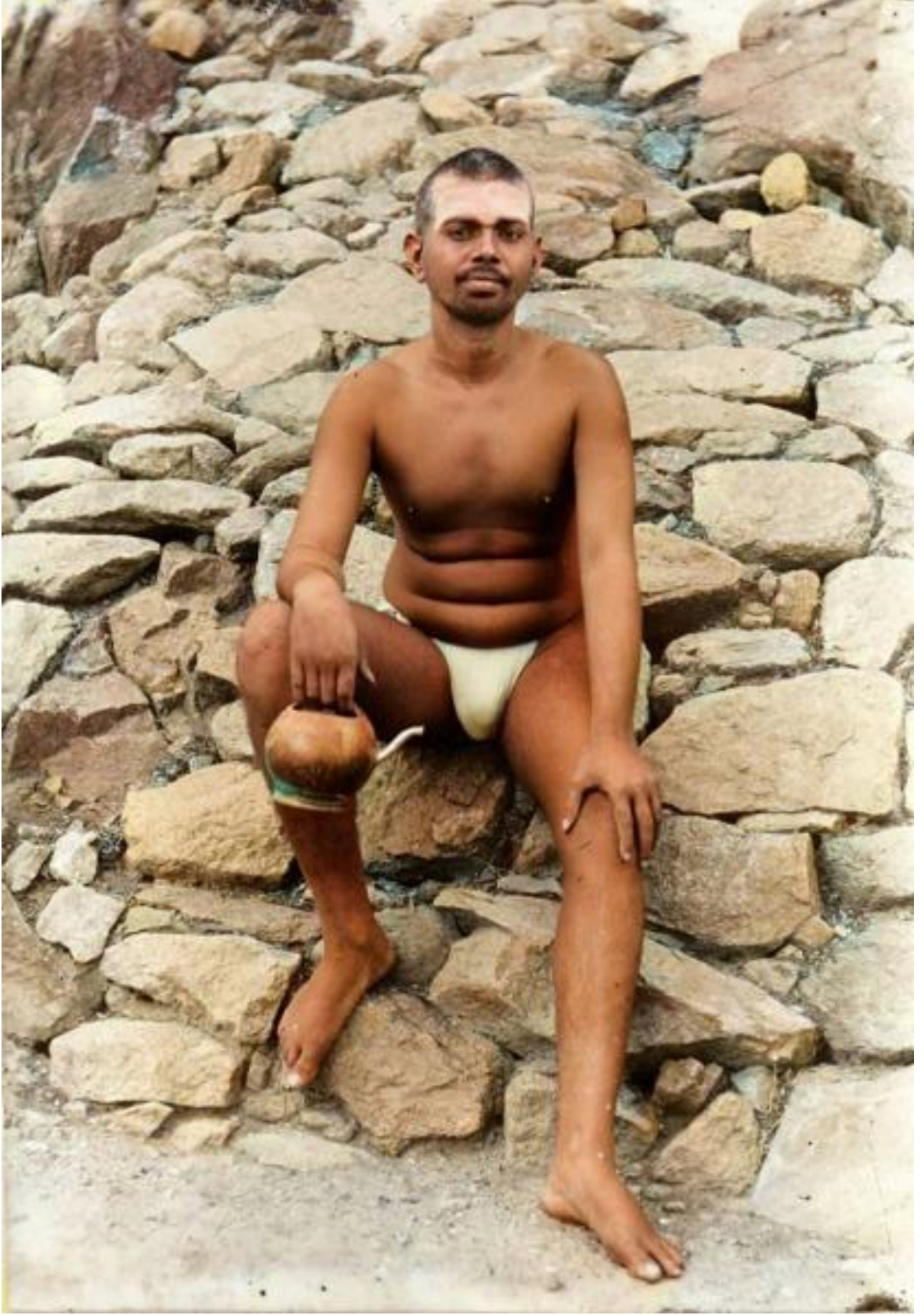
"It is the body which suffers," he told his visitors. "I am alright. *Sakti* is now stronger than ever before, and it is here [indicating the spot between the eyebrows]."

It was summer and mangoes were just beginning to appear. Accepting some as an offering, he alluded to his forthcoming death by saying, "I will eat a nice mango now, but it will become garbage tomorrow morning".

For more than an hour before his death, he was completely withdrawn in a deep meditative state, with his hair standing on end. At the last moment he whispered, "Let us go," and he left his body, in true *Yogic* fashion, through the fontanel in the top of his head. Blood was seen to ooze out of a hole there.

During his brief stay in the Sirumalai Hills, Swami Ramanagiri had attracted a substantial following, although he always refused to take on a teaching role, saying that no such mission had been given to him by Sri Bhagavan. His body was interred at the foot of the Sirumalai Hills at the place he had named "*Ramana Padam*", and a Siva *lingam* was installed over his *samadhi*. Twice a year there are gatherings there to commemorate the day of his 'great experience' with Sri Bhagavan and the date of his final passing away. A poor feeding is conducted and crowds of over 2,000 assemble to pay homage to this foreign son of India.

* * *



Sri Bhagavan seated outside the entrance to Sri Virupaksha Cave.

Umadevi



Miss Umadevi, a Polish lady convert to Hinduism, who came to the Ashram in 1938 asked Sri Bhagavan:

"I once before told Sri Bhagavan how I had a vision of Lord Siva at about the time of my conversion to Hinduism. A similar experience recurred to me at Courtallam. These visions are momentary. But they are blissful. I want to know how they might be made permanent and continuous. Without Lord Siva there is no life in what I see around me. I am so happy to think of Him. Please tell me how His vision may be everlasting to me.

Sri Bhagavan.: You speak of a vision of Lord Siva. Vision is always of an 'object'. That implies the existence of a 'subject'. The value of the vision is the same as that of the 'seer'. (That is to say, the nature of the vision is on the same plane as that of the 'seer'.) Appearance implies disappearance also. Whatever appears must also disappear. A vision can never be Eternal. But Siva is Eternal.

The *pratyaksha* (vision) of Lord Siva to the eye signifies the existence of the 'eyes' to see; the '*buddhi*' (intellect) lying behind the sight; the 'seer' behind the *buddhi* and the sight; and finally the "Consciousness" underlying the 'seer'. This *pratyaksha* (vision) is not as real as one imagines it to be, because it is not intimate and inherent; it is not first-hand. It is the result of several successive phases of "Consciousness". Of these, "Consciousness" alone does not vary. It is Eternal. It is Lord Siva. It is the "Self".

The vision implies the 'seer'. The 'seer' cannot deny the existence of the "Self". There is no moment when the "Self" as "Consciousness" does not exist; nor can the 'seer' remain apart from "Consciousness". This "Consciousness" is the Eternal Being and the only Being. The 'seer' cannot see himself. Does he deny his Existence because he cannot see himself with the eyes as *pratyaksha* (in vision)? No! So, *pratyaksha* does not mean seeing, but BE-ing.

"To BE" is to realise — Hence *I AM THAT I AM*. "I AM" is Lord Siva. Nothing else can be without Him. Everything has its being in Lord Siva and because of Lord Siva.

Therefore enquire "*Who am I?*" Sink deep within and abide as the "Self". That is Lord Siva as "BE-ing". Do not expect to have visions of Him repeated. What is the difference

between the 'objects' you see and Lord Siva? He is both the 'subject' and the 'object'. You cannot be without Lord Siva. Lord Siva is always realised *here* and *now*. If you 'think' you have not realised Him; it is wrong. This is the obstacle for realising Lord Siva. Give up that 'thought' also and Realisation is there.

D.: Yes. But how shall I effect it as quickly as possible?

Sri Bhagavan.: This is the 'obstacle' for Realisation. Can there be the individual without Lord Siva? Even *now* He is 'you'. There is no question of time. If there be a moment of non-realisation, the question of Realisation can arise. But as it is you cannot be without Him. He is already Realised, ever Realised and never non-Realised.

Surrender to Him and abide by His will whether he appears or vanishes; await His pleasure. If you ask Him to do as you please, it is not 'surrender' but command to Him. You cannot have Him obey you and yet 'think' that you have surrendered. He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. His is the burden: you have no longer any cares. All your cares are His. Such is 'surrender'. This is '*bhakti*'.

Or, enquire to whom these questions arise. Dive deep in the 'Heart' and remain as the "Self". One of these two ways is open to the aspirant.

Sri Bhagavan also added: There is no being who is not conscious and therefore who is not Lord Siva. Not only is he Lord Siva but also all else of which he is aware or not aware. Yet he thinks in sheer ignorance that he sees the Universe in diverse forms. But, if he sees his Self he is not aware of his separateness from the Universe; in fact his individuality and the other entities vanish although they persist in all their forms. Lord Siva is seen as the universe. But the seer does not see the background itself. Think of the man who sees only the cloth and not the cotton of which it is made; or of the man who sees the pictures moving on the screen in a cinema show and not the screen itself as the background; or again the man who sees the letters which he reads but not the paper on which they are written. The 'objects' are thus "Consciousness" and 'forms'. But the ordinary person sees the 'objects' in the Universe but not Lord Siva in these 'forms'. Lord Siva is the "Being" assuming these 'forms' and the "Consciousness" seeing them. That is to say, Lord Siva is the background underlying both the 'subject' and the 'object', and again Lord Siva in "Repose" and Lord Siva in "Action", or Lord Siva and Sakti, or the Lord and the Universe. Whatever it is said to be, it is only "Consciousness" whether in repose or in action. Who is there that is not conscious? So, who is not Realised? How then can questions arise doubting Realisation or desiring it? If 'I' Am not *pratyaksha* to 'me', I can then say that Lord Siva is not *pratyaksha*.

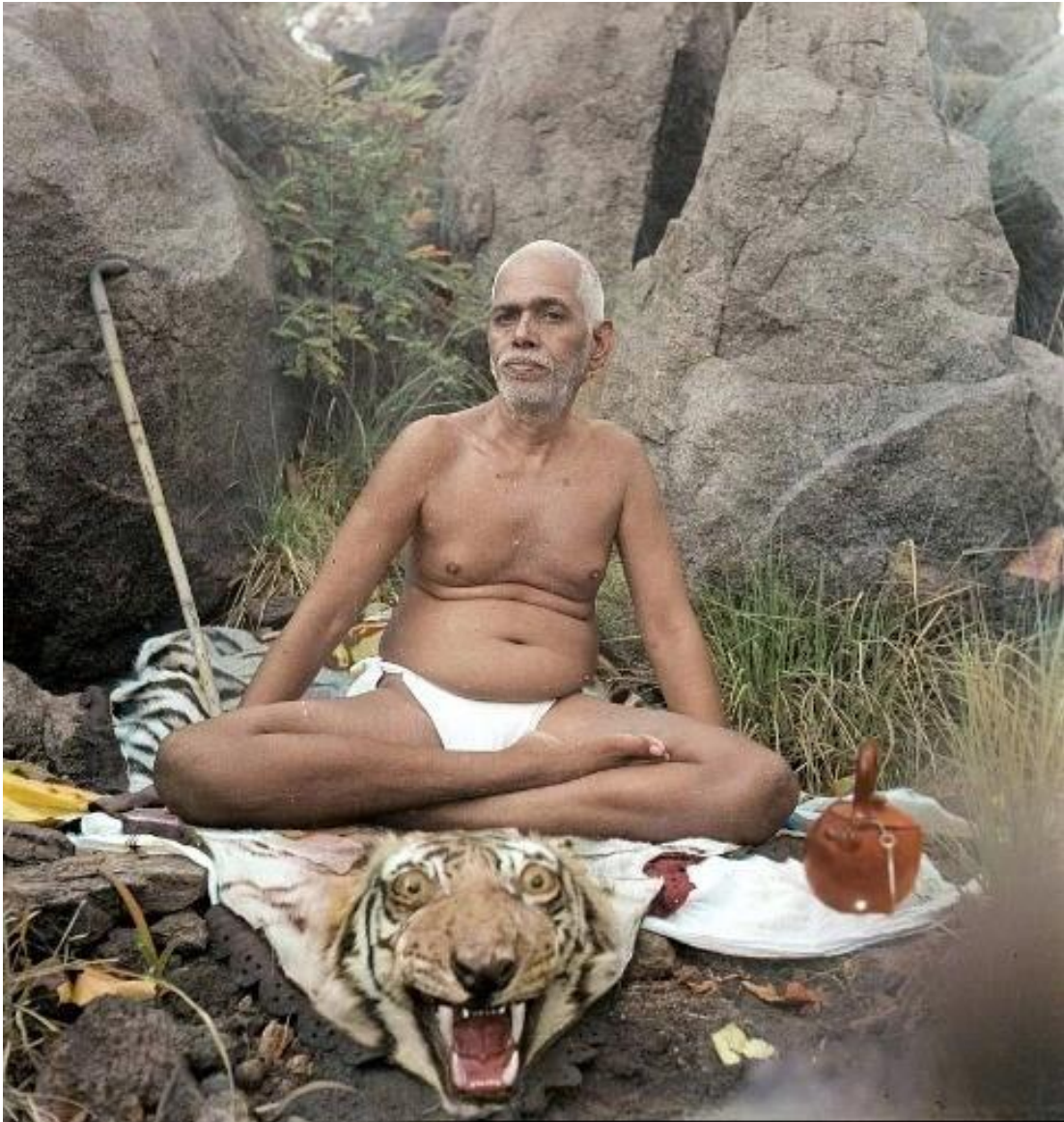
These questions arise because you have limited the "Self" to the 'body', only then the ideas of 'within' and 'without', of the 'subject' and the 'object', arise. The objective visions have no intrinsic value. Even if they are everlasting they cannot satisfy the person. Mother Uma has Father Siva always with Her. Both together form *Ardhanariswara*. Yet, she wanted to know Lord Siva in His True Nature. She made *tapas*. In her *dhyana* she saw a bright Light. She thought: "This cannot be Lord Siva for it is within the compass of my

vision. I am greater than this Light.” So she resumed her *tapas*. Thoughts disappeared. Stillness prevailed. She then realised that BE-ing is Lord Siva in His True Nature.

Muruganar cited Appar's stanza:- “To remove my darkness and give me Light, Thy Grace must work through ME only.”

Sri Bhagavan mentioned Manickavachagar's:

“We do *bhajana* and the rest. But we have not seen nor heard of those who had seen Thee.” One cannot see God and yet retain 'individuality'. The 'seer' and the 'seen' unite into One Being. There is no 'cogniser', nor 'cognition', nor the 'cognised'. All merge into One Supreme Lord Siva only!



Sri Bhagavan seated in front of a Huge Rock up on the Hill

Prabhavati Raje



Rajkumari Prabhavati Raje belonged to a royal family. Her parents were deeply spiritual and as such she was drawn to spirituality from her very young age. She was a scholar in many systems of philosophy and knew several languages. Her chosen God, Sri Bhagavan, bestowed affectionate attention on her. Munagala Venkataramiah and Jagadeeswara Sastri were her teachers; the former was her guardian whom she fondly addressed as '*Nayana*' (father).

It is interesting how Sri Bhagavan looked after her needs — one who had left her parents, kith and kin only to live in the presence of her Master — not only spiritual needs but also those in her mundane life. Though initially she stoutly refused to get married, marriage was arranged for her with a member of another royal family in Kerala. She had to go to the would-be bridegroom's house in Kerala. She did not permit any of her relatives to accompany her and preferred to go alone. Sri Bhagavan, however, called Kunju Swami and directed him: "Prabhavati Raje is going to Kerala. You would be the fit person to accompany her as you are also from Kerala. Take her." Rajkumari Prabhavati was exceptionally fortunate indeed to draw such pointed 'attention' from Sri Bhagavan, her chosen *Sat Guru*.

When she reached Kerala, she was drowned in the company of relatives and friends. Kunju Swami felt out of place in such family gatherings and hence wrote to Munagala Venkataramiah stating that it had become necessary for Prabhavati to stay there for a few weeks and that during that period he would take a short pilgrimage to holy places in Kerala.

By return of post Kunju Swami received a reply. In the reply Munagala Venkataramiah stated that he had read out Kunju Swami's letter to Sri Bhagavan and saw visible signs of disapproval in Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan also said: "He was to be with Prabhavati." Kunju Swami did not stir out of the Rajkumari's house; he stayed with her till he could accompany her back to *Sri Ramanasramam*! Sri Bhagavan was stern in emphasising that duty entrusted to one should not be transgressed under any circumstances. His love for the devotee's welfare was equally emphatic.

Princess Prabhavati Raje, immediately after her marriage, came along with her husband to receive blessings from Sri Bhagavan. She brought two beautiful rose garlands and wanted that she herself and her husband should place them around the neck of Sri Bhagavan. Such things were strictly forbidden. Yet, out of her intense love, she persisted in her request and took the garlands to Sri Bhagavan seated on the couch. Sri Bhagavan, while refusing the garlands, suggested: "Place them in the Shrine of the Mother". She was disappointed and, before leaving, deposited the garlands on the couch as she bent low to prostrate. She got up, took the garlands and left the hall, bitterly crying. After some time, Sri Kunju Swami by way of consolation showed her from a distance a remarkable sight. Sri Bhagavan was picking one by one the petals that had dropped from the rose garlands on the couch and was slowly putting them into His mouth one after the other! Said Kunju Swami to the Princess: 'Look! How lucky you are! You were disappointed that Sri Bhagavan did not accept the rose garlands, but now your roses have served as His food. Is not this real acceptance?'

She was immensely pleased and her tears of anguish turned into tears of joy!

* * *

Another incident narrated by the Rajkumari thrilled me; I want to share the same with you.

Long before Rajkumari Prabhavati Raje got married she presented Sri Bhagavan with a pair of book-ends with a specific request that Sri Bhagavan should keep it Himself and not give it away to the office or to any one else. Beside Sri Bhagavan was a rotating book-shelf, and He often referred to the books kept there. Above the book-shelf also books were placed pell-mell. Seeing this Prabhavati Raje brought the book-ends and insisted that they should be used there. Years passed. She was married; she had to live away from Sri Bhagavan.

Those were the last days of Sri Bhagavan's bodily existence. Prabhavati came to offer her homage to the illustrious Master. She also stood in the queue and waited for the *darshan* of her Master. Sri Bhagavan was very weak. He insisted on giving *darshan* to devotees in spite of the medical advice against it. Each devotee could have only a glimpse of Him before moving on to make room for the next. When Prabhavati stood transfixed Sri Bhagavan was compassionate enough to shower His gracious look on her and simultaneously He directed the look towards the inside of the room. Since she did not understand His gesture He took the trouble of raising His right hand (His left hand was affected by sarcoma) and stretched the hand towards the book-shelf in the room, or rather above the book-shelf. The book-ends presented by her was there fully utilised by Him though so many years had rolled by. She was thrilled. How the Master fulfilled even the simplest wishes of the devotee! Not only that. The incident assumes great importance when we take into account Sri Bhagavan's very bad state of health and the effort it would have cost Him to move and point to the book-ends. Prabhavati burst into tears and sobbed. Sri Bhagavan blessed her profusely through His joyful look!

Rani Padmavati Devi



Smt. Padmavati Devi, Maharani of Khairagarh, had all a human being could aspire in life. Born into a royal family, she married Raja Bahadur Birendra Singh of Khairagarh, at the age of 17. Living a princely life they raised four children; yet the search for True inner Peace led her to Sri Bhagavan's Presence in June 1946.

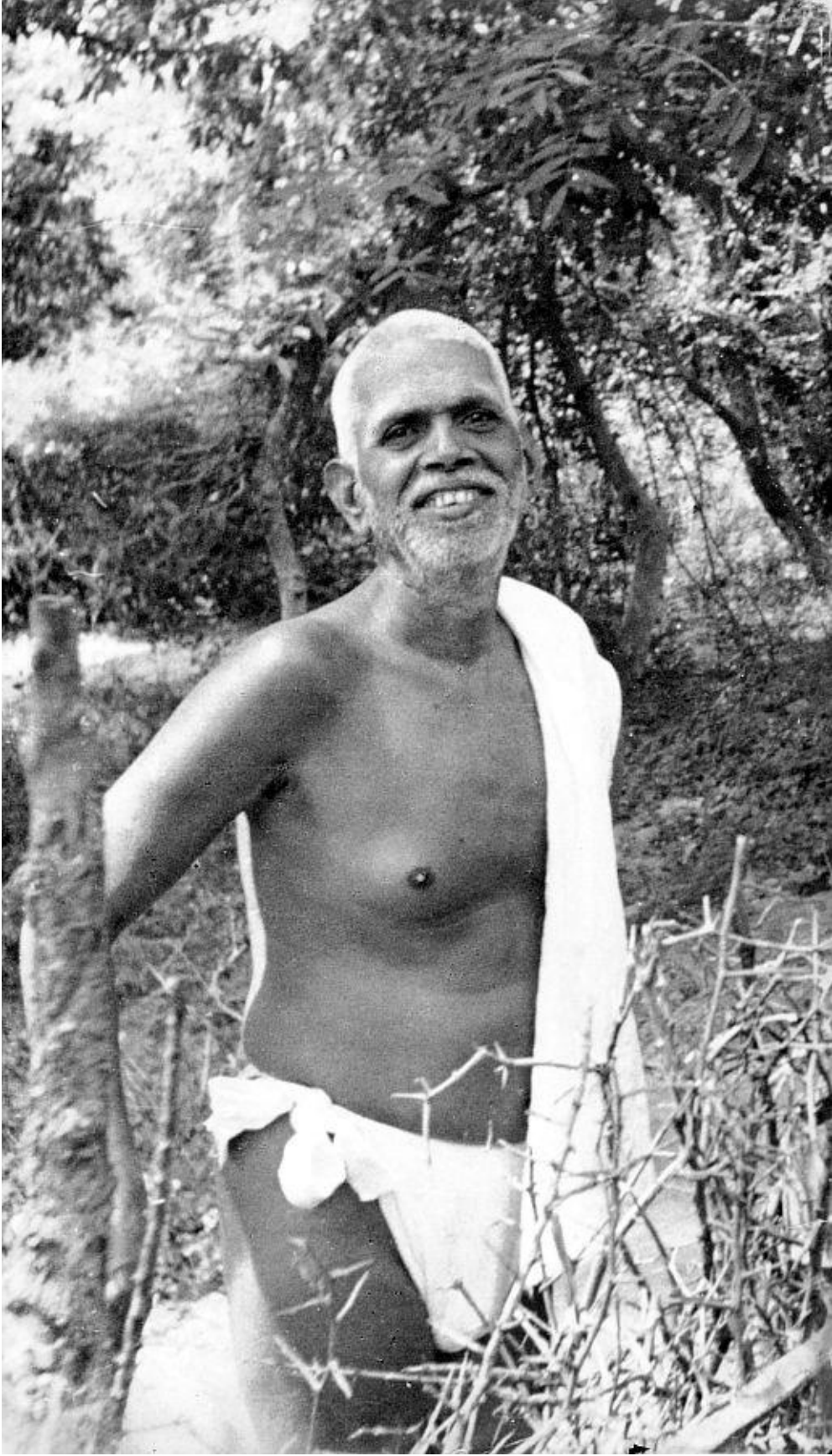
Her first meeting with Sri Bhagavan had an electrifying effect on her. The then *Sarvadhikari*, Sri Niranjanananda Swami, was most kind and helpful and made all arrangements for her comfortable stay at the Morvi Guest House. Thereafter, she had numerous occasions to remain in Sri Bhagavan's Presence in the Old Hall. On Mrs. Taleyarkhan's advice the Maharani's meditation took the form of concentrating into the eyes of Sri Bhagavan. This had a tremendous effect. During the forty-five minutes of her meditation, she forgot her Worldly worries and then the entire outer World, having a clear *darshan* of her *ishta-devata*, Lord Siva, in Sri Bhagavan's right eye. Thus she felt convinced that Sri Bhagavan was Lord Siva Himself and that her life's ambition of serving Lord Siva would be achieved by staying at the Holy Feet of Sri Bhagavan.

She had a strong inclination to renounce family ties and spend the rest of her life serving Sri Bhagavan, yet she could not achieve it. She did her first *Giripradakshina* of the Holy Arunachala, under Sri Bhagavan's guidance. She was an eye-witness to one of the operations on Sri Bhagavan's forearm. She was wonderstruck to watch Sri Bhagavan undergo the operation without anaesthesia. During the entire operation, which lasted a considerable time, she observed that Sri Bhagavan was always smiling and He did not feel the pangs of surgery!

As to all of those who had surrendered their lives to the Master, the *Mahanirvana* of Sri Bhagavan came as a rude shock to the *Maharani*. Constant remembrance of Him, keeping His pictures wherever she went and offering Him daily *puja* did give her consolation. Since then she was attending the *Deepam* and *Jayanthi* celebrations at *Sri Ramanasramam* almost regularly.

She continued to experience the Presence of Sri Bhagavan at the Ashram, which she had been serving all along. In her last days, she wanted to pay her homage to the Master by requesting the Ashram management to build a Guest House within the premises of the Ashram itself. This great *Bhakta's* wish was duly fulfilled!

A remarkable *bhakta* to a Master of the Highest Spiritual Attainment !



Sri Bhagavan in Palakottu

Mercedes de Acosta



At one of the dinner parties in Hollywood, I met Paul Brunton who had written a book called *A Search in Secret India*. When I read this book it had a profound influence on me. In it I learned for the first time about Sri Ramana Maharshi, a great Indian Saint and Sage. It was as though some emanation of this Saint was projected out of the book to me. For days and nights after reading about Him I could not think of anything else. I became, as it were, possessed by Him. I could not even talk of anything else. Nothing could distract me from the idea that I *must* go and meet this Saint. From that time on, although I ceased to speak too much about it, the whole direction of my life turned toward India and away from Hollywood. I felt that I would surely go there although there was nothing at that time to indicate that I would. Nevertheless, I felt I would meet the Maharshi and that this meeting would be the greatest experience of my life¹.

In Madras I hired a car and, so anxious was I to arrive in Tiruvannamalai that I did not go to bed and travelled by night, arriving about 7 o'clock in the morning after driving almost eleven hours.

. . . The ashram was a small place. I remember only a stone hall where day and night Sri Bhagavan sat on a couch. Not far from this hall, scattered around the hill, were small houses where some of the disciples lived, including his brother.

. . . When, dazed and filled with emotion, I first entered the Hall, I did not quite know what to do. Coming from strong Sunlight into the somewhat darkened Hall, it was, at first, difficult to see. Nevertheless, I perceived Sri Bhagavan at once, sitting in the Buddha-posture on His couch in the corner. At the same moment I felt overcome by some

¹ The above is an excerpt from the book "Here Lies the Heart" by Mercedes de Acosta. Published in 1960 in the USA, this book has been dedicated to "Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi — the only completely egoless, World-detached, and Pure Being I have ever known". In her book, she says that she arrived at Sri Ramanasramam on 22nd November 1938 from Pondicherry and stayed for three days and three nights. Upon her return home she sent a list of questions to Guy Hague, a friend who was staying at the Ashram then (In "Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi", there is a record of answers given by Sri Bhagavan to these questions.)

strong power in the Hall as if an invisible wind was pushing violently against me. For a moment I felt dizzy. Then I recovered myself. . . . I was able to look around the Hall but my gaze was drawn to Sri Bhagavan, who was sitting absolutely straight in the Buddha-posture looking directly in front of Him. His eyes did not blink or in any way move. Because they seemed so full of light I had the impression they were gray. I learned later that they were brown, although there have been various opinions as to the color of his eyes. His body was naked except for a loincloth. I discovered soon after that this and his staff were absolutely his only possessions. His body seemed firm and as if tanned by the Sun, although I found that the only exercise he ever took was a twenty-minute walk every afternoon at 5 o'clock when He walked on the hill and sometimes greeted Yogis who came to prostrate themselves at His feet. The rest of the time, day and night, and for over half a century, He had been sitting on his couch. He was a strict vegetarian, but He only ate what was placed before Him and He never expressed a desire for any kind of food. As He sat there He seemed like a statue, and yet something extraordinary emanated from Him. I had a feeling that on some invisible level I was receiving spiritual shocks from Him although his gaze was not directed toward me. He did not seem to be looking at anything, and yet I felt he could see and was conscious of the whole World . . .

I looked around: squatting on the floor or sitting in the Buddha-posture or lying prostrate face down, a number of Indians prayed — some of them reciting their *mantras* out loud. Several small monkeys came into the Hall and approached Sri Bhagavan. They climbed onto his couch and broke the stillness with their gay chatter . . .

After I had been sitting several hours in the Hall listening to the *mantras* of the Indians and the incessant droning of flies, and lost in a sort of inner World, Guy Hague suggested that I go and sit near the Maharshi. He said, "You can never tell when Sri Bhagavan will come out of *samadhi*. When He does, I am sure He will be pleased to see you, and it will be beneficial for you, at this moment, to be sitting near Him."

I moved near Sri Bhagavan, sitting at His feet and facing Him. Guy was right. Not long after this Sri Bhagavan opened His eyes. He moved His head and looked directly down at me, His eyes looking into mine. It would be impossible to describe this moment and I am not going to attempt it, I can only say that at this second I felt my Inner Being raised to a new level — as if, suddenly, my state of Consciousness was lifted to a much higher degree. Perhaps in this split second I was no longer my human self but the "Self". Then, Sri Bhagavan smiled at me. It seemed to me that I had never before known what a smile was. I said, "I have come a long way to see you."

. . . I had stupidly brought a piece of paper on which I had written a number of questions I wanted to ask him. I fumbled for it in my pocket, but the questions were already answered by merely being in His Presence. There was no need for questions or answers . .

To write of this experience with Sri Bhagavan, to recapture and record all that He said, or all that His Silence implied, is like trying to put the Infinite into an egg cup. One small chapter cannot in any way do Him justice or give an impression of his Enlightenment, and I do not think that I am far enough spiritually advanced — if at all — to try to interpret His Supreme Knowledge. On me He had, and still has, a profound influence. I feel it

presumptuous to say He changed my life. My life was perhaps not so important as all this. But I definitely saw Life differently after I had been in His Presence, a Presence that just by merely 'Being' was sufficient spiritual nourishment for a lifetime. It may have been that when I returned from India undiscerning people saw very little change in me. But there was a change — a transformation of my entire Consciousness. And how could it have been otherwise? I had been in the atmosphere of an egoless, World-detached, and completely Pure Being.

. . . Before leaving the Ashram I wrote down several questions for Guy to ask Sri Bhagavan that I had not had a chance to ask myself. I had been bothered by the fact that so many Saints and enlightened people had been ill and suffering physically. I asked, should they not have perfect bodies and why do they not cure themselves? In Europe I got a letter from Guy saying he had discussed my question with Sri Bhagavan. He wrote, "Sri Bhagavan told me to tell you that the spiritually perfect person, need not necessarily have a perfect body. The reason, as he explained it, is very simple. You see, the 'ego', the 'body' and the 'mind' are the same thing. The spiritually perfect person, like Sri Bhagavan, is above these three things. Consequently He has no 'body' to heal, neither a 'mind' or 'ego' — to heal it with. He is beyond all this because it is 'illusion'. He is living in Reality. Christian Scientists can take the mind and heal the body — for they are the same thing. American Indians heal, too, in this manner. It is 'faith healing'. But if the spiritually Perfect Person is sick in 'body' it is because the 'body' is working out its *Karma*. Sri Bhagavan gave an illustration of *Karma*, which He says is like an electric fan and must just run its course, only gradually ceasing even after it has been turned off. He says the 'mind' is born into 'illusion' and builds a 'body' and a World to suit it — that is, a World that it has *earned* and *deserves* (by its *Karma*). Sri Bhagavan, knowing the 'body' and the 'mind' to be 'illusion', cannot experience any bodily ailment or discomfort. We make Him suffer pain, loss of weight etc. It is in '*our minds*', *not His*. He is bodiless, actually is, though you and I cannot realize this as a fact."

In another letter Guy answered my questions, which led to others. He wrote down my questions and Sri Bhagavan's answers.

Question: Is reincarnation a fact?

Sri Bhagavan: You are incarnated now, aren't you? Then, you will be so again. But as the 'body' is 'illusion' then the 'illusion' will repeat itself and keep on repeating itself until you find the Real Self.

Q: What is death and what is birth?

B: Only the 'body' has death and birth, and it (the body) is 'illusion'. There is, in Reality, neither birth nor death.

Q: How much time may elapse between death and rebirth?

B: Perhaps one is reborn within a year, three years or thousands of years. Who can say? Anyway what is 'time'? 'Time' does not exist

Q: Why have we no memory of past lives?

B: 'Memory' is a faculty of the 'mind' and part of the 'illusion'. Why do you want to remember other lives that are also 'illusions'? If you abide within the Self, there is no past or future and not even a present since the Self is out of 'time' — "timeless".

Q: Are the World, the 'mind', 'ego' and the 'body' all the same thing?

B: Yes. They are one and the same thing. The 'mind' and the 'ego' are one thing, but there is no word to explain this. You see, the World cannot exist without the 'mind', the 'mind' cannot exist without what we call the 'ego' (itself, really) and the 'ego' cannot exist without a 'body'.

Q: Then when we leave this 'body', that is when the 'ego' leaves it, will it (the 'ego') immediately grasp another 'body'?

B: Oh, yes it must. It cannot exist without a 'body'.

Q: What sort of a 'body' will it grasp then?

B: Either a 'physical body' or a 'subtle-mental body'.

Q: Do you call this present 'physical body' the 'gross body'?

B: Only to distinguish it — to set it apart in conversation. It is really a 'subtle-mental-body' also.

Q: What causes us to be reborn?

B: 'Desires'. Your unfulfilled 'desires' bring you back. And in each case — in each 'body' — as your 'desires' are fulfilled, you create new ones. You must conquer 'desire' to be absorbed into the One and thus end rebirth.

Q: Can sex change in rebirth?

B: Oh, surely. We have all been both sexes many times.

Q: Is it possible to 'sin'?

B: Having a 'body', which creates 'illusion', is the only 'sin', and the 'body' is our only 'hell.' But it is right that we observe moral laws. The discussion of 'sin' is too difficult for a few lines.

Q: Does one who has realized the Self lose the sense of 'I' ?

B: Absolutely.

Q: Then to you there is no difference between yourself and myself, that man over there, my servant, are all the same?

B: All are the same, including those monkeys.

Q: But the monkeys are not people. Are they not different?

B: They are exactly the same as people. All creatures are the same in One Consciousness.

Q: Do we lose our individuality when we merge into the Self?

B: There is no individuality in the Self. The Self is One — Supreme.

Q: Then individuality and identity are lost?

B: You don't retain them in deep sleep, do you?

Q: But we retain them from one birth to another, don't we?

B: Oh, yes. The 'I' thought (the 'ego') will recur again, only each time you identify with it a different 'body' and different surroundings around the 'body'. The effects of past acts (*Karma*) will continue to control the new 'body' just as they did the old one. It is *Karma* that has given you this particular 'body' and placed it in a particular family, race, sex, surroundings and so forth.

Sri Bhagavan added, "These questions are good, but tell de Acosta (he always called me de Acosta) she must not become too 'intellectual' about these things. It is better just to meditate and have no 'thought'. Let the 'mind' rest quietly on the Self — in the cave of the Spiritual Heart. Soon this will become natural and then there will be no need for questions. Do not imagine that this means being inactive. "Silence" is the only real activity."



Panchamukha Darshan of Arunachala

A. Bose



Aravinda Bose was a scientist, an inventor and an industrialist. After his higher education in Germany, he returned to India and started a factory in Bangalore for manufacturing batteries for automobiles and industries, under the brand name “Amco Batteries”. It was the first factory of its kind in the whole of Asia!

Bose was fully devoted to Sri Bhagavan. He spent his weekends at Arunachala with Sri Bhagavan. Finding that ladies could not stay within the Ashram premises after sunset and had to therefore go all the way to the town for the night, Bose bought a big plot of land in front of *Sri Ramanasramam* and built ten well-furnished cottages in it. It was popularly called ‘Bose Compound’ and many of the more well to do devotees, especially Westerners, used to stay in these cottages in the 1940s.

Married to a German lady, he was living in Bangalore with their son who was being groomed to take over the factory. But a terrible tragedy took place that shattered Bose’s life. At the young age of twenty, this bright boy — the apple of his father’s eye — suddenly died, drowning Bose in inconsolable pain and misery. On hearing about it, some of the devotees of Sri Bhagavan went to Bangalore and tried their level best to console Bose. They could not even meet him as he had locked himself up in a room. When the devotees went back and reported the situation to Sri Bhagavan, He asked them to bring Bose to Arunachala. This time around, no doubt because it was Sri Bhagavan’s *aadesha*, Bose was persuaded to return with them to Arunachala.

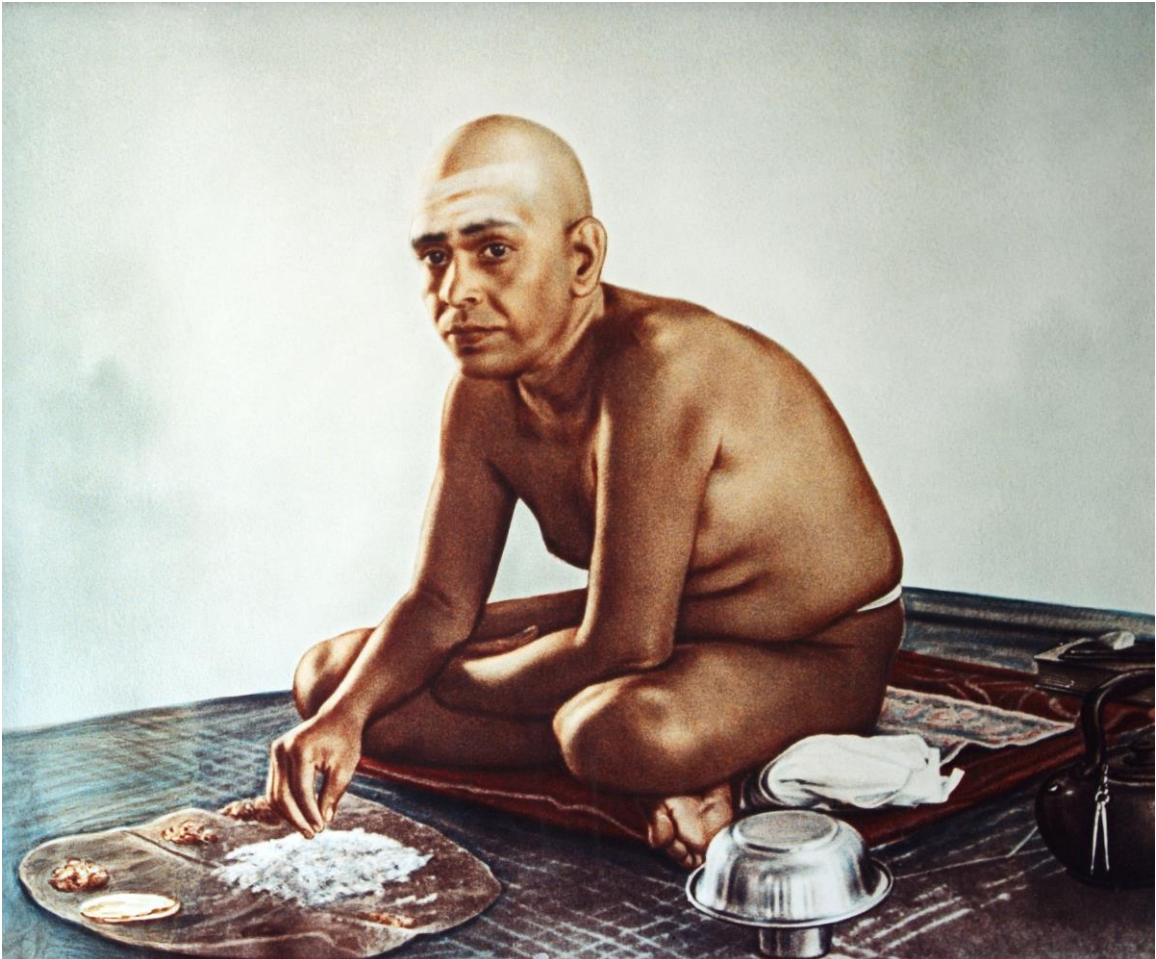
On being brought to the ashram, Sri Bhagavan asked them to leave Bose alone with Him in the Old Hall. Rolling on the floor, Bose vent out his grief and pain at his unbearable loss, with sobs racking his whole body. Sri Bhagavan kept looking at Bose with a steady gaze of Grace. After some time, Bose in desolate disappointment and deep pain, shouted: “Bhagavan! What is God?” For a devotee of such long standing, the question seems completely out of place. Though, in fact, it reveals how much Bose was devastated.

Sri Bhagavan kept silent for a long while. Then, with a look filled with Grace and in a soft voice brimming with Compassion, He replied, "Bose! Your question itself contains the answer: 'What IS [is] God!'"

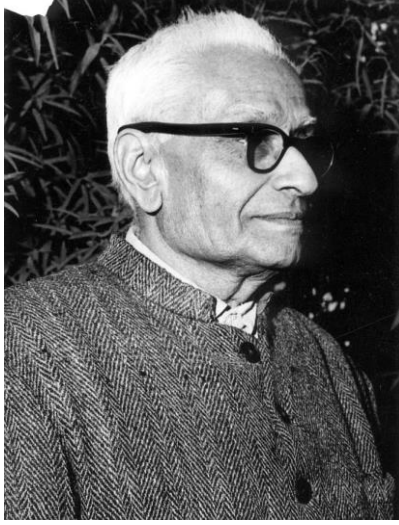
This was not merely a clever or well thought out answer. That may be so in the case of ordinary men. A *Purna Jnani's* utterances are free from the intermediary action of the 'mind' which colours and often distorts the Truth. In the case of *rishis*, it is said: "Sense follows speech." Also, Sri Bhagavan's deep and cleansing Silence before answering the question, was evidently meant to prepare the questioner to receive the full impact of the answer.

This was proven by the fact that while this illuminating answer was the perfect one to the question itself, it also dissolved Bose's mountain of grief and pain at his son's loss.

Revived and rejuvenated, Bose asked for further guidance. Sri Bhagavan told him to bury the body of his son in Bose Compound with the assurance, "He is absorbed in Arunachala!"



Prof. K. Swaminathan



Professor K. Swaminathan, Chief Editor of *"The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi"* (Delhi), was a well-known devotee of Sri Bhagavan. He was also familiar to readers of *The Mountain Path* through his translations of Muruganar's *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, (*Garland of Guru's Sayings*) voluminous books of Tamil poems like *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* and book reviews. He was decorated with 'Padma Bhushan', by the Government of India.

A distinguished scholar and writer, he had held important positions in the Educational World. His appointment to the Principalship of the Government Mohammaden College (now Government Arts College), Madras, was an event which was noted by Sri Bhagavan Himself as He made it a point to read out the news report to all present in the Old Hall.

He and his wife had their first *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan along with a few friends in 1940. Their experience was unique on that occasion. They entered the Ashram premises and were making their exploratory enquiries, when surprisingly, they saw Sri Bhagavan Himself standing at the entrance to the Old Hall after His daily walk on the Hill and graciously looking at them. Thus, Sri Bhagavan took them by surprise, denying them, as it were, the chance of mental preparation for such a significant event as the first *darshan* of him. Later, when they sat before Him in the hall, in silence, they felt overwhelmed. The impact of Sri Bhagavan's mere Presence was so powerful that it gave the experience of "Awareness with only Peace for its content"!

The association with Sri Bhagavan became closer and the Professor frequently spent his vacations at the Ashram. In Sri Devaraja Mudaliar and others, he found kindred souls. He took an active part in the 'Golden Jubilee Celebrations' in 1946 (commemorating Sri Bhagavan's arrival at Arunachala in 1896) and was also an editor for the Ashram, for instance, in bringing out the *Ramana Pictorial Souvenir* (1967) and *Ramana Jyothi Souvenir* (1970).

Prof. Swaminathan, besides being a Master of English Literature, was at home in Tamil literature as well, particularly the devotional poetry of the Singer-Saints of the South. Sri Muruganar's poems, devoted to Sri Bhagavan and His Teachings, moved him greatly and he translated many of these into English.

Particular mention deserves to be made of the Professor's services in the general interest of Sri Bhagavan's devotees. One is that since the *Maha Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan, he made his residence in Madras available for conducting the programmes of the '*Ramana Bhakta Sabha*'. His wife, Smt. Visalakshi Swaminathan was an equally great devotee, combining simplicity with greatness of Heart.

Prof. Swaminathan's great satisfaction was holding the responsibility of being the Editor of *The Mountain Path* after Arthur Osborne had passed away.

How the Professor was drawn by Sri Bhagavan whom he described as 'the Mightier Magnet' is best told in his own words:

"Sixty years ago, M.G. Shanmugam, (son of Police Inspector Gopala Pillai), then my student of Sri Minakshi College, Chidambaram, spoke to me enthusiastically about Sri Bhagavan. I was not interested then in some one sitting still and doing nothing when so much needed to be done to change this mad, bad World and Mahatma Gandhi strode the land doing so many things "socially relevant".

"Many things happened between 1927 and 1940 which drew me to the 'Mightier Magnet' of the 'Movementless Mountain'. Long talks in Madras with Douglas Ainslie and Swami Siddheswarananda and a casual perusal of Muruganar's *Sannidhi Murai* (1939 edition) convinced the obstinate camel that the oasis he badly needed was near and easy to reach.

"In 1910, my good father had appointed, and I had meekly accepted, Sir P.S. Sivaswami Iyer as my infallible guide and mentor. In the summer of 1940, I had many baffling problems and mental conflicts and, as advised by Sir P.S. Sivaswami Iyer, took a series of lessons on the *Brahma Sutras*, sitting at the feet of a learned *Pundit* in Bangalore. An English scholar, a Swami from Paris and this Narayana Sastriar agreed that an actual person in the *Brahmic* state was present there in Tiruvannamalai, offering rest and shade to tired travellers in the desert of *samsara*.

"Cautious Sir P. S. S., who was my sole *pater familias* after my father's death in 1935, permitted my visit to the Ashram but added this advice: 'You are a young man with many responsibilities. When I look down at the abyss from the edge of Dodabetta, I have four strong men holding me safe with a rope round my hip. By all means, go to the Ashram. But don't go alone. Take some friends with you.'

"And so, I took with me my wife, my former student, K. Subrahmanyam and my then student M. M. Ismail. The Maharshi deprived me of none of the persons or pleasures that

were dear to me. He left them all with me enriched and sanctified. Shakespeare, Keats, Wordsworth and the *Bible* meant much more for me when illumined by the Light He shed on all He saw. His Grace it was that gave me length of life, strength of body and ample room to render humble service to Rajaji, Vinoba and Gandhi, all reflections in our own time of the "Eternal Goodness" of which he was the Full Embodiment."

* * *

"Sri BHAGAVAN was a perfect Impersonality, like the Sun in the sky or like unnoticed daylight in an inner chamber. People spoke to one another freely and frankly in His Presence, as if the figure on the couch were a statue, not a listener. It was natural to refer to him as '*It*' instead of '*You*' or '*He*'. Thus, every conversation in the Old Hall turned out to be a truly Socratic dialogue; every statement was tentative and therefore poetic; no statement was dogmatic, eristic or polemical. This Impersonal Being would suddenly become a '*Person*' full of *Sattvic Power*, highly human, charming, mother-like, who could communicate with sharp precision His own Awareness-Bliss to other persons according to their needs and moods. The Sun now came down and played with us as the Light of the Moon to illumine the '*mind*', or as the '*fire*' in the home to cook our food.

"In 1944 when the proofs of the third edition of *Ulladu Narpadu* were being corrected in his Presence, some of us (scrupulous scholars) found fault with the introductory note of '*Who*' (Lakshmana Sarma): "To the question how the *sadhaka* (aspirant) is to behave in the World till he succeeds in attaining *Jnana*, the answer is given in the two following verses taken from the *Yoga Vasishta*."

The two verses may be summed up thus: "Holding firmly at Heart to the Truth of your Being, play like a hero, your part in the World-stage, inwardly calm and detached, but assuming zeal and joy, excitement and aversion, initiative and effort, and performing outward actions, appropriate to your particular role in various situations." Now we (fine fellows and fully qualified College Teachers!) pointed out the obvious absurdity of the Pudukottai Lawyer's suggestion that Sri Rama, *avatar* of Lord Vishnu and a *Nitya Mukta*, needed this teaching. 'Who has these doubts?' enquired Sri Bhagavan. Someone mentioned my name and then the cool bright beam of His Glance pierced my eyes as he said smiling. 'Look! It is for you. (*Paar, unakkuttaan.*)' This teaching was for me!

"This one moment solved for me a whole multitude of problems, personal, philosophical and social.

My father's chosen God was *Sri Rama* and my mother's *Hanuman*. They had both died years before, and the old familiar World of *Dharma* (with no mention of *Moksha*) was half-forgotten and I had been feeling rather rootless in this strange new 'milieu of meditation', 'self-inquiry' and all that. And now while at the hum-drum job of proof-correction, Sri Bhagavan planted me back firmly in my ancestral soil. I was told gently. but clearly, 'The *oasis* is a nice place to rest in, but not your permanent home. Also

remember, there is a way of taking the *oasis* into the desert, of making more and more of the desert a garden green. What's wrong with poetry? Does it not work in the World and transform all life in earth into a poem? Why not speak and listen to the "Heart" rather than the 'head'?

"Sri Rama, the *Mukta*, enacts the poem of his earthly life, playing his heroic roles as son, brother, husband, ruler. Poetry can not only be written and read; it can also be lived and enjoyed. The line that divides the aesthetic and the practical is (like the equator) 'imaginary'. What after all is a poem? An expression of disinterested joy, an experience of someone else's agony or ecstasy as if it were one's own; a momentary manifestation in 'word' or 'deed' of our eternal Being."

* * *

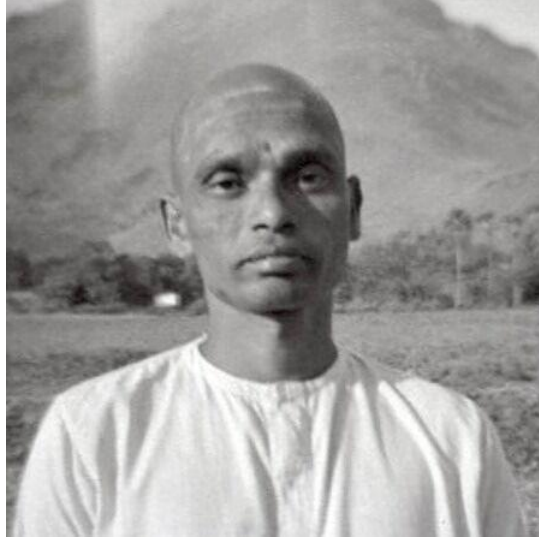
"In the early forties Professor Madan Gopal (of Jubbulpore) was a frequent visitor to the Ashram. He knew German and would translate into English articles in German. In one such article, the famous psychologist Carl Jung had contrasted Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Bhagavan and saw in this succession the progressive advance from *Bhakti* to *Jnana*. On hearing this, Sri Bhagavan promptly sat erect and protested against the comparison, saying: 'When one has reached the mountain-top, no matter from what side or by what path, one knows and understands all other paths. What is there that Sri Ramakrishna did not know?'

The eye that sees and the hand that works are alike organs of one and the same Eternal Goodness. He saw only one *Adhyatma Sakti* working everywhere. Different persons perform different functions. Arranging them in an order of merit is 'the mischief' of the 'ego'.

"Another thrilling incident is worth recalling. One afternoon in 1949, two highly esteemed senior devotees, Dr. V. Srinivasa Rao and Mr. T. P. Ramachandra Iyer, stepped into my house, *Dharmalayam*, formally 'prostrated' before me and presented to me two copies (fresh from the press) of *Anma Bodham*, Sri Bhagavan's Tamil rendering of Adi Sankara's Sanskrit work. Speaking with unusual respect they said, 'Bhagavan wanted us to go and give these copies to you. They contain some corrections in His own hand.'

"How did I deserve this shower of grace? A few weeks earlier, my friend Minna Nuruddin (a good Tamil and Sanskrit scholar) had gone to the Ashram and given to Sri Bhagavan a copy of M. N.'s Tamil translation in eight-line stanzas of *Atma Bodha*. Sri Bhagavan had done many years earlier a translation in terse *venbas* of most of the 68 verses of the Sanskrit treatise. He now had the old note-book dug up from the Ashram archives, revised and completed the translation and had it printed and brought out as His last little booklet. And He now sends me these two copies, one for me and the other for Minna!"

Sadhu Om



Sri Sadhu Om was a great Tamil poet and one of the staunchest followers of Sri Bhagavan's Direct path of Self-enquiry. His grasp of Sri Bhagavan's teachings was profound, and his adherence to them was unswerving.

Though one of the foremost devotees of Sri Bhagavan, Sri Sadhu Om chose to live unnoticed by the World, He exemplified Bhagavan Sri Ramana's principal practical precept, that one should deny oneself at every step and turn of life, should give no importance to one's individual entity, and should thereby completely erase the 'ego'.

Sri Sadhu Om's attitude of shunning any kind of public appreciation or prominence is expressed clearly in the following prayer he wrote to Sri Bhagavan:

*" Not to teach the world, the myth,
Not to gain a mass of wealth,
Not for name and fame that hails,
' There a Sage in Samadhi dwells,
Flock you all and worship Him
'Tis not for these I sing this hymn;
Only for the great reward,
The death of 'ego', I pray, my Lord! "*

— Sri Ramana Guruvarul Antadi, verse 68

Sri Bhagavan had taught only two paths, viz., Self-Enquiry and Surrender (both of which necessarily imply and stress the non rising of the 'ego'), and both these paths find rich and happy expression in the thousands of Tamil songs and verses of Sri Sadhu Om.

Rather than any of his poetical works, it is Sadhu Om's prose work, *Sri Ramana Vazhi*, and its English translation, *The Path of Sri Ramana*, has earned Sadhu Om the lasting gratitude and appreciation of the devotees of Sri Bhagavan.

We should gratefully make a mention of his intimate and long-standing association with Sri Muruganar. On the very first day that Sadhu Om had *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan, he was sent by Him to meet with Sri Muruganar (living at Palakottu) and to show him his Tamil Composition.

Through his association with Sri Muruganar, Sadhu Om was able to gain a deeper insight into the abstruse and cryptic style of Tamil used by Sri Bhagavan in His works, and also to perfect his own innate poetic genius. In return, Sadhu Om did singular service to Sri Muruganar in having helped him to finalize his verses and to preserve them for posterity.

Consequently, Sadhu Om was entrusted with the task of editing the fourteen thousand unpublished verses of Sri Muruganar into a massive nine-volume work under the title *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham*.

Sadhu Om's continued and valuable service to *Ramana-bhaktas* in general and Ramana-literature in particular, is a great asset, indeed.



Sadhu Om with Sri Muruganar

Dr. K. Subrahmanian



Dr. K. Subrahmanian, popularly known as 'KS', was the devout son of Sri Bhagavan's staunch devotees, Sri Krishnaswami Iyer and Smt. Saraswati Ammal. He used to visit Sri Bhagavan from boyhood as his parents were living in Tiruvannamalai in the mid-1920's. Subsequently, his parents moved to Kodaikanal. There, his father became the tutor to the children of the Raja of Nabha. Krishnaswami Iyer was very deeply devoted to Sri Bhagavan; much more devoted was his mother, Saraswati Ammal. Krishnaswami Iyer's brother, Vayalamur Srinivasa Iyer, was also equally deeply devoted to Sri Bhagavan.

KS and his sisters had frequent *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan in the company of their parents. Referring to these visits, later K.S used to say, "In the case of us children, these *darshans* meant it was we who were 'seen' by Sri Bhagavan. For, we were conscious of 'meeting' him only much later!"

KS also used to write letters to Sri Bhagavan even when he was a school boy of ten. During one of his visits to the Ashram, Sri Bhagavan jocularly remarked, "So, you are the person writing letters to me! Does your father send you money so that you can write letters to me?" KS could give no reply to this question! He thus had several opportunities for receiving the Grace of Sri Bhagavan. he had the last *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan exactly a week before Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma Nirvana*.

KS founded the "Ramana Kendram" in Hyderabad in 1979. Under his inspiring leadership the 'Kendram' has grown substantially. In spite of his scholarship and immense popularity as a newspaper columnist, KS retained the quality of utter simplicity throughout his life. Devotees of the 'Kendram' benefited immensely from the impressive talks given by him on the Life and Teaching of Sri Bhagavan.

Dr. K. Subrahmanian was kind enough to share the following interesting anecdotes, during his visits to the Ashram:

"My father was very deeply devoted to Sri Bhagavan. He never went to any temples; he said that everything Holy was contained in *"Sri Ramanasramam"*, the Abode of his Great Master and nothing else was more sacred for him. It was my mother who first had *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan; my father had it later. "From my childhood, I was soaked in Sri Bhagavan since my father, mother and paternal uncle, Vayalamur Srinivasa Iyer, would all the time be talking only about Sri Bhagavan. Added to this, devotees like Viswanatha Swami would often visit our house and tell thrilling stories about what happened in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan. So, for me too, there existed no God other than Sri Bhagavan.

"My father in his very first visit to Sri Bhagavan asked him: 'There are so many *sadhus*; how can one know who is a genuine *siddha*?' Sri Bhagavan, after sometime, replied in clear terms: "In whose mere Presence, one, even without effort, gets spontaneous Peace of 'mind' (*shanti*), that one is the Real *Siddha*.'"

Dr. Subrahmanian continued: "In *Talks* and other books, the questions put by devotees and answers given by the Master are scrupulously recorded. Yet, the mode and manner of how Sri Bhagavan answered them could not be brought out in such books. For instance, once a *bhakta* who had come from a long distance asked Sri Bhagavan: 'I have been following methods of 'mind'-control but I have not had any marked success. Will I ever get mastery over my 'mind'?' Sri Bhagavan kept quiet. After sometime he continued: 'Scriptures say that without 'mind'-control no spiritual progress could be achieved. I am very sincere in my efforts. Have I any hope?' Again, there was only Silence from Sri Bhagavan. He pursued with his questions and said that he was really worried that he was not progressing, and wanted Sri Bhagavan to bless him with a categorical reply. Sri Bhagavan was unmoved. After nearly an hour and a half, Sri Bhagavan got up. While crossing over the door step He was Gracious enough to turn back to the questioner and said: 'By and by you will know.' (போகப் போகத் தெரியும்). What would have transpired in the 'mind' of the questioner during these one and a half hours could never be brought out by any one, in books. Also, how in between Sri Bhagavan would have worked with the questioner's efforts to attain maturity is a secret known only to the *bhakta* and the Master! The final Glorious words of Sri Bhagavan were not only an encouraging answer but a Real Blessing to the questioner."

Dr. K. Subrahmanian was a brilliant speaker. Following is a selection from some of his speeches: "Sri Bhagavan once said: 'Even to think of God, we must have the Grace of God. There is no real quest without Grace. When we think of Him, when we meditate on Him, we are not doing anything of our own accord. We think of Him, meditate on Him as He makes us do them. We can't take any credit to ourselves. We are not doing these activities; we are made to do these. The moment we are fully conscious of this, we shall be utterly humble. Whatever happens during the meditation, happens because He makes it happen the way it happens. So, there is no cause for joy or sorrow.

"Sri Bhagavan hasn't said even once that He 'thought' of Arunachala. He continually says that Arunachala made Him think of Arunachala and He is grateful to Arunachala for that.

In Verse 3 of *Arunachala Pathikam*, Sri Bhagavan says: 'I had no idea of thinking of You at all. And yet You drew me with Your Cord of Grace...' In Verse 49 of *Aksharamanamalai*, Sri Bhagavan says: 'Wealth Benignant, holy Grace that came to me unsought...' Everywhere, Sri Bhagavan talks about the Grace that was showered unsought. He didn't seek Arunachala but Arunachala made Him seek Him. Sri Bhagavan talks of His own utter insignificance, and the Majesty, Grandeur and Glory of Arunachala. In Verse 5 of *Arunachala Pathikam*, Sri Bhagavan says: 'From out of all the creatures in the World, what did You gain by choosing me? You saved me, did You not, from falling into the 'void' and You have held me firm fixed at Your Feet. Lord of the Ocean of Grace! My Heart shrinks in modesty, even at the 'thought' of You. Long may You live, O Arunachala, and let me bend my head in praise and worship of You.'

"Whenever we feel depressed at not progressing in our *sadhana* despite our efforts, we must remind ourselves that we are not doing any *sadhana* of our own but He is making us do it out of His Grace. It is up to Him to do what He wills with our *sadhana*. We cannot choose Him, only He can choose us. The *Kathopanishad* says: 'This *Atman* cannot be attained by study of *Vedas* or by intelligence, nor by much listening. It is gained by him alone whom It chooses. To him, this *Atman* reveals its True Nature' (I, 2.23).

"We cannot choose to do or avoid *sadhana*. When chosen, we must be grateful and humble and not complain about results. We must leave everything to Arunachala who as Sri Bhagavan says 'will not stop till He makes us still, like the Holy Hill Itself, once we turn to Him.' (*Decad, 10*).

Dr. Subrahmanian often pointed out: "We are made to turn to Him through His Grace. It is through His Grace that we think of Him and it is for Him to do what He likes with us and our *sadhana*."

Professor K. Subrahmanian was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on January 11, 1998.

Guided by KS, the members of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad, to this day, prefer to practise rather than discuss or propagate the ideal of brotherhood based on equality. Close and well knit, all its members are totally devoted to Bhagavan and his teaching.

Once, they invited Kanakammal and me to share with them the reminiscences of the Master. While I spoke in English, Kanakammal spoke in Telugu. Devotees, particularly the ladies, were overwhelmed to listen to these homely talks, especially as we had been witness to some of Sri Bhagavan's Divine Play. Later, we gave public talks at the Gandhi Memorial Hall on the "Sacred Presence of Sri Bhagavan".

"The Hindu", was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan on January 11, 1998.

Kanakamma



Kanakamma was a precocious child. The precocity lay in her sad Socratic discontent — her constant companion for many years. The discontent was like an inner *sphurana*. Born with the proverbial silver spoon in her mouth — in an affluent Tamil *Brahmin* family — settled in Andhra, Kanakamma evinced from her early girlhood a natural indifference to things mundane and materialistic, and later a distaste for married life. She did get married to give satisfaction to her dying grandfather whom she was very fond of from her childhood. Soon, she left her husband and came away to Arunachala.

Kanakamma had all the makings of a true spiritual seeker. There was search for a Master but no groping from *guru* to *guru*. There was discontent but no desire; aspiration but no ambition; a gentle sadness but no grief; righteousness but no self-righteousness; tears of love but no sobs of self-pity. Her sights were being set for her and when they were set, she saw the *Jnani* Supreme! Thanks to her father who understood her noble aspirations, she finally came away in 1946 to Tiruvannamalai and settled down in an apartment near *Sri Ramanasramam*. There were no residential facilities then for women in the Ashram.

In Sri Bhagavan's Presence, Kanakamma's sadness diminished gradually and then vanished. A joy she never knew before was now hers. When one day in 1949 she was sitting in front of Sri Bhagavan with lots of other devotees in the New Hall, His gaze focussed on her. She closed her eyes and then opened them after a while. The luminous gaze was still on her and the "Penetrating Gracious Glance" of the Master took her mind to the innermost depths to be dissolved at the Source. This rare benediction was repeated for a longer time later, a few months before Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma nirvana*. She was immersed in peace and bliss. Kanakamma rarely talks about this event. While she avoids talking about herself, she is always willing to talk on Sri Bhagavan.

Kanakamma used to come to the Ashram every morning and evening around *Puja* time and kept herself as an open house for serious students of Sri Ramana's Teaching. Eager groups of devotees listen in rapt attention to her informal talks on Sri Ramana's

"Collected Works" (Nool Thirattu). Her Tamil commentary on Sri Bhagavan's **"Collected Works"** was published by the Ashram. Even now it is a great boon to Tamil-speaking devotees. Characteristically, she disowned any credit for it and passed it to Sri Muruganar who explained the entire **"Nool Thirattu"** to her during the years when she served this devotee extraordinary and poet *par excellence*. Kanakamma was conversant with every one of the nearly forty thousand exquisite verses that Sri Muruganar composed on Sri Bhagavan and His teaching everyday early in the morning she would narrate one poem from Bhagavan's **Collected Works** and Muruganar's **Sannidhi Murai**.

Still waters run deep. Kanakamma, who came to Sri Bhagavan in the 1940's, was like a mill pond but much deeper. The slight frown on her forehead, almost constant, seemed to put off strangers, but devotees of Sri Ramana knew the depth of her Ramana-scholarship.

On our request Kanakamma agreed to share the following scintillating anecdotes :

It was in the New Hall — now adorned by the granite statue of Sri Bhagavan. The Power of the Presence of Sri Bhagavan surcharged the atmosphere. Kanakamma, who always preferred to sit at the back-most corner and meditate, was urged by another lady-devotee to go to the front and enjoy the 'luxury' of nearness of Sri Bhagavan! With hesitation she acceded to it and took seat in the front row, not knowing that she had thereby blocked the passage for Sri Bhagavan to come out of the enclosure around His couch. Sri Bhagavan gave a Gracious Look which sent quivers of joy through Kanakamma and she closed her eyes. Something made her open her eyes again and she saw Sri Bhagavan's Grace-filled eyes piercing through her! She was filled with ecstasy and she remained in that state for a long time unaware of the external environment. Time arrived for Sri Bhagavan to move out. The attendants were visibly annoyed that Kanakamma was seated right in the way; the lady-devotee too became restless and wanted to wake her up. Sri Bhagavan gave a look of disapproval to the attendants and made a gesture to the lady-devotee not to disturb the meditating Kanaka. Everybody had left the Hall; Kanakamma continued to be totally absorbed! On account of His rheumatism Sri Bhagavan moved with great difficulty to the side and managed to have the side enclosure readjusted so that He could squeeze out. All this He did without making any noise lest it should disturb the meditating aspirant. The lady-devotee later reported to Kanakamma her great good fortune. Till He got up for His walk Sri Bhagavan had been directing His Glance of Grace on Kanakamma. What a great spiritual boon!

* * *

"When Sri Bhagavan came to the New Hall, in front of the *Matrubhuteswara* Shrine a few rigid restrictions had been imposed that *darshan* could be had only between fixed periods, that no one should sleep in the Hall except the attendants, and that even such

attendants should go to sleep in the night at certain hours etc. So, Kodur Venkatratnam, Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer and T.P. Ramachandra Iyer used to offer to be the attendants at night so that they could be in the company of Sri Bhagavan. In those days Sri Bhagavan also talked a lot, irrespective of whether it was day or night. Particularly if He was narrating a story Sri Bhagavan would enact the entire drama with lively gesticulations. Sri Niranjanananda Swami, the *Sarvadhikari* was very particular that the attendants did not engage Sri Bhagavan in conversation and that they lay down quietly. So, he would go round the Hall at regular intervals, peeping through the window in between to check. Venkatratnam and Narayana Iyer would sit erect and gape at Sri Bhagavan while He dramatised a story. They would entirely forget the environment. Sri Bhagavan would know the incoming danger(!). So, suddenly He would stop telling the story or talking and make signs to them with His hands to lie down; they would obey. After some time when the *Sarvadhikari* had left, Sri Bhagavan would again make signs without a whisper of a sound and the avid listeners would get up! How childlike Sri Bhagavan was!

“During one such night session Sri Bhagavan was telling the story of a Saint very graphically. Venkatratnam was massaging Sri Bhagavan's leg. Since, Sri Bhagavan was having pain in the legs, it was customary to massage His legs from thigh to toe, every night. That day, it was the good fortune of Venkatratnam to do it. He was transfixed in listening to Sri Bhagavan; yet he kept massaging His leg. After sometime Sri Bhagavan stopped the narration and looked at him. Thinking that Sri Bhagavan wanted more strength to be used, he massaged with added force. After some time Sri Bhagavan looked again at him, again he pressed the leg very hard. This happened again. Then suddenly Sri Bhagavan told Venkatratnam: ‘What are you doing? You want to massage something, do you? Go and massage that stone pillar.’ Venkatratnam was flabbergasted! Then only he realised his mistake. Instead of massaging the whole leg, absorbed in listening to Sri Bhagavan's storytelling, he was massaging the same place again and again! Each time Sri Bhagavan looked at him to make him understand his mistake, he only pressed with greater vehemence, so much so the spot had swollen. How much Sri Bhagavan must have felt the pain! Next morning he could not face Sri Bhagavan. He avoided coming into the presence of Sri Bhagavan as he felt guilty and ashamed. Then Sri Bhagavan went out of the way and called him in and said: ‘Why are you avoiding me? Anyone else in your position would have also committed the same mistake. You were so absorbed in the story. It is alright !’ These, soothing words of Sri Bhagavan relieved Venkatratnam. Here, one should notice not only the forgiving nature of Sri Bhagavan but His rushing to rescue a devotee from mental suffering.”

Kanakamma continued:

“Once it happened in the Jubilee Hall — this was a beautiful thatched extension to the Old Hall to its North. It was raised so that more people could be accommodated and Sri Bhagavan could have fresh air, particularly, in summer.

"It was Sri Bhagavan's *Jayanti* day. Sri Bhagavan had gone behind the *Goshala* and was returning to the Jubilee Hall. At the entrance to the men's guest room (next to the stores) a lady had drawn kolam (design with flour on the ground) of a peacock. The peacock design had come out so well and life-like that the White Peacock who happened to be there, was stunned looking at the design as he took it to be a fellow-white peacock. Sri Bhagavan reached there and stood observing this unique scene. Cereals were brought, and were placed in an open tin next to the White Peacock. The Peacock who would otherwise have rushed to eat it did not even look at it; he continued to stare at his 'image' on the floor!

"Sri Bhagavan said: 'What (*Yennada*)! Are you feeling that a competitor has come to confront you?' After Sri Bhagavan said this, the White Peacock, as if understanding His retort, gave up his staring and started eating the cereals. Sri Bhagavan was kind enough to comment: 'The greatness of a piece of art lies in another artist of the same calibre appreciating it wholeheartedly. If a cobbler really appreciated the shoe made by a non-professional then it has real worth. If you stitch a cloth and if a tailor appreciates it then it must be really first rate. Likewise, if a peacock is lost in admiration of a drawing taking it to be a real peacock it proves the excellence of the art work. The artist is to be very much appreciated!'

After a pause Sri Bhagavan continued: 'For such exceedingly gifted artists, *Brahma Vidya* (Highest Spiritual Attainment) is very easy. But, they will not pursue Spiritual Perfection. Their mind will go only after further fame!'

These words of Sri Bhagavan apply to all talented people.

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"I came to the Ashram in 1946. In those days *Veda Parayana* was being done in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan at 5 a.m. During the month of *Margazhi* (December-January) Tamil *Parayana* would begin at 4 a.m. itself, before the *Veda Parayana*. '*Margazhi*' is the coldest month. The Tamil *Parayana* contained sections from Muruganar's *Sri Ramana Sannidhi* *Murai*, like *Tiruppalliyezhuchi*, *Tiruvembhavai*, *Tiruvammanai* and *Tiruppallandu* and from Saint Manickavachakar's *Tiruvachakam-Tiruvembhavai*. Sri Bhagavan would, as usual, be ready seated by 3.30 a.m. itself.

"Then Sri Bhagavan was sitting in the Jubilee Hall. Since it was open on all sides, the cold was really biting. Yet, Sri Bhagavan would wear only a shawl, which covered his head also. *Dasangam* (incense) was burnt and when sprinkled on the live charcoal, the smoke would spread, freshening the entire atmosphere.

"The urn with burning charcoal stood on a stool near Sri Bhagavan. Occasionally, He would spread out His palm and fingers over this fire and warm them. It was a beautiful sight! Once, when an over-enthusiastic attendant showered a lot of incense, waves of

thick, heavy smoke gushed out and smothered His face and He could hardly breathe. Sri Bhagavan laughed and said:

“போடுங்கோ ஓய் போடுங்கோ, சாமி தானே!
புகையை நன்றாக போடுங்கோ! கோவிலில்
இருக்கும் சாமிக்கு தூபம் போடுவதில்லையா?
அதை போல் தானே இந்த சாமிக்கும் போடணும்!
அப்போது தானே த்ருப்தி!”

“Add incense as you please, Sir! After all this is also ‘Swami’! Raise a cloud of smoke! Don’t they do so for the ‘Swami’ in Temples? So, you won’t be content unless you do likewise for this ‘Swami’! Perhaps that is why in Temples the ‘Swami’ is always made of stone! Otherwise, how troublesome would all this worship become for Him! I am troubled only once in a way. Guess the predicament of the Temple ‘Swami’! For Him it is six times a day; sometimes even more!”

* * *

Kanakamma narrated the following as told by Sri Muruganar:

“A disciple of a reputed Swami of South India came to Sri Bhagavan to have His *darshan*. With some hesitation he started telling Sri Bhagavan about his *guru*’s strict injunction that each one of his devotees should do so many thousands of *japa* daily and surrender the *phala* to the *guru* as their offering and that they were following it without fail.”

“Sri Bhagavan smiled and observed: “Is it so? It is to be appreciated. So much gain for the *guru* with no strain on his part!” While Sri Bhagavan was saying this, Muruganar entered the Old Hall. Turning to him Sri Bhagavan said: ‘Do you know? His *guru* commands each one of his disciples to perform so many thousands of *nama-japa* and surrender the *phala* to him, as *guru kanikkai* (offering). After that will there be any balance for the disciples? It looks like one keeping the principal and surrendering the interest to the *guru* as offering. How do you appreciate this?”

“Muruganar with tears in his eyes replied: “Sri Bhagavan! Their *guru* is far better. He at least leaves the principal and demands only the interest. But this *Guru* here (pointing to Sri Bhagavan) is worse. He takes away the principal itself; then where is room for interest? He demands the devotees’ moolam (principal) and vaddi (interest) all at once!” Sri Bhagavan gave a benign smile enjoying the poet’s joke with deep meaning.

* * *

It happened during Sri Bhagavan’s serious illness when He was laid up in the *Nirvana Room*. Sri Bhagavan’s sister, Alamelu Ammal, very hesitantly went near Him and pleaded with Him, thus: “Bhagavan! Once when you were in Virupaksha Cave, while trying to move a big rock from one place to another your hand was suddenly caught under it and

when the hand was taken out one of the fingers was dislocated and found hanging down limp. Vasudeva Sastri, who noticed it, was alarmed and started crying aloud. You calmed him saying: 'Why do you cry? Nothing has happened!' Then, with the other hand, you placed the drooping finger back in its place and it regained its proper position. No trace of any mishap could be noticed! Likewise, why don't you now touch this painful cancer on your left shoulder-arm with your 'golden' right hand, Bhagavan? It will be cured if you will do it. All our anxieties will be at an end. Just as you relieved the anguish of Vasudeva Sastri, please bless us now by turning your mind to the arm and curing it".

Sri Bhagavan looked at His sister intently with love and compassion. After some time He replied:

“ஆமாங்! எனக்கு உடம்புன்னு ஒண்ணு இருக்கு. அதுலே என்னோட கைன்னு ஒண்ணு இருக்கு. அதுக்கு வியாதின்னு ஒண்ணு இருக்கு. அது எந்த வைத்தியத்துக்கும் கட்டுப்படாம இருக்கு. அதெ நான் மனசு வச்சி சரிபடுத்திக்கணும். இத்தனைக்கும் எனக்கு மனசு எங்க வச்ச வாழறது?!”

“Yes, Yes! I have a body; and that has a hand; the hand has a disease that defies any treatment and so I must apply my mind to it to cure it. But, where is a 'mind' to do all this?”

* * *

“Krishna Prem (Britisher) was in the Ashram. He would always carry a shoulder bag in which he kept in a glass-case the images of *Radha* and *Krishna*. Only when going to bed would he remove it from his shoulder. After his first *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan he said he wanted to see the places hallowed by the Presence of Sri Bhagavan. Viswanatha Swami was asked to act as his guide. Early in the morning the two left for Skandashram. They went to various places and finally returned to Skandashram. Overwhelmed by the serene atmosphere, Krishna Prem sat down and started meditating. He was lost in it, Viswanatha Swami, with his practical wisdom, noticed the passage of time, and whispered into his ears: 'We are now in *Gokulam* (Birthplace of Lord Krishna). Sri Krishna has gone to Brindavan; we should also go there; so, please get up!' Krishna Prem meekly followed the Swami back to the Ashram.

Viswanatha Swami recounted the story of the journey in detail to Sri Bhagavan, the places visited and the ruse which he employed to bring Krishna Prem out of his meditation. Sri Bhagavan gave a broad smile and said, “பலே பலே! ரொம்ப பொருத்தமாயிருக்கே பிருந்தாவனம்!” “Very good, very good! calling this 'Brindavan' is quite apt!”

Krishna Prem was a staunch *Vaishnavite*, who saw only Lord Vasudeva in all the Worlds perceived. '*Sarvam Vasudevamayam jagat*,' 'Everything is pervaded by Lord Vasudeva.' Quoting this, he asked Sri Bhagavan: “Is not this the highest ideal?”

Sri Bhagavan nodded His head in agreement and said: “Yes, yes! It is an exalted State of Consciousness. The *Vaishnava* cult is based on this. Yet, who is it that thinks 'All that is

perceived is *Vasudeva*? Is it not 'you', yourself? Do any of the things perceived come forward announcing themselves as '*Vasudeva*'? While seeing the Earth, trees and plants as *Vasudeva*, don't you wish to see 'yourself' as He? If you who see everything as *Vasudeva* learn to see yourself as *Vasudeva*, you will become Lord *Vasudeva* Himself. After that there will be no need to specially perceive each and every other thing as His Form. If he who sees is transformed into *Vasudeva*, then that which is seen automatically becomes *Vasudeva*! Acharya Sankara's *Drishtim Jnanamayeem Kritva* (Making perception permeated by *Jnana*) is simply this."

The *Vaishnava*-experience is that God is both our Master and the Inner Self (யானும் நீ, அதன்றி, எம்பிரானும் நீ, இராமனே) How wonderfully has Sri Bhagavan explained this!

* * *

In front of the Ashram, there is a small but very old Temple for "*Manakkula Vinayakar*". During Sri Bhagavan's last days, Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami bought a plot of land and built a house behind that powerful shrine. After Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma Nirvana*, Muruganar was requested to occupy the main building, while Smt. Kanakamma and Smt. Padma Amma who used to serve Muruganar then, stayed in an attached room beside it. Ashram was sending his lunch; and Padma and Kanakamma were helping him with coffee and hot water to drink, bathe etc. (Some years later, Dr. TNK gifted the house to me. In the 1990s, I transferred the ownership of this land and building to Sri Ramanasramam.)



Dr.T.N.K Building: Muruganar and Kanakamma gave their expositions on 'Collected Works' in Tamil

Since devotees like Kanakammal, Anandammal, Abhurvathammal, Nombammal and some other ladies could not bear the absence of the physical Presence of Sri Bhagavan, Muruganar started holding sessions in this building, explaining the intricacies of Sri Bhagavan's *Nool Thirattu* — "*Collected Works*" — verse by verse. As Muruganar revealed, "Just as Sri Bhagavan did the same verse by verse explanation of the entire text to me!"

* * *

Kanakamma, who worshipped Sri Bhagavan and basked in His Presence, was further fortunate in her close acquaintance with Sri Muruganar. This association greatly helped her; particularly after Sri Bhagavan shed His body. Muruganar, through austere living, high thinking and vast learning, preserved and radiated a bright ray of Sri Bhagavan's Sun-like Presence for those who felt orphaned after 1950. Kanakamma, Padma, Anandamma and others, thus benefitted from their proximity to Muruganar. His daily exposition of Sri Bhagavan's *Nool Thirattu* ("*Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*") for many months transported them into Sri Ramana's "World of Pure Awareness".

I once asked Kanakamma to tell me about Anandamma. She narrated: "Anandammal had been coming to Sri Bhagavan from His Virupaksha days. She belonged to Tiruvannamalai itself and lived here with her parents. She was attached to Sri Bhagavan from her childhood and used to meditate in front of Him at Virupaksha Cave."

"Though her aspiration was purely spiritual, her parents forced her into marriage. Even after marriage, her regular visits to Sri Bhagavan at Virupaksha Cave did not cease. In course of time, she had a son. All her thoughts were about Sri Bhagavan; and, the son and other family members remained neglected. Leaving the child at home, she would still go up the hill for meditation. Nothing — not even the pleading persuasions of her parents and relatives — could wean her from this practice. After a few years, her husband passed away. Sri Bhagavan also had come down from the Hill to the present *Sri Ramanasramam*.

"Anandammal, leaving her son with her brother, shifted her residence from Tiruvannamalai town to 'Ramana Nagar', opposite to the Ashram. She erected a thatched hut with mud walls. She led a strictly disciplined life, eating very little, speaking only on matters spiritual and going to Sri Bhagavan every day without fail. The purity of her appearance would inspire reverence - the ochre dress, *rudraksha* mala around her neck, and clean-shaven head. Her needs were few. One Dhanammal, who was a great admirer of Anandammal, used to help by cooking for her. If Dhanammal had to go out of town, she would cook rice for a few days and put it in a pot and pour water into it. This was all: when hungry, Anandammal would eat a portion of the cold rice, with salt for taste!"

"Though she could not read and write, she could explain any passage from spiritual texts. She would be very happy if friends who were visiting, recited Sri Bhagavan's *Nool Thirattu* and *Ribhu Gita* in her presence. Her happiest moments, however, were those when she could sit meditating in Sri Bhagavan's Presence. She also dearly loved to go round the Holy Hill, Arunachala."

"A school teacher, Madurammal, well-versed in *Vedanta*, often visited the Ashram. She hailed from Madurai. Seeing the greatness of Anandammal, she used to spend some time with her and read out Tamil religious books. Difficult passages which baffled her would be explained by Anandammal in the light of Sri Bhagavan's Teachings. Thus, what erudition could not reveal, her direct experience could."

"In those days, many earnest *sadhus* were living at Palakottu - Muruganar, Munagala Venkataramaiah, Annamalai Swami, Kunju Swami and others. It was customary for devotees to give these *sadhus* some special eatables prepared at their houses. Once, I prepared '*pakodas*' and distributed them to the *sadhus* in Palakottu. That day, I took a packet of *pakodas* and went to her hut. She was in meditation. But, she welcomed me with her usual affection. I offered the packet. Without touching it, she asked what it was. I said: '*Pakodas*. I prepared them specially to offer to the *sadhus*. I had a thought that I should also give some eatables to the *sadhus* at Palakottu. I have given the rest. This last packet is for you'.

"She ate it and then turned a stern face towards me and said: 'Do you think *sadhus* really need these varieties? Look at that corner. Dhanammal has left cold rice there in the pot for me for a few days. That is all I need. Time is very precious for seekers. We should abide '*as we are*' — to remain '*as we are*' is all that we have to do. Not waste time in making special eatables for *sadhus*. This is all due to distracting, disturbing 'thoughts'. Remain where 'thoughts' do not rise'. Saying this, she resumed her meditative state. After some time, she opened her eyes and said: "Why do you waste your time like this? What does Sri Bhagavan say? Close your eyes and be still. Simply be!" She said these words with such power that after all these years, I remember and cherish them. Yes, why should one waste even that much time to do a so-called good act, when our Master wanted us to spend all the time in reposing in the Self. Even today, I feel greatly grateful to Anandammal for saving me from unnecessary entanglements and directing me powerfully to spend all the time in diving within, withdrawing the mind from going outward.

"Anandammal did spend most of her time in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan. When she returned to her hut, she would remain in meditation or if people arrived, she would ask them to read out to her some passages from books. She was quite fond of me. She told me: 'You have come to Sri Bhagavan at this tender age; it is very good. It is a rare

opportunity, indeed! Utilise every moment in *sadhana*. Attaining the "Fullness of Self" should be your aim; all the rest are only the traps of the 'mind'. Be ever vigilant. Attain the "Self" which is ever yours. Be true to yourself; Sri Bhagavan's Blessings will always be with you! Young aspirants have much to learn from the Wisdom and Pure Life of Anandammal."

"Once when I went to her hut, a young woman was lamenting over her hardship in life and Anandammal's consoling words even now linger in my ears: 'Your thinking about such troubles is what makes your will power weaker and weaker. Break the whole chain of these 'thoughts'. Go and sit in the presence of Sri Bhagavan. He will solve your problems and bestow Well-Being on you'. She added: 'For women who wish to do *sadhana*, Arunachala is the best "*Kshetra*": Did not Mother Goddess, Parvati, Herself do *tapas* here to gain the Left Half of Lord Shiva's Body? It means that at Arunachala, women will surely gain *Atma Siddhi*. Look at Sri Bhagavan's Mother. Are there temples over the *samadhis* of the mothers of Rama or Krishna? For Alagammal, Sri Bhagavan saw to it that a Temple was built. What better proof is there for the Greatness of Womanhood?'

"After Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma Nirvana*, devotees scattered out of Tiruvannamalai. However, after some time, they discovered that they could not find peace of mind anywhere else! So, they slowly came back to the shrine of Sri Bhagavan's *samadhi*. They approached Muruganar and requested him to expound Sri Bhagavan's written works (*Nool Thirattu*). Muruganar's explanations, interspersed with reminiscences of the Master, delighted us, like showers of Ramana-ambrosia. Fortunate indeed were those who listened to Muruganar's talks! Anandammal and myself were among those who have had this rare privilege!"

"After completing the *Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Muruganar expounded other spiritual treatises like *Atma Purana*. One day, Anandammal wanted Muruganar to explain a passage about Saint Vamadeva in *Atma Purana*. She asked: 'Vamadeva had some residual *prarabdha* and had to experience *garbha vaasa* (stay in womb, i.e. rebirth). Immediately after coming out of the womb, he realised the "Self", didn't he?' After uttering these words, Anandammal suddenly fell forward and collapsed. It looked as if she was prostrating. But after a few minutes, when she did not get up from her 'prostration' I lifted her and made her sit up. She was not conscious. We sprinkled water on her face, yet there was no improvement. Then, she was taken to her relative's house in the town. She never opened her eyes again. This happened at evening 6 and by 9 p.m. she was pronounced dead. Her last thought was on the Release of Vamadeva! Her body was laid to rest near the Ashram, by her son and her brother. Anandammal was an ideal devotee worthy of emulation!"

This scene must have caused a deep impression in Kanakamma that her life also ended at the very Shrine of Sri Bhagavan — on Sri Bhagavan's Jayanthi day – She was wearing a new saree and prostrated to the Sacred Shrine and never got up — her life having merged in the Huge Flame of her *Sat-Guru*.

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Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar was instrumental in reviving the Tamil *Parayanam* at the Ashram, which had captivated him in the days when Sri Ramaswamy Pillai, Sri Somasundaram Pillai, Sri Kunju Swami and others did daily *Tamil Parayanam* in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan.

I lost contact with him after that point as I was immersed in Ashram work — being actively involved with *The Mountain Path*. Still, I sometimes caught sight of him near the Bus Terminus during my trips to Chennai. He would suddenly appear, hand me a flower and then demand, "Ganesa! Give me a Rupee." It was only in 1980, after a gap of several years, that I came into contact with him again. The Birth Centenary of Sri Bhagavan's *Jayanthi* was being organized at the Ashram on a grand scale, with lots of celebrations and *poojas*.

One day, Yogi Ramsuratkumar met me and said, "Ganesa, the local people of Tiruvannamalai are not in favour of what is happening at *Sri Ramanasramam*. They are saying that it is a *Brahmin* institution and only Sanskrit is chanted there. During Sri Bhagavan's lifetime, Tamil *Parayanam* from the "*Collected Works of Sri Bhagavan*" was being sung. Start that again." I tried, but except for two or three Old Devotees, there was nobody who knew Sri Bhagavan's entire "*Collected Works*". I avoided meeting him again as he was very persistent with this demand.

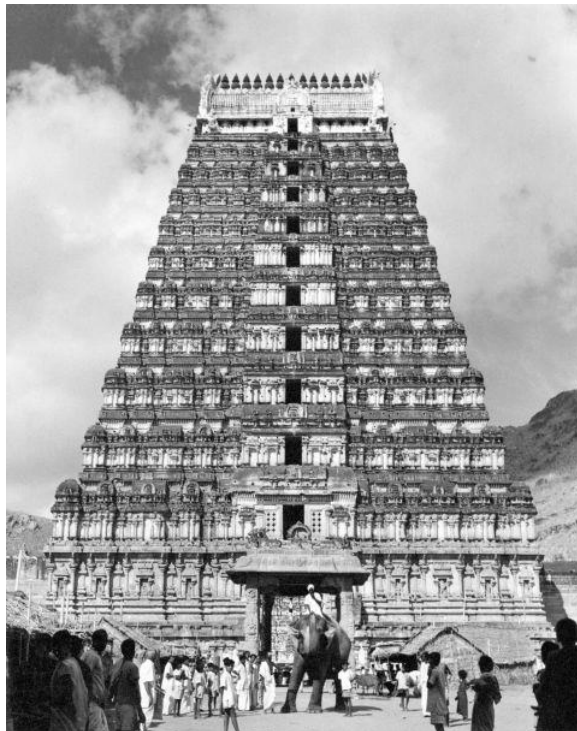
He solved this dilemma of starting the Tamil *Parayanam* in his own inimitable style. My friend Anuradha had settled in Arunachala in 1983. My brother Mani had also resigned his job and moved permanently to Tiruvannamalai to help with Ashram work. Together, they were helping me manage the Ashram as its activities had grown significantly. During the *Karthikai* festival in 1983, Anuradha, Kanakamma and I were near the Temple witnessing the procession of the Huge Wooden Car. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Yogi Ramsuratkumar came and caught my hand and said, "Ganesa, this beggar has been sending word to you to meet you and ask you to start the Tamil *Parayanam*. But you have been avoiding me." He was in his garb of several shawls, carrying a coconut shell bowl, sticks and a large fan. Anuradha was quite frightened with this vision of a '*madman*' suddenly accosting me — this was her first *darshan* of Yogi Ramsuratkumar! I admitted that I was avoiding him as I was unable to find someone to take on the heavy task of learning all the "*Collected Works of Sri Bhagavan*" in Tamil and teaching these to others to do *Parayanam*. He instantaneously turned towards Anuradha and said, "She will take up this task!" He then disappeared into the crowd as abruptly as he had appeared. Anuradha, still quite stunned by his dishevelled appearance and the familiarity with which he addressed me, asked,



Sri Bhagavan's Sacred Samadhi Shrine



Yogi Ramsuratkumar's 'Spiritual Haven' ARUNACHALA : Hill and Temple



Eastern entrance to Sri Arunachaleswara Temple



*Kunju Swami expounding Sri Bhagavan's Teaching
(Kanakamma, Anuradha, Ganesan seated among audience)*

*Kunju Swami teaching Tamil Parayanam –
'Nool Thirattu' to Anuradha*



Tamil Parayanam with Kunju Swami (seated in the centre)

"Who is this 'madman' who accosts you and gives orders to you? What is this Tamil *Parayanam* he is referring to?"

Some power must have been transferred from "Yogi" to Anuradha, because she started learning the "Collected Works of Sri Bhagavan" from Kanakamma and Kunju Swami and started singing whatever she had learnt in Sri Bhagavan's shrine. Many ladies were attracted to her singing because they had never heard Sri Bhagavan's "*Collected Works*" being sung in the recent past. Whenever Kunju Swami taught Anuradha, he used to say, "You have to learn it by heart. Otherwise, I will not teach you." She soon learned every poem in the "*Collected Works*" by heart and taught all the ladies who were interested. Ramani, my brother's wife, was especially keen on learning them. Dr. TNK building was the place wherein this *Parayana* training was being conducted. The same place wherein Sri Muruganar taught the meaning of "*Nool Thirattu*" to the ladies after Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma Nirvana*. Significantly, Kanakamma was expounding the "*Nool Thirattu*" within the same place, in the same building. More joyously, Anuradha too was teaching the 15 ladies *Parayanam* within this Dr. TNK Building!

In the beginning, devotees did *Parayanam* only on Mondays and Thursdays, between 6.45 and 7.30 p.m. On Monday, they sang *Five hymns to Sri Arunachala (Arunachala Stuti Panchakam)*, and on Thursdays, *Forty Verses on Reality (Ulladu Narpadu)*, *Supplement to Forty Verses on Reality (Ulladu Narpadu Anubhandam)* and *Essence of Instruction in Thirty Verses (Upadesa Undhiar)*. This was increased to three days in a week under the immediate presence of Kunju Swami, and Anuradha, its organiser and conductor. Now, the schedule that was followed was: on Monday, *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*, on Thursday, *Ramana Stuti Panchakam* (Five hymns to Sri Ramana), on Saturday, *Ulladu Narpadu*, *Ulladu Narpadu Anubhandham* and *Upadesa Undhiar*.

Yogi Ramsuratkumar kept himself informed of the progress of the *Parayanam*.

A few years later, when Anuradha had completed and prepared six days of *Parayanam*, Yogiji asked her, "How many days of *Parayanam* are ready?" When she replied that six days of it were ready, Yogiji asked her, "What about Sunday?" Anuradha, who is very bold and quick witted, retorted, "Sunday is *Sabbath*!" Yogi Ramsuratkumar burst into peals of laughter and said, "Oh, then Sunday will be a rest day."

The presence and participation of Old Devotees — Kunju Swami and Kanakamma — in the Tamil *Parayanam*, devotees felt the Presence of Sri Bhagavan! More so, since the *Parayanam* is taking place in front of the Sacred *Samadhi* Shrine of *Sat-Guru* Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Even today, the very singing of the Holy Hymns composed by Sri Bhagavan and on Sri Bhagavan in the Tamil *Parayanam*, is divinely and enthralling to all !

Thoppayya Mudaliar (Thapas Swami)



Thoppayya Mudaliar, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, was born in Kalappal, a sacred place in the Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu, as the son of Aiyappa Mudaliar, a very kind hearted and charitably disposed devotee.

It is interesting how he came to Sri Bhagavan. In 1915, he got severe stomach ache. Medicines did not cure it and he was advised by a well-wisher to go to Tirupati and have *darshan* of Lord Venkateswara there. He accepted the advice and on his way alighted at Tiruvannamalai and had *darshan* of Sri Arunachaleswara at the Temple. That night, a *Brahmin* youth, who had met Sri Mudaliar that morning asked him if he had gone round the Hill Arunachala (*giripradakshina*) and had *darshan* of Sri Seshadri Swami and Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. He gave a negative reply and the youth remarked that his visit to Tiruvannamalai was of no use! That was corroborated by Ganapati Muni, whom he chanced to meet near the temple immediately after. Ganapati Muni gave an illuminating talk on the significance of *Giripradakshina*.

And so, lead by the same youth, Mudaliar went round the Hill and up on the Hill, had *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan. From that moment his heart was ever drawn to the Maharshi and he began to visit Him off and on.

In 1926, when he happened to stay at the Ashram for a few days he asked the Maharshi if the giving up of worldly life was not indispensable for Self-enquiry. Sri Bhagavan did not encourage him that way and asked him to turn within his attention to the ever-present Self under all circumstances of life. "What is there to give up or gain afresh? Where to go? Who is to go? Everything that is, is only the ever-present Being", replied Sri Bhagavan. Mudaliar was deeply moved by this reply and went on sobbing for some time. Sri Bhagavan made fun of him before Sri Muruganar and observed: "Wherever one goes it is the Self and Self alone and one has only to find out what it is."

Though he has received replies from Sri Bhagavan to various questions on many occasions, he firmly believed that the very Presence of Sri Bhagavan was capable of removing all doubts and made one established in the Self.

He had the good fortune of taking a leading part in the *Maha Kumbhabhishekam* of Sri Bhagavan's Mother's Shrine at the Ashram in 1949, having had good experience in that ritualistic line, already. The express-request of Sri Niranjanananda Swami in connection with this task, got the silent approval of Sri Bhagavan. Mudaliar was entrusted with this great task which he successfully accomplished, gaining the appreciation and gratitude of all *Ramana-bhaktas*. He will ever be remembered by devotees for his service in this connection.

Thoppayya Mudaliar is then had learnt *Vedanta* systematically from a resident Swami of the famous Koilur Math. His learning and devotion found their utter fulfilment in the proximity of Bhagavan Sri Ramana. He is a shining example of learning, devotion and humility. He had the good fortune of meeting Ma Anandamayee also, who called him *Thapas Swami*, by which name he is now known to all. What greater *tapas* is there than coming in contact with the Enlightened!

Sri Thapas Swami narrated the following:

"When I was meditating in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan, the radio announced that Mahatma Gandhi had been shot dead. There were some communal disturbances in the town that night. The following day there were incidents of arson and looting. The *Sarvadhikari* asked some of us to keep vigil at night so that nobody trespassed into the Ashram.

"Next day when we were sitting before Sri Bhagavan, suddenly there were shouts of 'Catch them. Don't let them go.' A big crowd was moving in the direction of the Ashram. Salem Rajagopala Iyer bolted the doors and windows of the Hall so that nobody could come in. Chasing some Muslims, some Hindus ran towards the road through the Ashram.

"Unperturbed by all the noise and commotion around Him, Sri Bhagavan was quietly going through some proofs! I realised how a *Jnani* could be indifferent to things happening around Him."

He continued:

"It was the time when Sri Bhagavan was known to have cancer. One day, He asked Viswanatha (Swami) whether he remembered the verse in *Yoga Vasishta*, which said that a *Jnani* would remain unaffected in the face of all difficulties. Viswanatha Swami could not recall it nor could I. Sri Bhagavan asked for the book and had the passage read out to us.

"He who sees Himself as free from the body (idea) knows it not even when the body is cut asunder, in just the same way as the sugarcandy whether dried in fire or cut remains sweet. Just as the wife carried on with the house-hold chores though ever doting on her husband, so too the Jnani remains ever in the Supreme State though engaged in activity. "

Prabhakar

Prabhakar came to Bhagavan in 1949. The story of how he came to the Master is of absorbing interest. Prabhakar was a pure rationalist and was averse to anything spiritual. Though he had heard about SriBhagavan and seen His photos, he ignored Him. However, a total change in his life took place suddenly.

One night, Sri Bhagavan appeared in his dream. In that dream his boss pointed to Sri Bhagavan and asked him whether he knew Him. On replying in the negative, Prabhakar was told that he was none other than *Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi* and that he should go to Arunachala and have His *darshan*. Prabhakar proudly replied that he felt no such need and in any case he had no money to travel. His boss offered to give him the required money. He said: 'I will need Rs. 60/-'.

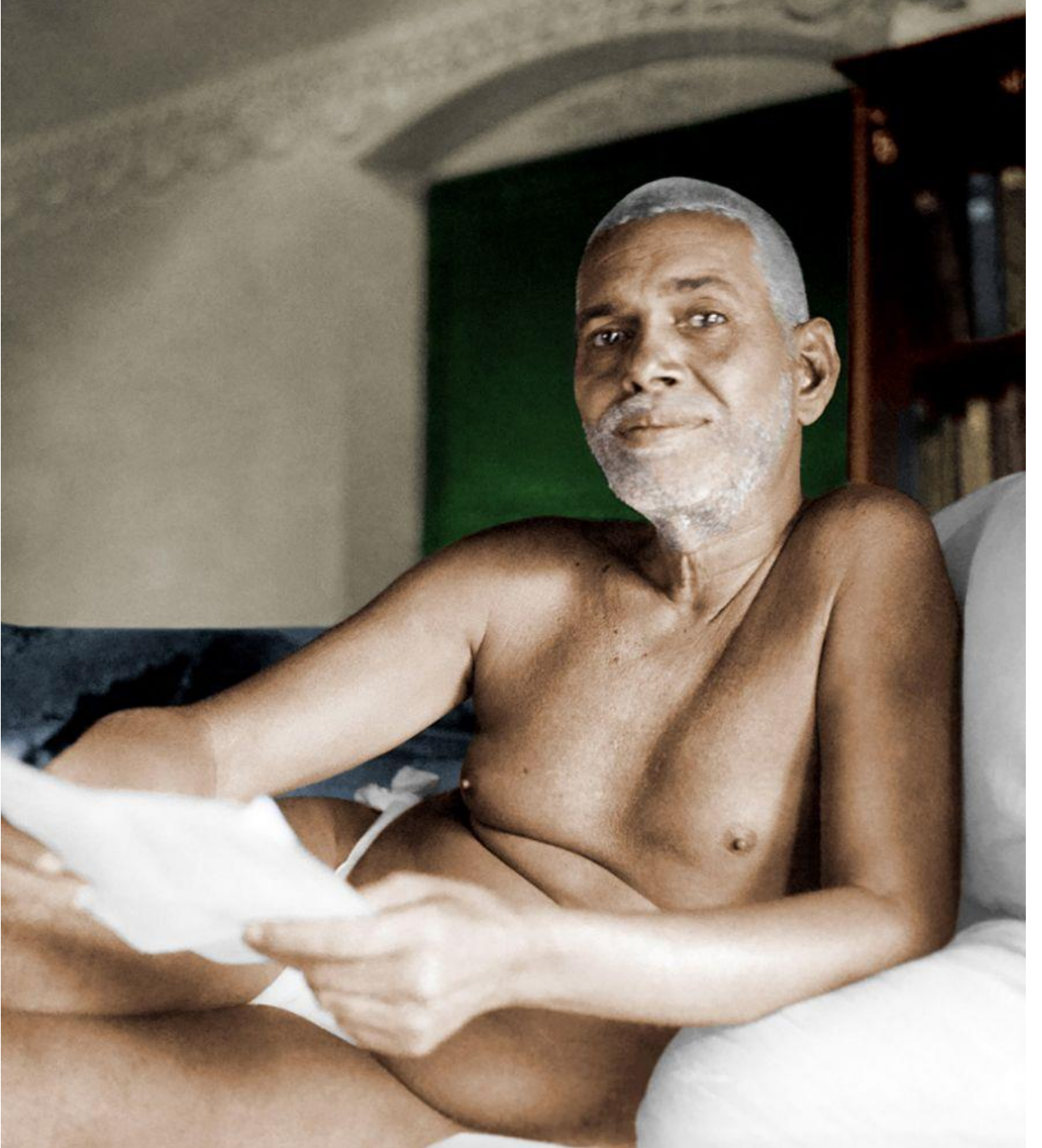
At this, he woke up from his dream. He hesitated to narrate this dream to his boss, though he did to one of his close friends. Prabhakar was persuaded by his friend to approach his boss with his dream story.

One day he picked up courage and fully narrated his dream to his boss (avoiding the portion dealing with money). The boss was unmoved. He said: 'Anyhow, pay more attention to your job and thus save some extra money to pay for your trip to your Sri Bhagavan'. Before Prabhakar tried to move away, there was a sudden change in his boss's attitude and he hastened to add: 'Do you yourself have a deep desire to visit Sri Bhagavan?' On Prabhakar replying in the affirmative, his boss asked him how much money he would require. However, without waiting for an answer, he wrote a cheque for Rs.60/- and handed it over to Prabhakar! Receiving the exact amount indicated in the dream, Prabhakar saw that it was all Sri Bhagavan's Grace and left at once for Tiruvannamalai.

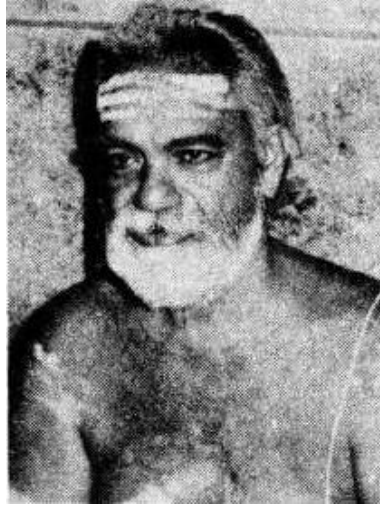
More thrilling than all these happenings was the fact that Sri Bhagavan was looking intently at the entrance to the Hall as if waiting for someone to arrive and as soon as Prabhakar entered He gave a beaming smile and a welcoming nod! For the first time in his life, Prabhakar did *sashtanga namaskar* (full prostration) to a Great Man. At his very first glimpse of Sri Bhagavan he became a fullfledged *bhakta*! He asked Sri Bhagavan: "Did you summon me?" Sri Bhagavan nodded His head in assent. He repeated the question twice; Sri Bhagavan nodded each time. This stabilised Prabhakar's bondage to Sri Bhagavan. During his stay he used to ask questions and Sri Bhagavan would reply to every one of them.

Once, Sri Bhagavan told him: "You say 'I am Prabhakar'; who is this Prabhakar? Why do you accept that you are 'Prabhakar'? Your parents called you so; you being a rationalist, why should you accept it? Who is this 'Prabhakar'? Use your reasoning faculty and search for '*Who you really ARE*'. Then, the Prabhakar of this particular form and name will drop off and the Real Being alone will shine. The wrong 'thought' that you are the sufferer of all these troubles will cease once for all."

Despite odds and obstacles, Prabhakar led a peace-filled life, because of his faith in and devotion to Sri Bhagavan. He composed *Prapatti Satakam* in Sanskrit, a language in which he was not well-versed. Many corrections were made and Sri Bhagavan had it included in the Collection of Poems Book preserved in the Ashram archives. It has a very moving beginning: *"The fullness of my devotion to you, Oh Bhagavan, is due not to the excellence of my reasoning power or my spiritual maturity, but only to the lustre that You shed on me in such abundance!"*



K. Krishnamurthy



K. Krishnamurthy, affectionately called 'Kittu' or 'Kittu Mama', the chief Priest of the Ashram Shrines, who celebrated his 60th birthday in 1987, was a product of the Ashram's *Veda Patasala*. Brawny, of medium height and wheat-complexioned, Kittu was a picture of calm majesty. Whether he was performing the *pujas*, *archanas*, *mahanyasa japam*, attending to the Tamil correspondence of the Ashram for the President, scanning the newspapers, briefly chatting with his colleagues in dulcet undertone, or delivering his customary thanks-giving speech at the end of functions, Kittu Mama was totally relaxed, poised, elegant and dignified.

His scholastic career ended at the primary level but he had an urbanity and a bearing which would do honour to a University Don, knew Sanskrit and spoke Tamil, Telugu and English. If his Veda chanting was perfect, it was not only due to his innate flair but also thanks to Sri Bhagavan who would not let the slightest error in pronunciation or intonation go uncorrected.

Kittu had the privilege of serving food to Sri Bhagavan in His last days and the mindful manner in which he did it elicited the approval of everybody, including the Doctors.

Kittu was a polished speaker and had a bubbling sense of humour. In a few short, sharp, staccato phrases, he would deftly distil the essence of any Ashramites personality and could generate much mirth at nobody's expense and in impeccable taste. It is amazing how keenly he managed to observe everybody because he had neither the time nor the talk.

Those who look down on rituals and the priestly profession should observe Kittu Mama and his colleagues in the Ashram and could learn how wisely and beautifully one could live. Head of a large family with seven children, Kittu Mama flowered into a householder-ascetic, utterly devoted to his family, his noble work and to Sri Bhagavan, who to him is Father, Master and God!

While walking within the Ashram premises — to be precise — in between the present Office and Sri Mathrubhutesware Temple, he had a sudden Heart attach and fell down dead with a smiling face in October 1995.

A great Priest ! A great Ramana-bhakta !

N. Subrahmanyam



N. SUBRAHMANYAM, Ashram Priest, was endearingly called "Appichi", and thereby hangs a tale. When 14 years old Subrahmanyam joined the Ashram's *Veda Patasala* in 1942, the *Patasala* boys decided to give themselves a nick name each and young Subrahmanyam got the sweet name "Appichi", Tamil kidword for "Sweets", and it stuck.

When the *Patasala* was in limbo in the difficult days following Sri Bhagavan's *Mahasamadhi* in 1950, prudent Appichi did a course in Teacher Training and taught in elementary schools for a couple of years. In 1954, on the advice of Major Chadwick, Ashram Priest Kittu looked around to find a young man to help him in performing Sri Chakra Puja at the Matrubbhutesvara Shrine and young Appichi who chanced to visit him, landed the job. He had never left the Ashram as he was totally dedicated and surrendered to Sri Bhagavan the 'Timeless One' as he would praise Him!

Appichi mama was a versatile person. A trained teacher, he was a priest, electrician, sanitary fittings expert, clock and watch mechanic, superb decorator of temple icons, and so on. All these talents were placed wholly at the service of the Ashram. During the nine evenings of *Navaratri*, the most talked about is the Sacred Image of Mother Yogambika, the Consort of Matrubbhutesvara. The costume wizard that he was, Sri Appichi bought out the several faces and facets of the Cosmic Eve during those nine days.

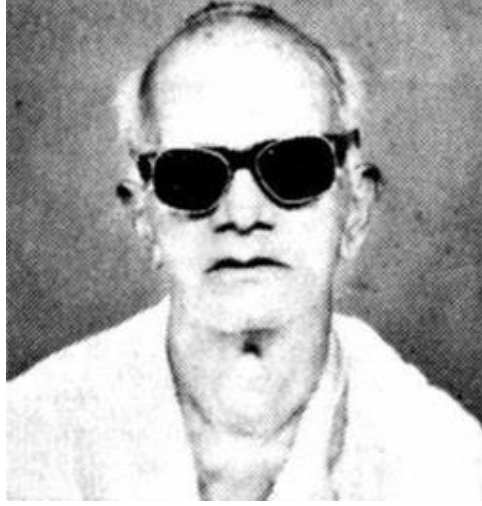
Appichi had carefully studied all of Sri Bhagavan's Works in Tamil and had a clear and firm grasp of His Teachings. He was also conversant with most of the Tamil verses composed by different devotees on Sri Bhagavan. Like his colleague and neighbour, Kittu Mama, Appichi, was also devoted to his family, to the Ashram and Sri Bhagavan. They were a wonderful pair of which any Religious Institution would be proud — as the Ashram doubtless was and is.

Appichi had a short illness and passed away in 2007. Appichi was a dedicated complete human being and fully blown fragrant flower!

All Ramana-bhaktas are still feeling proud and happy that they lived while Appichi was dedicatedly serving the Ashram.

* * *

Natesan, Sri Bhagavan's Barber



Natesan, a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan, had the unique privilege of having shaved Sri Bhagavan for an uninterrupted period of twenty-five years!

Natesan was a native of Polur, a small village to the north of Tiruvannamalai. His father, a staunch devotee of Lord Arunachaleswara, used to visit Tiruvannamalai walking the distance of twenty miles on the first day of each Tamil month in order to do a *pradakshina* of Arunachala Holy Hill. After reaching a ripe old age, his father eventually died during one of his walks around the Sacred Mountain! Natesan had full faith that it was the merit earned by his father that eventually earned him the privilege of serving Sri Bhagavan.

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

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

On one occasion, Sri Niranjanananda Swami called Natesan and asked him to start the work an hour earlier. Niranjanananda Swami thought that in the heat of the summer this

would be more convenient for Sri Bhagavan. Natesan turned up at the newly appointed hour, and in response to Bhagavan's questioning gaze, he narrated Sri Niranjanananda Swami's new plan. Sri Bhagavan said that the heat was of no importance, and the former timetable was restored.

Natesan also used to play pipe-music for weddings and other festivities, and once when he was shaving Sri Bhagavan, his uncle Subbarayan came to see him and told him that he was required in town to play some music as soon as he had finished shaving Sri Bhagavan. On hearing this Sri Bhagavan remarked: "It seems that Natesan has to go to town by 12 noon, and he has not taken any food since this morning". His attendants who were standing nearby took the hint and brought him some lunch from the kitchen. Barbers are normally treated as outcastes, and caste Hindus would normally only offer them food after they themselves had finished eating. Natesan was overwhelmed by this show of compassion by Sri Bhagavan and felt that only Sri Bhagavan could love like this. Recalling this incident in later years, Natesan was moved to tears and pointed out that Sri Bhagavan always treated devotees equally, and was particular that none went without food.

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

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

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

Natesan always used to spend a few minutes with Sri Bhagavan after his monthly work had been completed. In those few minutes he would have Sri Bhagavan's uninterrupted and undivided attention. Natesan considered these short sessions listening to the compassionate words of Sri Bhagavan to be the happiest moments in his life.

Although he was old, he continued to serve devotees in the Ashram, and many of them consider it a privilege to be shaved by the same hands which shaved Sri Bhagavan. Natesan spent his last days in his small house near the Ashram. His last moments were very serene and he was murmuring Sri Bhagavan's Name when he breathed his last in 1983.

Rajapalayam Ramani Ammal



Rajapalayam RAMANI AMMAL better known in and around the Ashram as 'Rajapalayam Ammal', was conquered before she came and saw Sri Bhagavan. She had been reading *Vedantic* books in Tamil from her fifteenth year. A grand uncle had become a *sannyasi*. And when her parents passed away in 1944, in her eighteenth year, her spirit of detachment and her spiritual yearning deepened.

It was then that a kinsman brought *Ramana Vijayam*, a biography of Sri Ramana in Tamil. When she opened the book and saw the photograph of Sri Ramana, she was totally overpowered. That picture opened up before young Ramani a path which she had no choice but to tread — the Path leading to the Mount, the *Maharshi* and *MahaYoga*. There was no question of asking for her relatives' permission because hers was an affluent, highly conservative family of '*Rajus*', descendants of the *Rajputs* of Rajasthan, the womenfolk of whom rarely if ever stepped out of their homes.

She waited for a few years and then came away one day with the help of an understanding brother. The moment she saw Sri Ramana, bright like Flame, all her anxieties vanished. Later Sri Bhagavan told her that she had come to her own place. Indeed, it was homecoming for Rajapalayam Ammal and she was living happily ever after. She found here her Father who, nearly half a century earlier, had left home in quest of His Father. She said that when one goes to heaven, one cannot but be happy and there was no return because *that* was "really the return".

Living in a charming little house with a nice portico, built with her brother's help, not far from the Ashram, she came regularly to the Ashram. She was held in esteem by everybody for her deep devotion to Sri Bhagavan, her graciousness, her dignity, mindfulness in word and deed, dispassion and exquisite sense of poise.

Of Sri Bhagavan she said: "Sri Bhagavan is beyond words. He is beyond *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Siva*. There have been Great Saints in the World, but here was a Perfect *Jnani* who lived with people as one among them, making himself available to them all the time".

Rajapalayam Ammal was given medical treatment away from Arunachala, but at her last moments in 1994, insisted she would die only "as a dust at the Foot of Sacred Arunachala — her Guru's GURU!" Her last prayerful wish was fulfilled !

Ammani Ammal



It is very interesting as to how **AMMANI AMMAL** came to Sri Bhagavan. She neither remembers her age nor the year it took place! She was born and brought up by affectionate parents; and, her father was owning a Cloth Store. After marriage too she proudly claimed that she was blessed with an understanding husband and a compassionate mother-in-law. Her husband was owning a *paan-beedi* shop and was quite affluent.

After marriage — coming to know of Ammani Ammal's deep devotion to visiting Temples — her husband would take her once in a year to a *Kshetra*, like Madurai, Chidambaaram. That year, all the three, visited Arunachaleswara Temple. While having *darshan* inside the *sanctum sanctorum* the Chief Priest (an old man) looking at their devotion, asked them: "Have you come to Arunachala to have *darshan* of Sri Ramana Maharshi?" The word "*Sri Ramana Maharshi*" went straight into Ammani Ammal's Heart! When they came out of the Shrine, she asked her husband as to what was the strange word the Priest uttered! He repeated it: "*Sri Ramana Maharshi*". Ammani Ammal lost instantly body-consciousness and stood like a stone. Her mother-in-law shook her up and brought her to normal Consciousness.

Ammani Ammal requested her husband to take her to the Maharshi, which he did with pleasure. When she stood before Sri Bhagavan — as He sat on the couch in the Old Hall — she asked for *upadesam*. He turned His *Glance of Grace* on her and smilingly said, "Oho! You want *upadesam*? Where is the big vessel to take it away in?" Ammani Ammal was ripe enough and hence took it as Sri Bhagavan's *upadesam* to her. She deeply understood in her Heart that *upadesam* was not an 'object' either to be given or taken away. It was the 'subject' of physically staying with the *Guru* and living in His presence!

Look at her husband's generosity! When Ammani Ammal made a request to her husband 'to leave her there and allow her to do service to her *Guru* Ramana'! With great joy he turned to his mother, enquiringly! And, see the magnanimity of the elderly lady! "Leave Ammani with her *Guru*! You send her money every month for her stay here comfortably and do *seva*!

The pious lady stayed, initially, at the small 'Manakkula Vinayakar' temple (which had no gate or doors for protection). When she expressed it to Sri Bhagavan, He got a photo of His framed and gave it to her, saying: "Keep it with you. I will always be with you!" She had this photo, all her life intimately devoted to it.

In her last days in her hut in Ramana Nagar, Ammani Ammal was bed-ridden, waferthin and toothless, but there was an arresting quality and nobility in her clear-cut features and that showed in her speech as well. She remembered every little incident and every devotee of Sri Bhagavan. Since some years food was being sent to her hut from the Ashram, which she ate after offering it in worship to the picture of Sri Bhagavan near her saggy little cot.

When asked if at this bedridden state she thought of Sri Bhagavan, she quipped, "Do I have any choice? What else can I think of?"

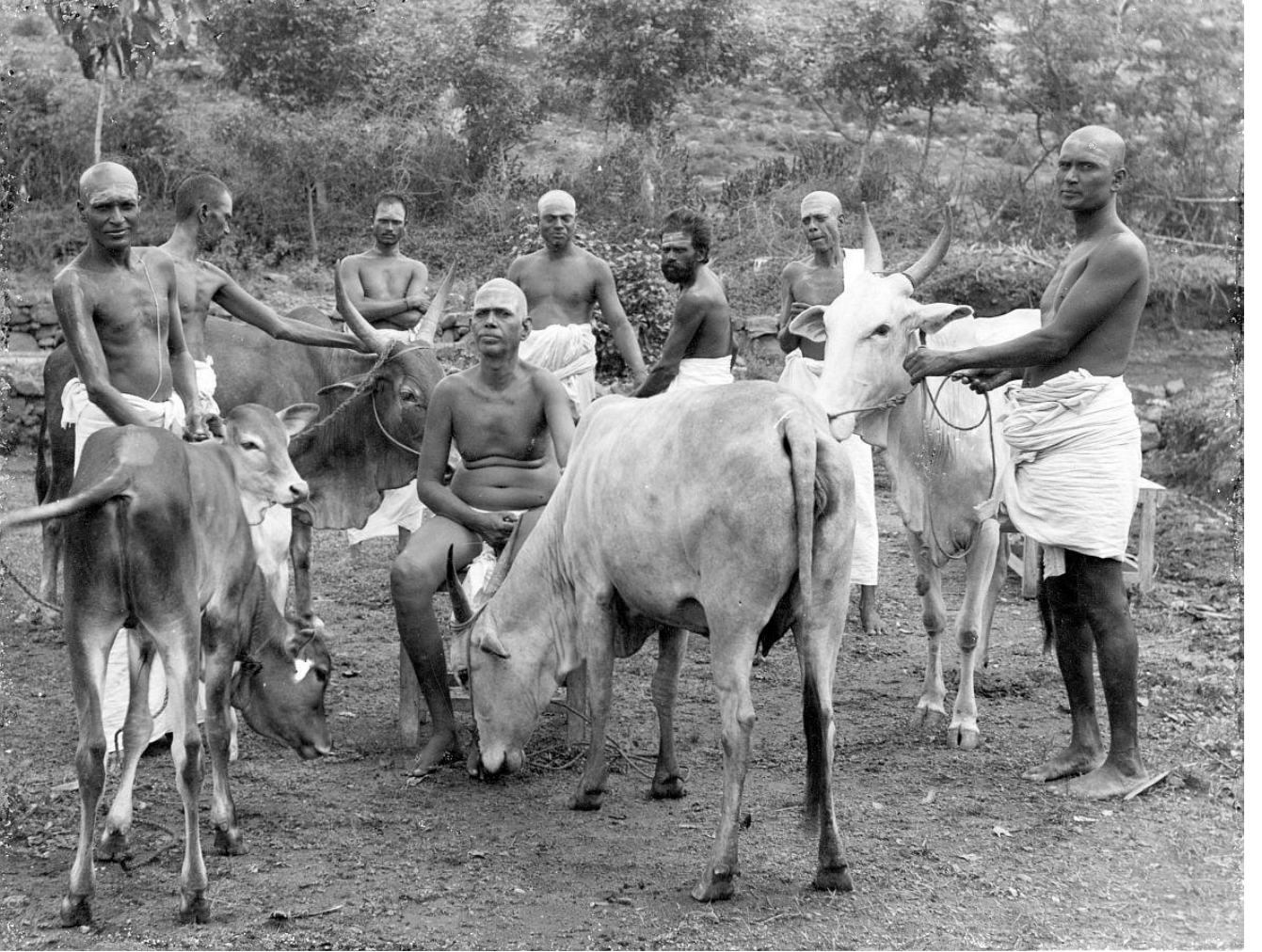
Ammani Ammal is one more proof that it is far easier to have Sri Bhagavan with the Heart than with the Head.

* * *

Being a great ascetic, she never demanded for anything — not even a maid servant to be with her and help her. Ashram was supplying a carrier — her lunch. She was content with one meal. However, in her last days, her weak state of health made her make a request to me. She said early morning she felt deeply hungry and wanted "*Idlis*".

Brave and compassionate as she was and still is, Anuradha came forward to supply morning breakfast of "*Idlis*" through a *Brahmin* family, living in Ramana Nagar. Ammani Ammal's physical need was fulfilled! When we met the next day, she expressed her gratitude through affectionate hugs, to both of us!

What a great Blessing from such a great devotee !



In the midst of the cows. Notice Cow Lakshmi offering her 'namaskar' to Sri Bhagavan

Pachaiappan



Pachaiappan, a nephew of Krishna Konar, was about 16 years old when he came to Sri Bhagavan around 1941 from Chettipattu. Prior to this he had studied upto the sixth class and was tending sheep at home. He served first in the garden and later began helping in the construction of Mother's Shrine. It was then just above ground level. He recalls the loading of huge stones cut from the hillock, vairakundru nearby, tied with chains on to carts drawn by giant bulls.

Once in a while as he passed by the window near Sri Bhagavan's sofa, He would signal to him to come. As he entered the Hall and stood near Sri Bhagavan, He would hand him the *kamandalu* asking him to get it filled. On one occasion, Sri Bhagavan advised him: "Never steal; never utter a lie; if you are in need of something ask for it." On another occasion when he was feeling ill, Sri Bhagavan told him: "Whenever you feel ill, lie down and rest for a couple of hours. That would be enough." Pachaiappan said he had followed this advice faithfully. When the temple construction was completed he had to return to his village, as there was no more work for temporary hands like him.

Pachaiappan was married when he was 25, about a year after Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma Nirvana*. He returned to the Ashram to serve permanently, a short while after. He had two daughters, both given away in marriage. He then took the job of a caretaker of the Morvi Guest-House complex.

As a young boy in the Ashram in those days, he recalled how Sri Bhagavan would take a walk daily to the room east of the *Goshala*. Seeing Him approaching, Cow Lakshmi would invariably lift her head and "Moo" affectionately to Him. Pachaiappan once saw Sri Bhagavan walk up to Lakshmi who had called out to Him very tenderly. He went near her, stroked her affectionately and then going down on His haunches, eased out a few drops of milk from her full udder into the vessel in His hand. He then raised the vessel and drank the contents. It was as if Sri Bhagavan had acceded to Lakshmi's desire to feed Him! It was a unique sight!

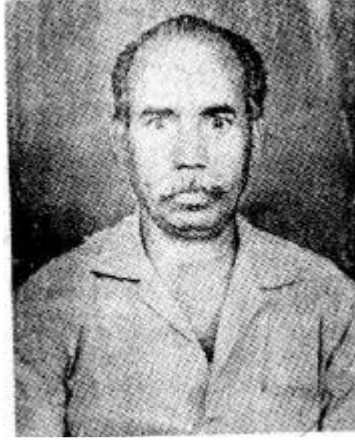
Sri Bhagavan had told him that he could help in cutting the vegetables at the kitchen. Even now he did this on and off, besides his chores in the Guestrooms. He recalled the way tooth-powder was prepared then by roasting *iluppai* (Mahua) leaves black and pounding them to a powder and mixing with salt, later to be folded in small packets for Ashram use. He would also go to the market to fetch fire-wood for the kitchen fire. Sri Bhagavan had told him that *iluppai* wood was ideal for the kitchen fire.

At his old age, pachaiappan could work physically no more. He was requested to stay at the Ashram itself, which he did with utter gratitude, till his death at the Ashram itself in 1993!



Cow Lakshmi offering her obeisances to Sri Bhagavan by surrendering her head at the Feet of Sri Bhagavan

Mannu



Mannu, another nephew of Krishna Konar and cousin of Pachiappan, used to visit Sri Bhagavan, in the company of his elders, when he was about 10. This was around 1948. He spent his time then playing marbles and the like in the company of others of his own age in the Ashram. He recalled that, Sri Bhagavan sometimes would walk past the spot where the play was on. Seeing Him they would stand by respectfully. Sri Bhagavan had once asked Mannu if he was studying in school. It was after several years after Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma Nirvana* that Mannu came to stay permanently in the Ashram, though there had been many short visits in between.

Mannu who was cheerful, rough and tough had remained a bachelor, dedicating himself to the service of the Ashram.

Mannu, beloved Ashram worker, was absorbed in Sri Bhagavan on 7th August, 92, while staying within the Ashram premises.

* * *



Natesan



Natesan, also from Chettipattu, belonged to the generation following Pachaiappan's. His father had earlier served in the Ashram. He had many occasions to visit the Ashram as a youngster in those days. His first visit was probably around 1948 when he was about 10 years old and studying in the fourth class. Sri Bhagavan used to sit out in the thatched enclosure north of the Old Hall.

Once while Sri Bhagavan was on His way towards the *Goshala*, Natesan's father had prodded him to prostrate to Sri Bhagavan. As he lay down in supplication at His feet, Sri Bhagavan asked:

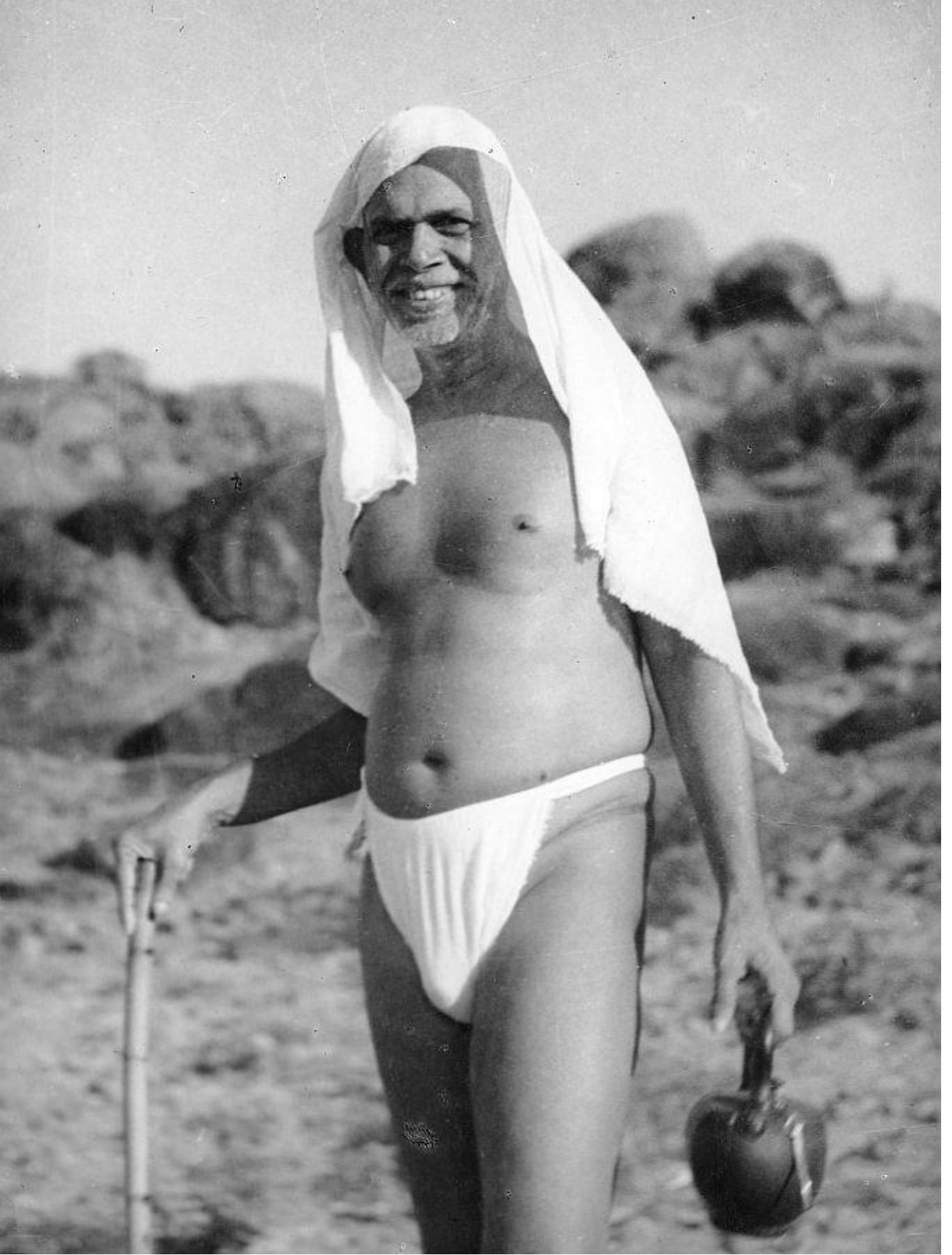
"Enna? Oon paiyanaa?" (Your son, is he?) When his father replied in the affirmative Sri Bhagavan blessed with a "*Sari, Sari* (All right).

Natesan was married and had two daughters both given away in marriage. Like the others mentioned earlier he too had served in all areas of the Ashram. He particularly earned the reputation of being an excellent gardener. He worked in the Ashram Office, as well.

His ability to serve Old Devotees of Sri Bhagavan very well and with personal attention, dedication and care enabled him to serve the Ashram President T.N. Venkataraman in his last days earning him the appreciation of all the residents of the Ashram. He, then, very dedicatedly served Sri Balarama Reddiar till he got absorbed in Arunachala.

In his last days, he preferred to stay with his family in the village very nearby, where he breathed his last.

* * *



Very rare photo of Sri Bhagavan putting His towel on His head

Rare Experiences

T.N.Venkataraman (My Father)

All know that Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is a great Saint. But only a few know of His philanthropy and humanitarianism. Still fewer are those who experienced his paternal and maternal affection.

Of all these, one boy alone had the most enviable opportunity of sleeping with Sri Bhagavan and enjoying such paternal treatment. One and only one had that golden privilege. This was in 1920. Sri Bhagavan had come to Skandashram from the Virupaksha cave and a small batch of devotees had gathered round him. The greatness of the Saint echoed all over the world. Devotees from all parts of India were coming for his *darshan*. While males enjoyed the privilege of staying in the Ashram up the Hill with Sri Bhagavan the whole day, ladies were not allowed to remain there after Sun-set.

Maharshi had a younger brother and sister, his elder brother having passed away prematurely. This younger brother Sri Nagasundaram Iyer who was working as a clerk in Tiruvengadu temple had a small son. Fortunately for *Sri Ramanasramam* to be and unfortunately for his family, he took *sannyasa* when his wife died leaving a two year old baby uncared for. When both the parents left this child an orphan, Maharshi's sister, popularly known as '*Athai*' (Aunt), took charge of the child and brought him up with unstinted love, affection and care.

It was not only because she had no issue of her own but also because this boy was the only descendant of their whole family.

This lad was taken twice or thrice a year to Tiruvannamalai to see Sri Bhagavan and his father (of the *poorvasrama*), henceforth known as Sri Niranjanananda Swami, by Athai and her husband, who were living in the far South. They were provided with a house near the hill at Tiruvannamalai. Every morning *Athai* would climb up the hill and return to town in the evening, leaving the boy behind at Skandashram.

When at first *Athai* hesitated to do this, fearing to cause any kind of inconvenience to the much loved boy, Sri Bhagavan said that he would be well under His protection. In the night the boy would eat from the sacred hands of Bhagavan and Bhagavan would make him lie down beside Him, cover him with a blanket and lull him to sleep. He bestowed on him all care that any sincere mother is capable of. Early in the morning he would take the boy to the spring, clean his teeth with powder, and wash his face. *Athai* would rush up in the morning. Sri Bhagavan with the lad seated on a culvert would tell the child, "There comes your *Athai*. See in what hurry she runs up to see you." As soon as she came up, Sri Bhagavan would tell her, "Take your boy, see, he is safe and sound." The child was fondly addressed as "*VENKATOO*".

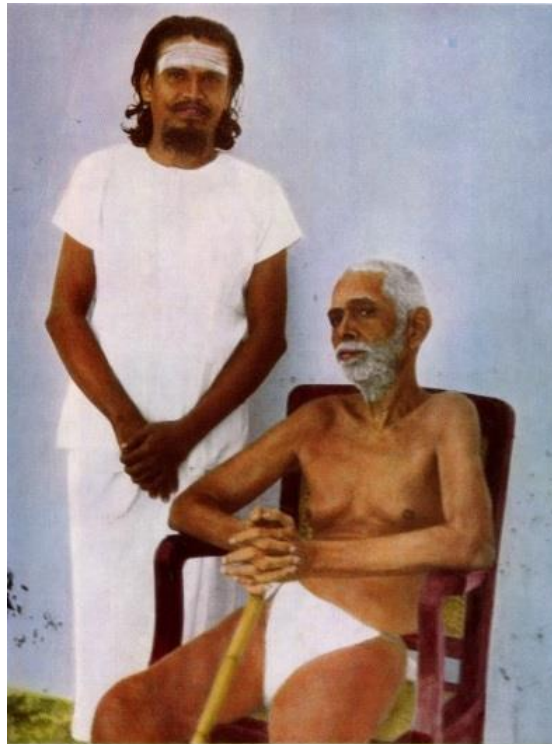
This abundant affection for the boy did not in any way prevent the Maharshi from being strict with him. The following incident makes it clear that Bhagavan gave the boy a practical lesson which till his last days he had not forgotten.

At Skandashram lived a monkey named *Nondi*, which was the pet of all. The Maharshi had ordered that whatever food was served to His followers should also be served to the monkey, and in case it was absent elsewhere, then its share should be kept separate for its return. In such a case, the food would be kept near a window inside the cave and the shutter closed but not bolted. This was the custom.

On one of his periodical visits to the Ashram one day, the boy had enjoyed the sweet dishes served to the devotees. He had a little more than the usual share. The monkey being absent, its share was kept near the closed window. The boy, having had his share, went up to the window and began to eat out of the monkey's as well. Suddenly, the monkey came and opened the window only to see the boy eating its share. It gave the boy a blow on his cheek. Shocked and terrified, the boy cried out and devotees tried to console him. Sri Bhagavan came to the spot, understood the situation and told the boy: "You deserve it. Why did you want his (monkey's) share? You have had enough already. You ought to have been contented with that." Instead of appeasing the beloved child, Sri Bhagavan put him right. The boy became silent and heeded Sri Bhagavan's words.

"Do not touch the property of others. Be content with what you have. Share equally what you have. Divide it with one and all around you. Help the needy. Be not blind when a wrong is committed before you. Correct it if possible, or at least speak out for the right." These are some of the golden truths the young boy was able to grasp from the words of the Maharshi that day.

That blessed boy was Swami Ramanananda (Sri T.N. Venkataraman, former President of *Sri Ramanasramam*, the only descendant of Maharshi's family and my father).



T.N.Venkataraman with Sri Bhagavan

Namakaranam

Many devotees have known and poets have sung of the grace of Sri Bhagavan as Mother or Father, but few are aware of His charming playfulness as a grandfather interested in *Namakarana* (christening), to the satisfaction of all concerned, when new additions were made to devotees' families. This natural prerogative, which He enjoyed exercising, was brought into full play in the successive names He bestowed on Venkatoo's children. This series presents a beautiful story revealing the humour and humanity of Sri Bhagavan, who also officiated at the *annaprasana* ceremonies of these children and fed them with their first mouthful of boiled rice.

Even before Venkatoo came to Tiruvannamalai and settled at the Ashram in 1938, he used to bring his new born babes to Sri Bhagavan to receive His blessings and be named by Him. When the first son was brought to Him in 1934 and placed in His hands in the Old Hall and *Athai* requested Him to choose a name for the child, He lifted His head and noticed one Sundara Arya, a shy resident, unobtrusively entering the Hall, and said: Look! there he is. Does he not say, name the child after me? "So, the child got the name, *SUNDARA RAMANAN*, combining Sri Bhagavan's name with that of His father.

The next son, brought to Him in 1936 for naming, gave Him, as He jokingly said "No trouble at all, for he had come into the World with a name!" The implication was that, having been born on *Vinayaka Chaturti* (the birthday of Lord Ganesa), the baby had to be named *GANESAN*.

The third son was born in 1939, by which time the family had settled in Tiruvannamalai. When the infant was taken to Him for naming, Sri Bhagavan smilingly said: "This fellow too gives no trouble. He is the younger brother of Ganesa and hence is also born with a name!" Thus he came to be called *SUBRAMANIAM*.

The next infant, a girl, was put into Sri Bhagavan's hands in 1941, and elicited the remarks: "Though the first girl born in our family should be named *Alagu* or *Alamelu*, I would name her after my grandmother who almost sacrificed herself for the family". So, in grateful memory, the child was named *LAKSHMI*. The next baby girl (1944) was named by Sri Bhagavan, *ALAGU*, after His mother.

When the next baby girl (1946) was taken to Sri Bhagavan, He told the devotees in the Hall "I had given my grandmother's name and my mother's name to two girls. Won't Venkatoo be angry with me if I fail to give this one his mother's name?" So this child was called *MANGALAM*. The last baby girl (1949) was taken to Sri Bhagavan by Sadhu Kumaraswami and others who wanted to name her *Alamelu*, after Sri Bhagavan's sister, and were almost certain that He would make this obvious choice. But when the baby was in His hands and there was a general murmur 'Alamelu', Sri Bhagavan gave a beaming smile and said "No, no; I have given the name of my grandmother, my mother and also Venkatoo's mother. What will poor Nagu feel if I forget her mother? Let her be called *SARASWATI*". Saraswati was the name of Venkatoo's mother-in-law!

"BE A CHANNEL FOR THE 'WHITE LIGHT' TO PASS THROUGH"!

(Rig Veda: "Be a Channel for the 'White Light'¹ to pass through"!)

"Channels" through whom *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana moulded *Ganesan* from his Childhood!

The Photos-presentation that follows will by itself give clarity of how magnanimous is the '*Guru-Sadhaka*' relationship is. Sri Bhagavan's Grace moulded (the future) *sadhaka* Ganesan from his childhood. Ganesan is now 88 years old = (Sri Bhagavan gave the name '*Ganesan*' to him.)

Sri Bhagavan systematically moulded him through His Holy Presence, through His Sacred Words of instruction; and, through appropriate "Channels" at the most appropriate periods in his life as a *sadhaka*!

Up to the age of 24 Ganesan was allowed to wander in the outward World; and in 1960, he was drawn back by the Great Magnet BHAGAVAN Sri Ramana to stay at His Ashram, permanently and serve Him. Great and compassionate Old Devotees of Sri Bhagavan and Sages and Saints moulded Ganesan spiritually, as '*Pure Channels*' of the Great Flame of Sri Arunachala Ramana.



'Child' Ganesan

¹ White Light = GOD



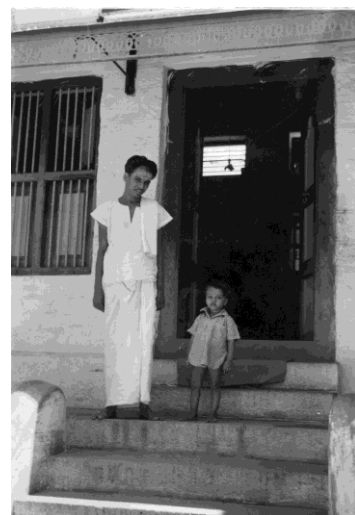
**One of the earliest group photos of Old Devotees with Sri Bhagavan
(Annamalai Swami holds 'Baby' Ganesan in his hands)**



Ganesan is being carried by Father T.N.V (to his right stands Mother Nagalakshmi, and to his left stands Alamelu Athai)



With Sri Bhagavan



**Standing with Father T.N.V in front of Asharm
Office(entrance)**



With Sri Bhagavan (standing rightmost)



**Standing to the right of Sri Bhagavan
at Skandashram**



In the New Hall with Sri Bhagavan (in the circle)

Ganesan was taken to Sages and Saints by one Old Devotee of Sri Bhagavan or the other, beginning with Framji Dorabji and his son Dorab Framji taking him to J. Krishnamurti, through Soona Nicholson to Nisargadatta Maharaj, through T.K.Sundaresa Iyer to Swami Ramdas and Mother Krishna Bai, through Munagala Venkataramiah to Mother Rama Devi, Balarama Reddiar to Ma Anandamayee Ma, all remarkable "Channels" for Sri Bhagavan through whom Ganesan had the greatest spiritual opportunity of benefitting by the presence and proximity of the Sages and Saints. His constant stay at Sri Bhagavan's Ashram, enabled him to receive, serve and thereby get spiritually benefitted from them.

Please read the following salient points to have a glimpse of how Ganesan was moulded into true Spiritual Living :

1) In 1967, Ganesan met Sadhu Natanananda for the first time! Prostrated to him. Sadhu Natanananda enquired: "What *sadhana* are you doing? Are you practising Self-Enquiry?" Ganesan replied: "I am not capable of doing Self-Enquiry. I only chant 'Arunachala Siva', 'Arunachala Siva'!"

His face was red with rage: "What a fool you are! What do you think you have come to Sri Bhagavan for? For what purpose has He chosen you? It is only to make you "like Him"! Read His '*Forty Verses on Reality*', practise Self-Enquiry! Be the TRUTH! That is why you have been chosen!"

2) Mataji Krishna Bai, Anandashram: "Before you commence your *sadhana* of '*Atma Vichara*', prostrate THREE times to the picture of Sri Bhagavan! Chant THREE times the *Guru Mantra*: 'OM NAMO BHAGAVATHEY SRI RAMANAYA'! And, then only commence your inner journey of diving within into your Heart !"

3) The Hyderabad Sufi Mystic came to Sedona, USA, where Ganesan was giving a series of talks on Sri Bhagavan and His Direct Teaching of *Atma Vichara*, embraced him; and, said: "Ganesha! *Alla Mallick* has sent me from India to tell you: 'Arunachala is your '*Kshetra*'! Bhagavan Ramana is your '*Guru*'! '*Atma Vichara*' is your mode of *sadhana*!"

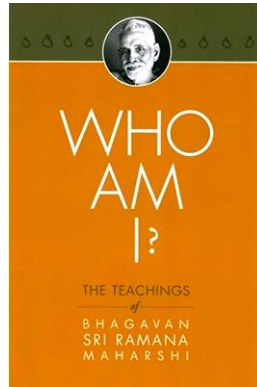
4) Ganesan prostrated to Yogi Ramsuratkumar ; and, said:

"Swami ! Today is '*Guru Vaar*'!"

"Swami lifted him up and, emotionally choked, said: "Ganesha! Your *Guru* is BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI ! This Beggar's *Guru* also is BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI, Ganesha !"



(l to r) G. Ramaswami Pillai, K. Natesan, Kunju Swami, Sadhu Natanananda, Ashram President T.N. VENKATARAMAN - V. Ganesan paying Tributes to Sadhu Natanananda, on his 90th Birthday



Who Am I?



Sri Bhagavan



J. Krishnamurti



Mataji Krishna Bai



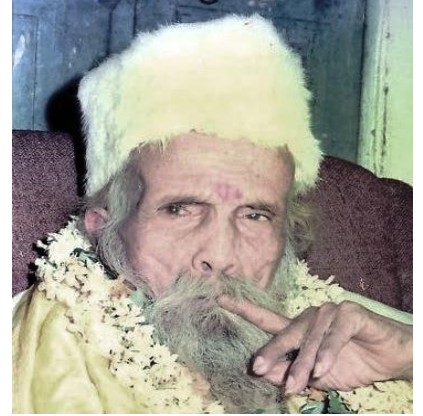
Ma Anandamayee Ma



Mother Rama Devi



Nisargadatta Maharaj



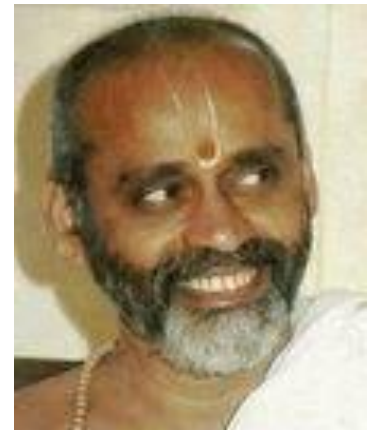
Koti Swami



Velpur 'Mouna' Swami



Nannagaru



Sri Sri Anna



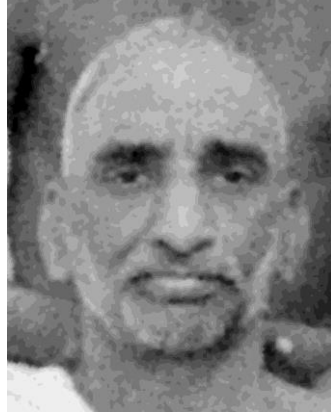
Nochur 'Ramana'



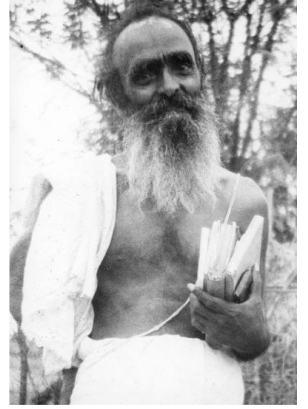
Nagalakshmi (My Mother)



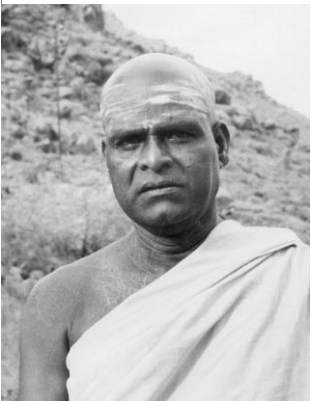
Ganesan with Sastrigal Mama and Sala Mami



Sivarama Reddiar



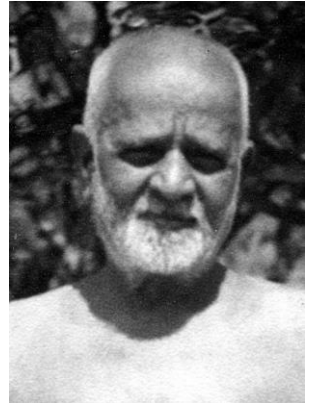
T.K.Sundaresa Iyer



Kunju Swami



Framji Dorabji



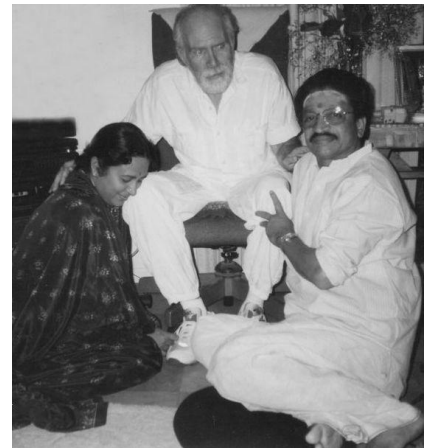
Munagala Venkataramaiah



Balarama Reddiar



Western devotees relentlessly guided Ganesan



with Robert Adams



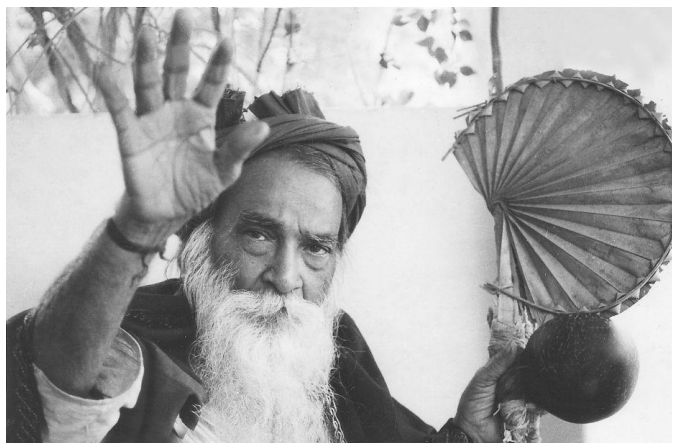
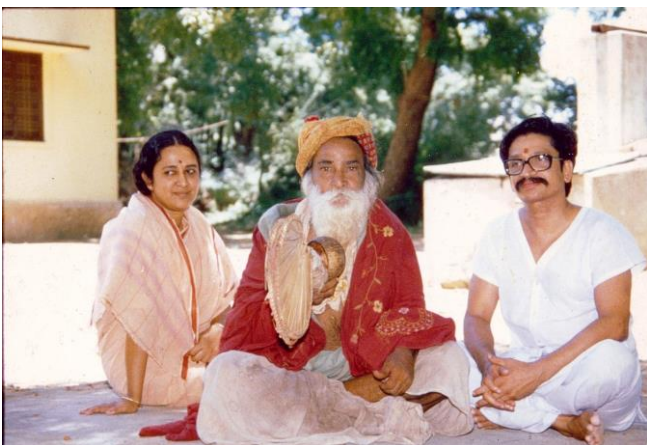
"Ganesha ! This Beggar is always with you"



Within the Sri Ramanasramam premises



" ...Sat-sangh with Yogiji... "



Sri Yogiji came 60 times to 'Ananda Ramana' to steady Ganesan in doing 'Atma Vichara'

Nagalakshmi (My Mother)

My mother is my *upaguru*. For it was she who showed me Sri Bhagavan even while I was in the crib by singing the third song of *Ramana Stuti Panchakam* to me as a lullaby:

"Of bright Gold Form, full blown lotus-faced One! Personification of Rare Realization, spreading fragrance all over the Earth! Having heard of Your fame, poor as I am, I looked for You throughout the World and reached You here, my Gracious Lord! Wise Ramana, Hill of Light. (1)

"Oh, Brahmin who dwells in Virupaksha Cave on the Sacred Hill of Light called Sonagiri! Oh Primordial, Eternal Treasure, oh Ramana, the Pure! Make me Your own without testing me. You are indeed the Supreme Being!" (2)

"Let me place Your Soft, Holy Feet on my head, at this very moment, to gain the Life free from pain and be cured of the disease of recurring births! Ramana, reborn in Self, living silent in Arunachala, unknown even to the Gods, tell me when I shall attain You, oh pupil of my eyes!" (4)

"Lord Ramana! I sought Your Holy Feet. You are Knowledge untiring, Silence and the Supreme Thing beyond 'thought'. Your Heart is the Centre that unifies the individual and the Supreme. You are the Ultimate Reality that endures beyond birth and death." (9)

At that time, I did not understand Sri Bhagavan, the *Guru* or the Self. But it was this lovely lullaby extolling Sri Bhagavan that sowed the seed of awareness of Him in me, and finally guided me to remain at the Lotus Feet of my Master. When I was around one and a half years old, my mother often had me in her lap when we were in Sri Bhagavan's Hall. Then, she would slowly push me in the direction of Sri Bhagavan's sofa so that I could crawl towards him. I would try and climb up the sofa but the attendant would pick me up and place me back on my mother's lap. This was a daily occurrence. One day, I moved towards the sofa and just climbed up. Sri Bhagavan, who had been watching all this, supported me with His left leg lest I tumble down. He pressed His right foot on my head, remarking, "He has been making an effort every day to achieve this. Today, there have been no hurdles. He has succeeded." I was able to get this *prasad* of Sri Bhagavan's Holy Feet on my head because of my mother. My mother, who showed me the real Sri Bhagavan, would always declare, "I only gave birth to your body. Sri Bhagavan is your True Mother." In this manner she trained me to have true Bhagavan-Consciousness.

When my mother was admitted in the local Government Hospital, the Government Doctor who attended on her, Dr. Sundaram, a ranked military officer, held her in such high respect that he used to prostrate first to her before checking her pulse. And as the hospital had only a common ward with two rows of fifteen beds, with no provision for a separate room for my mother, Dr. Sundaram graciously gave her his private room with its bed, attached bathroom, etc., an act for which I am eternally grateful to him.

But, since his bed was too high for my mother who was quite short, I had to carry and lift her up whenever I had to put her back on the bed. I felt blessed doing even this small act of *Mathru Seva*! I would come daily with dinner for her at around 8 pm, stay the night watching over her and return to the Ashram at 4 a.m.

During the day, my cousin sister, Gomathi, would take my place in the hospital. Gomathi's mother, my aunt, was very fond of my mother and used to keep her food ready for me to pick up. When handing over the packed food, she would pinch my cheek — hard enough to hurt me — and scold me: "Because of you my sister is in the hospital. You have not got married and that has affected her so much that she has fallen sick." At first, I took this as a joke. But, when she repeated it night after night, it started bothering me. So, one night, after feeding my mother and putting her on her bed, and hesitantly told her, "Amma! Your elder sister is accusing me daily of being the cause of your illness. She says it is because I have refused to get married that you have fallen ill. And, my looking after you here every night is only to pretend that I love you and show off that I am serving you. Amma! Is it true?" My mother ordered me to immediately lift her from the bed onto the floor. The moment I did as she wanted, she fell at my feet. I was shocked and cried out, "Amma! You are my *guru*! You are my revered mother! It is I who should fall at your sacred feet! Not you at mine!"

Before I could continue, she closed my mouth with both of her hands and said, "You know how I am proud of you — proud that I could be the mother of such a blessed son! In fact, not only do I not want you to get married, but I also do not want you to lead the Worldly life of a *grihastha*. Understand this! By remaining a *brahmachari*, you are performing the Divine act of preventing the creation of generations of *jivas* bearing lorry loads of *prarabdha karma*! Ganesa! Within a hundred years of your married life, you would have been responsible for creating a thousand *prarabhdha*-filled *jivas*! Though you are born in the Sacred family of Sri Bhagavan, you too will have a load of *prarabdha karma* to exhaust. One's *prarabdha* itself is so hard to eradicate! Imagine then, being responsible for a thousand *jivas* — each with their heavy load of *prarabdha* to exhaust! By remaining a *brahmachari*, you have saved a thousand *jivas* from being born, and having to suffer their *prarabdha*. How noble a vow that is! That's why I wanted to prostrate to you! May you live long and happily as a *brahmachari* and serve *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana! I wholeheartedly bless you, my dear son!" Deeply moved, I embraced her in gratitude before laying her back on the bed. And once she was comfortable, held her sacred feet and drenched them with my joyful tears! Till then, I had worshipped my mother as my *upaguru*, the one who showed me and made me accept Sri Bhagavan as my one and only *Guru*. On that day at the Government Hospital, she revealed to me that she was a fully blossomed *Jnani*. I repeatedly prostrated to her.

After this happened, another great revelation took place. My mother got cardiac asthma in 1980. She was suffering from severe pain and was admitted to the local Government General Hospital. However, there was no suitable treatment for her condition. Even oxygen cylinders were not available there. During that time, instead of going around the hill at night as I usually did, I used to sleep in the hospital at night and return around four in the morning to the Ashram.

On one such night, the Chief Doctor called me aside and warned me, "Your mother's condition is critical. She will die. Take her to a bigger hospital in Chennai." Although he spoke in a low voice, my mother had an idea of what the Doctor told me. She called me and asked, "What did the Doctor say?" I had no choice but to tell her. She said, "Give me your word on two things." I nodded. She continued, "First, promise me that under no circumstances will you take me away from Arunachala. My *Guru*, Sri Bhagavan, came to Arunachala and never left this place until He dropped His body. Likewise, do not allow anybody to take me away from here, no matter what the circumstances are. Secondly, I must die when I am in a state of Full Consciousness. Please allow that to happen because if I die in that state, then I will not have any rebirth. Even if I scream in sheer agony, do not allow the Doctors to give me morphine or any other sedative. Let my body suffer outwardly. Inwardly, I will have merged in Silence." I kept my promises even though the Doctors chided me, "You are an educated fool. You claim to love your mother, but you are a *rakshasa*, a demon. Just look at her plight!" I bore it all without uttering a word.

Before she left us, I prostrated before her and entreated, "Mother, are you going to leave me? What will I do?" I wept uncontrollably. She tried to soothe me, saying, "Do not cry. Be happy! The 'body' has to die one day. Do not give such significance to this 'body'. Shift your focus from my 'body' to my State of Being. Inwardly, I am immersed in Peace. The Being transcends both the 'body' and the 'mind'. Cling to the ever free Being and allow the 'body' and the 'mind' to fade away as they should. By not pampering them, they remain your servant. You become the master when you start paying sole attention to your Inner Being. My blessings are with you." My mother further blessed me by adding, "Sri Bhagavan will bless you. I gave you only your body. Sri Bhagavan is your True Mother." With her third blessing she said, "Serve Sri Bhagavan faithfully by practicing His Teaching. His grace is His Teaching." When I sobbed uncontrollably, she comforted me by saying, "I constantly feel Sri Bhagavan's Holy Presence, Ganesa! That is enough for me!" She passed away fully conscious in the midst of all her kith and kin at the foot of Arunachala. I helped carry my mother's body and we performed the final rites.

My mother was a devotee who was a *Jnani*, a truly realized soul. Yes! There is a great purpose in leading the spiritual life! And that purpose is to obtain the *Guru's Anugraha*, which alone can completely destroy all our stored up *prarabdha karma*!

Manni — Janaki Ammal

The year might have been 1948. Sri Bhagavan was reclining on stone sofa in the New Hall in front of *Sri Mathrubutheswara Temple*. A good number of devotees had gathered in it.

A *Brahmin* widow in her fifties with clean shaven head and draped in a plain, white saree, prostrated before Sri Bhagavan. He immediately sat up and called His sister, "Alamelu! Manni vandhu irukkaa paaru! Yingeyey irukka chollu! Nee gavanichchukko!" ("Our sister-in-law has come. Make her stay here. And see, that you take full care of her.") He uttered those words with a sense of reverence and inner joy!

Sri Bhagavan's elder brother Nagaswami got married at the very young age of sixteen to a thirteen-year-old girl. After a very short time, Nagaswami died. His young wife, Janaki Ammal was now a widow. Her parents being fairly rich, they came and forcefully took her to their native village — against the then prevalent custom in the *Brahmin* community of the widow continuing to stay only with her husbands' family.

Consequently, no one from Sri Bhagavan's family had seen her after that. Now, it was forty long years later that Sri Bhagavan was seeing her. Everything about how she looked had changed — she had grown wizened and dressed in the typical attire of a widow. But despite all that, Sri Bhagavan recognised her the moment He saw her!

His insistence that '*Manni*' should stay there in Arunachala has great significance. Because of this, Janaki Ammal dropped her body in Arunachala and was released from taking any more births — Sri Bhagavan, thus, released her from the cycle of births and deaths!

* * *



Sri Bhagavan giving darshan in the New Hall – (Ganesan can be seen in the foreground, right)

Pichu Iyer

ALAMELU was Sri Bhagavan's only sister and was younger to Him. From His boyhood, Sri Bhagavan was very fond of His baby-sister. But, being immersed in Inner Bliss after coming to Arunachala, He had absolutely no contact with His family.

When Alamelu grew up, she married Pichu Iyer. Though not very educated, Pichu Iyer was so efficient that he was appointed by his employer, a millionaire named Annamalai Chettiar, as *Peshkar*, or General Manager. On his shoulders rested the responsibility of managing and supervising — with a small group of others — Annamalai Chettiar's vast estates, lands and other properties. Later, he also owned a modest, local bus service.

When Sri Bhagavan's younger brother, Nagasundaram, lost his wife, she left him with a baby son. Soon after this, Nagasundaram came away to Arunachala to live with Sri Bhagavan. His baby, Venkataraman — fondly called Venkatoo — was handed over to his sister Alamelu. Having no child of their own, *Athai* Alamelu and her husband Pichu Iyer, gratefully accepted the charge of the small boy and brought him up with the love and tenderness of doting parents. When Venkatoo grew up and got married, they looked after his children with the same love and tenderness they had showered on him. Meanwhile, his father, Nagasundaram, who had chosen to stay with Sri Bhagavan in Virupaksha Cave for good, took *sanyasa* on the advice of Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni and was initiated by him with a new name, *Niranjanananda Swami*.

When Sri Bhagavan moved down and lived near Mother's *Samadhi* Shrine, a small group chose to stay with Him. This was the start of "*Sri Ramanasramam*". When the ashram started expanding, in order to manage its increasingly complex and varied operations, Niranjanananda Swami became its sole manager, the *Sarvadhikari*. When it became apparent that the responsibility was too big for one person to bear, the management decided to call in his son — Venkatoo — to stay with him and assist him. Consequently, a house was rented in the town for Venkatoo's family as it was then, consisting of his wife and his two children. This was because ladies were not permitted to stay inside the Ashram after sunset in those days. Not surprisingly, Pichu Iyer and Alamelu also moved in with them to help look Venkatoo's family.

Pichu Iyer was very fond of eating, and had a seemingly insatiable appetite for the *vadais* that were occasionally fried for lunch. He would enter the kitchen at a time when no one else was there and steal away to the garden with thirty or forty *vadais* and surreptitiously eat them! Knowing fully well that only one *vadai* per person was allowed!

The lady cooks had no choice but to report the repeat offender to the *Sarvadhikari*. "Chinna Swami" — as the *Sarvadhikari* was addressed by all — rushed to where Pichu Iyer was and ranted and shouted at his behaviour with the choicest of insults. Not surprisingly, this sorry episode reached Sri Bhagavan's ears. On hearing this, Sri Bhagavan called Chinna Swami and said: "Didn't you realise who you insulted? Pichu Iyer is our அத்திம்பேர் (brother-in-law) and மாப்பிள்ளை (son-in-law)! Remember!" Realising that while he was probably justified in his anger as the *Sarvadhikari*, he had certainly overstepped the line with a close member of his family, Chinna Swami went at once to the kitchen and requested the cooks that Pichu Iyer be allowed to eat as much as he chooses!

But, the miracle of miracles, though he was now given a free hand, from that day onwards, Pichu Iyer could eat only one *vadai* a day. His voracious appetite and hunger had left him! Sri Bhagavan had fed him with His Grace!

There is another significant 'family drama' that I would like to share. We were seven children — three brothers and four sisters. As my father was brought up by Pichu Iyer like his own child, he had a feeling of deep gratitude towards him. So he decided to give his third son — Subramanian (popularly addressed as Mani — to Pichu Iyer as his adopted son. On hearing this, my mother stoutly opposed the idea. As it would involve the religious ritual of changing Mani's *gothram*, the spiritual lineage from the lineage of Sri Bhagavan's family.

The elders in the family took the delicate issue to Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan smiled and said, "What is there to decide? Venkatoo is and has been the 'adopted son' of Pichu Iyer all along. What need is there for some other boy in the family to be newly bequeathed to him!" Both my father and Pichu Iyer were fully satisfied with this. It goes without saying that so was my relieved mother!

Years later, when Pichu Iyer passed on, Venkatoo did all his funeral rites as a son would do for his own father. Wasn't Venkatoo the son of Pichu Iyer as confirmed by Sri Bhagavan? There was therefore no doubt in any of us that Pichu Iyer's soul was at peace and had been absorbed in Arunachala.



My Mother (Nagalakshmi) and Athai standing behind my Father (T.N.Venkataraman) and Pichu Iyer

"Athai's" Absorption

It was 1952, two years after Sri Bhagavan's *Mahasamadhi*. In one of the tiled rooms a few feet away from 'Mangala Nivas', my father's house in Ramana Nagar, lay Sri Bhagavan's sister, Alamelu Amma. She was seriously ill and it was the last day of her life. By her bed and taking care of her, were Nellore Lakshmi Ammal and my mother's elder sister, also named Lakshmi Amma.

Suddenly, "*Athai*", as she was called by all, opened her eyes. They shone with a bright, ethereal Light as she focussed her gaze on the top of a small cupboard. She then exclaimed audibly, which was strange considering that for the past one week or so she was only able to murmur words very faintly, "Lakshmi! Get her down from the top of the cupboard. The baby-girl wants to climb down!" Both the Lakshmis looked up at the cupboard but could see nothing. Joyfully '*Athai*' continued, now at the top of her voice, "Lakshmi! She is calling me to get up and go to her! I am going to that baby-girl." Smiling then at them, '*Athai*' happily closed her eyes! When the Doctor came and examined her, he said: "'*Athai*' passed away fifteen minutes ago." The time tallied exactly with '*Athai*' closing her eyes.

Sri Bhagavan's sister Alamelu Amma had been absorbed by Arunachala Ramana!

When Viswanatha Swami came from the Ashram to pay his homage to '*Athai*', he said, "This is the third case where *Mother Apeethakuchambal* has come and showered Her Grace and Blessings on a senior devotee of Sri Bhagavan!" When I asked him whether that baby-girl '*Athai*' saw on top of the cupboard was *Mother Apeethakuchambal*, he affirmed it with a nod of his head.

"Please explain," I begged him. Viswanatha Swami elaborated, "The first instance I know of is when *Mother Apeethakuchambal* appeared before *Nayana* (Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni). He was then doing penance at "*Nirudhi Lingam*", one of the eight Siva shrines located at the cardinal directions on the circumambulation route around Arunachala. Determined to do intense and uninterrupted *tapas*, he took shelter in the hollow of a large, dead tree behind the "*Nirudhi Lingam*" and resumed his severe penance of being silent and going without food. After the fifth or sixth day, the Divine Mother appeared on the Holy Hill. "The *Guru* alone bestows on you what you are seeking for. He is on the Hill. Go! Surrender at his holy feet and you will get his grace. Go now!"

Kavyakantha leapt out of the hollow of the dead tree in search of his *Guru*, the living *Kalpavriksha* on the Hill. It was one o'clock in the afternoon and the Sun was beating down hard. The *Karthikai* festival was on and hundreds of people thronged

around the Hill. Undeterred, he ran up the Hill to Virupaksha Cave as guided by *Mother Apeetakuchambal* and found his *Guru*. The *Guru* to whom he famously gave the name, '**BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI.**'

"The second instance I know of the Divine Mother showering Her Grace on a devotee of Sri Bhagavan, was Masthan Swami. When Masthan Swami became ill, he moved from his village to another village because he did not want to give anyone trouble. Rarely did Sri Bhagavan go out of His way for anybody, but in Masthan's case, Sri Bhagavan called Desurammal and said, "Wherever Masthan goes, be with him and look after him." Devotees have rarely heard of Sri Bhagavan giving this kind of instruction for the sake of any other devotee!

Masthan Swami's last days were very beautiful. After he dropped his body, Desurammal came to Sri Bhagavan and narrated, "Bhagavan! In his last days we thought he was in delirium. He was saying, '*Nandi!* has descended and Lord Siva's celestial devotees — the *bhutaganas* — are dancing, saying, 'Masthan! Come, come, come to us.'" She continued, 'Perhaps, he was blabbering in his delirium. But Bhagavan, in his last moment he stood up. It was absolutely impossible for him to stand up in that state. He stood up and then with tears in his eyes said, '*Apeethakuchambal* has come to take me, I am going Desurammal,' and he dropped his body!

"On hearing this, Sri Bhagavan commented, 'The Universal Mother personally came to take him. All his descriptions tally with the description of "*Sivaloka*" in the *Puranas*. Masthan Swami was an unassuming devotee. But, he had a wealth of hidden spiritual experiences. Not only did Sri Bhagavan extol Masthan Swami, He thanked Desurammal, as well, "It is a matter of gratification that he passed away in your care, under your supervision." He did not stop there. After this, Sri Bhagavan picked up a copy of the two thousand five-hundred-year-old Tamil book, *Thirumandiram*. In it, are instructions on how a realized being's dead body should be buried. Sri Bhagavan marked those passages and sketched out how the tomb had to be built and the body entombed with sacred ash, camphor and other ingredients. Following these clear instructions, the *samadhi* was built.²"

Viswanatha Swami concluded, "Our beloved "*Athai*", is the third devotee for whom the Divine Mother came personally and made her one with Herself!"

* * *

² Refer to "*Jnani's Samadhi: Rituals*" on page 282

Mudaliar Patti

The Universal Mother ("*Mathru Tattva*") took the form of mother ALAGAMMAL and gave Sri Bhagavan His 'body'. In the form of Ratnammal, Meenakshiammal, Keerai Pati, Desuramma, Echamma and Mudaliar Patti, the Universal Mother fed and nurtured Sri Bhagavan's 'body'. Sri Bhagavan too expressed His gratitude towards them by making them stay in Holy Arunachala and gave them 'Realisation'!

It was Sri Bhagavan's Grace that Mudaliar Patti who was staying in the town was requested by devotees to stay in Ramana Nagar — a little away from the premises of *Sri Ramanasramam*. Kunju Swami, Viswanatha Swami and Suri Nagamma were sent by Sri Bhagavan to look after Patti and her health. They built a hut for her in Ramana Nagar. Sri Bhagavan enquired about her daily. By 1949, Mudaliar Patti had grown very old, gone blind and had lost her daughter-in-law, everything. Yet, she continued cooking for Sri Bhagavan. Even on her last day, she cooked a meal and made sure that it was taken to Sri Bhagavan. She insisted on being informed when Sri Bhagavan had finished eating her food. When that was reported to her, she blissfully closed her eyes and dropped her body. Sri Bhagavan gave instructions to Kunju Swami and others that she should be buried like a realized being (just as He had done earlier in the case of Seshadri Swami and Mother Alagammal). On a previous occasion — the day when Echammal passed away — Bhagavan had remarked, "Still, Mudaliar Patti is alive." When Mudaliar Patti passed away, Sri Bhagavan declared, "A big responsibility has been taken off my shoulders."

* * *



Mudaliar Patti and her daughter-in-law 'Kamakshi'

Santhammal



Santhammal came to Sri Bhagavan in 1928 and never left Him. Chinna Swami was cooking, though there were then only 7 or 8 residents at the growing up small Ashram. She was the first Lady-Cook! Sri Bhagavan had sent her the books of '*Upadesa Saram*' and '*Ulladu Narpadu*' and made her read them. While she was herself a very hard worker in the Kitchen, yet, Sri Bhagavan helped her. But, the greatest help Sri Bhagavan did for her was "to Cook her mind and feed it to the SELF". He thus prepared her, made her mature so as to drop her body at Holy Arunachala.

Santhammal was very kind and helpful to the *sadhus* living in Palakottu. They had to cook their own food, so she used to supply them with the things that they could not get, such as pickles and even some of the sweets and other delicacies that were made in the Ashram. She did all of this with Sri Bhagavan's knowledge. Once, *aviyal*, a South Indian delicacy with a lot of vegetables, was being served in the ashram. Muruganar was living in Palakottu. Sri Bhagavan called Santhammal aside and told her, "Muruganar loves *aviyal*. Who will give *aviyal* to Muruganar?" Santhammal immediately ran to the kitchen to make a parcel of *aviyal* for Muruganar. With this, she ran to Palakottu, but Muruganar was not there as he had left for town to beg for his food. She caught up with him on the road and told him that Sri Bhagavan had sent *aviyal* for him. Muruganar wept profusely thinking of this great act of compassion of his Master.

As she became older, Santhammal felt that she could no longer do physical work for the Ashram. Not wanting to be a burden, she wanted to leave. That night, Sri Bhagavan appeared to her in her dream and said, "Where will you go, Santhammal? Who will look after you?" Indirectly, Sri Bhagavan was saying that he would look after her.

Sri Bhagavan did look after Santhammal by having a cottage being built for her opposite to the old Manakkula Vinayakar Temple, by a compassionate devotee.

Thus, Santhammal peacefully lived — spiritually absorbed within — till she got absorbed by Arunachala into Himself!

The point is Sri Bhagavan made her drop her body only within the vicinity of the Holy Soil of Sacred Arunachala — (so that no more birth for her)!

* * *

Lokammal



Lokammal, like all the other cooks, was totally overwhelmed by her very first *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan in the 1930s. Just one look from Him was enough for her to surrender to Him completely. When she was a young girl, her uncle, a holy and pious man, initiated her to the *panchakshara mantra*, the five holy syllables, 'Om Nama Sivaaya'. From childhood, her attention was on God.

Lokammal became a child widow and was looked down upon by both family and society. Her only friend in the village was Tenammal, also a widow. The two of them would exchange information about spirituality. Tenammal, who had been to Arunachala and had *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan, would constantly narrate incidents about Sri Bhagavan. Lokammal began to wonder, "Will I also not go to Sri Bhagavan and sit at His Holy Feet?" But she belonged to an affluent family who did not allow her to do so. Her pleas fell on deaf ears. But could God ignore her sincere prayers? One day, a woman pointing to a newspaper told Lokammal, "Hey Lokammal, your Saint in Arunachala is no more." Lokammal was heartbroken and wept continuously. However, what the lady was referring to was the news of Seshadri Swami dropping his body. Soon after this, when she was alone one day, Lokammal had the vision of Sri Bhagavan walking in her direction and calling out to her. She pleaded with her brother to take her to Arunachala. He loved her sister and consented. On her being in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan, He looked at her very compassionately for a long time, and that look remained with her till her last moment.

In her final days, Lokammal stayed in a cottage in the Ramana Nagar. I attended on her, as I did on other devotees. Lokammal was a ripe individual, but her *prarabdha* was that she remained an irritable person till the end. She once said to me, "You must send a maid to attend on me." She was so difficult to please that I had to change her maids eighteen times! Each of them pleaded to me with folded hands, "Please do not ask us to serve Lokammal." When I went to see her the next morning, Lokammal scolded me, "I was alone. I was afraid. You did not send a maid." I was afraid of her abrasive tongue and ran away. Even for that one night, I couldn't get any maid for her.

The next day I entered the cottage with great trepidation. But I found her face all aglow. She asked, "Is it Ganesa?" I replied, "Yes, Amma." I thought she was going to scold me because I had not sent another maid. She said instead, "Come here, my child. Come." She held my face tight, kissed my forehead and said, "Because of you, I had the *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan. Last night, I scolded you. But look at Sri Bhagavan. Here is the picture that Sri Bhagavan gave me when I once told him that young men are troubling me. He at once

got up from his sofa and gave me this picture. He gave it to me saying, 'From today onwards, you will not face this problem.' Just look at me, Ganesa. I am ninety years old! After that day, I have never had any problems from any man. Last night, as I was scolding you, I heard Sri Bhagavan say, 'Lokammal, Lokammal!' And you know, Sri Bhagavan seemed to come alive in that picture and say, 'Have I not told you that I am always with you? When I am with you, why fear. Be happy!' Sri Bhagavan spoke to me because of you." I was delighted.

Next day, Lokammal passed away. I lit her funeral pyre. What a blessing! It doesn't matter whether the cooks were ordinary people or great people. They were all transported to the highest state of 'I AM' **MUKTI** !

* * *



Sri Bhagavan with a Rabbit

Sampurnammal



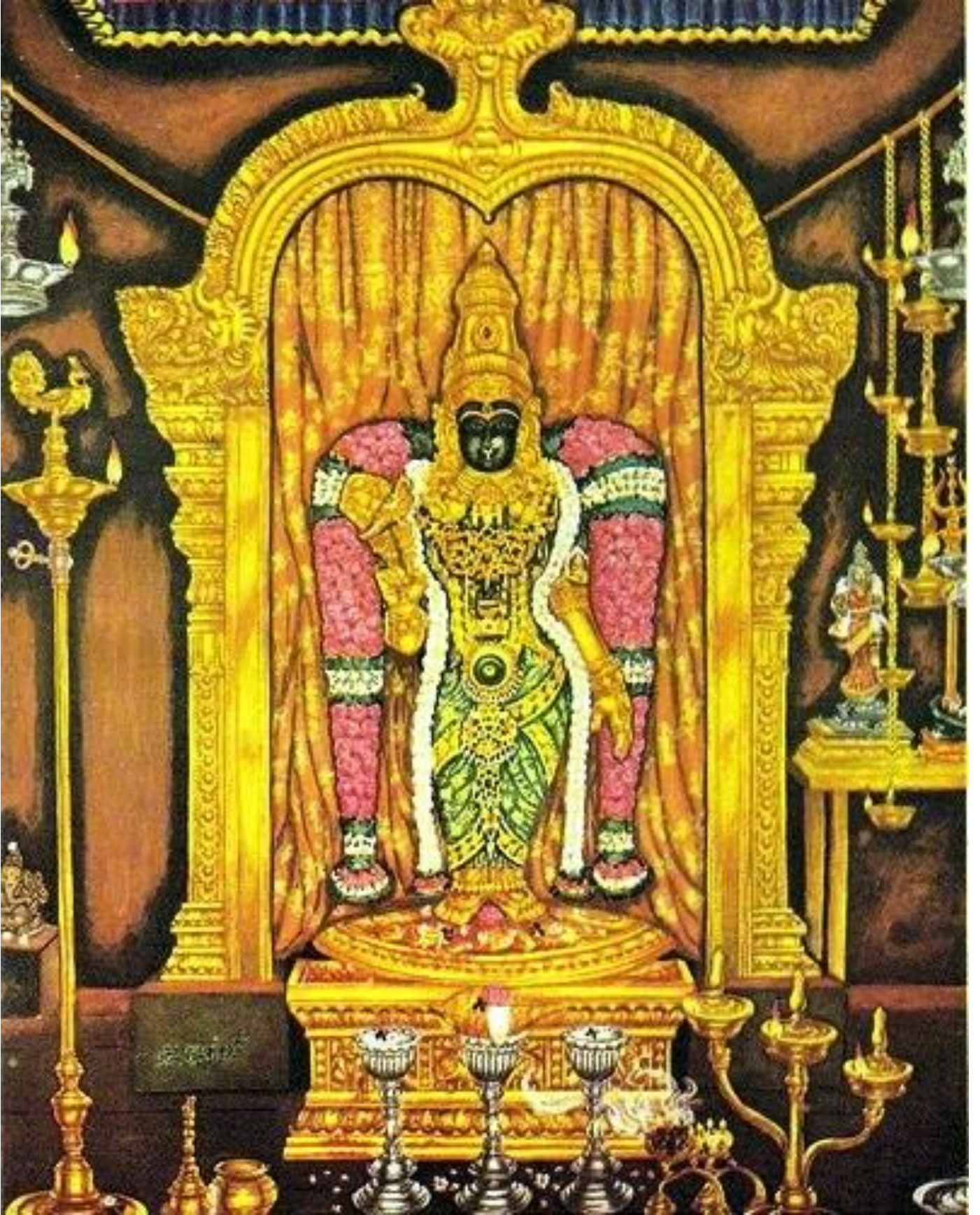
Sri Bhagavan, who rarely drew any comparisons, said of Sampurnammal, "She is our best lady cook." Sampurnam literally means 'a sweet filling'. But its spiritual meaning is 'Complete Bliss'. Sampurnammal was born in a village next to Tiruchuzhi, Sri Bhagavan's village. She had heard about young Ramana's Death Experience, His departure to Tiruvannamalai and how He had come to be known as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Her family followed each occurrence with a great deal of excitement and wanted to have His *darshan*. The family invited Sampurnammal. She declined because she wanted to devote her time to her husband and relatives. After some time, Sampurnammal lost her

husband. She was in inconsolable sorrow and pain. Her family wanted to help her out of this depression and invited her to visit Sri Bhagavan as they strongly believed that only Sri Bhagavan could help her regain normalcy. However, she only wanted to wallow in her grief and turned down the invitation once again.

Yet, look at Sri Bhagavan's grace! One day, while she was in the Meenakshi temple in Madurai offering prayers at the shrine, a bright young *Brahmin* boy interrupted her prayer. He asked rather firmly, "Will you not cook a meal for me?" This was a strange request! When asking for alms, mendicants only request for food. However, here was this strange and bright young man asking, "Will you not cook a meal for me?" Sampurnammal, who had almost finished her prayer, told herself, "Here is a good opportunity for me to feed a *Brahmin*. I am so happy!" But the young man suddenly vanished. She searched for him all over. Then it dawned on her that he might be none other than Sri Bhagavan who had come in search of her.

So, in 1932, Sampurnammal went to Tiruvannamalai with her sister and brother-in-law, Dr. Narayana Iyer. She was still grieving. But one look from Sri Bhagavan and she was transformed. The look was soothing. She continued to look at Sri Bhagavan and Sri Bhagavan too gazed at her. The result was magical. The three of them stayed on at the Ashram for twenty days. Sampurnammal had been physically very active and therefore she had never known what it was to meditate. However, when she sat in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan, she was taken to the meditative state effortlessly. When she was in His Presence, she had absolutely no thoughts; when she was away from Him in the town, thoughts cramped her mind. The next day, when she was in the physical presence of Sri Bhagavan, she again experienced a thought-free state as He continued to look at her. Sri Bhagavan wanted her to understand that this was a spiritual act and not a psychic one, and therefore gave her a copy of *Who am I?* the booklet:

Twenty days later, Sampurnammal went back to her village and found that she was restless. She realized that the tranquility she had experienced in the Ashram was because of Sri Bhagavan's Presence. She made up her mind to go back. Her uncle understood her plight and escorted her to the Ashram. Once there, she found that Santhammal, the cook, was leaving. She was thrilled when she was asked in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan, "Will you go and take up the cooking so that Santhammal can go?" As Sri Bhagavan looked at



The Sanctum Sanctorum of Mother Meenakshi in Madurai

her, she said to herself, "Oh, so this is Your trick!" Thus, it fell on Sampurnammal's shoulders to take on that responsibility. She cooked that day's meal and as she was serving Sri Bhagavan she realized that this indeed was the young *Brahmin* who had asked her in the temple whether she would cook a meal for him. By serving her very first meal, she not only began her spiritual quest but also ended it. She realized that she was not just feeding an individual *Brahmin*, but that she was feeding *Brahman*, the God in each one of us. She stayed on at the Ashram, making food for Sri Bhagavan.

Sampurnammal said, "Once, I sought Sri Bhagavan's permission to go on a pilgrimage with some friends to Benares. Sri Bhagavan made fun of me and asked me, 'What do you expect to find in Benares that you cannot find here in Arunachala?' He then continued, 'Viswanatha, the Lord of Benares is here. Why do you go in search of him when he is here with you?' He was referring to Himself, for he said, 'Why go in search of Him when He is here with you? He is with us, in every one of us here. He is here.' I gave up the idea of the trip since Sri Bhagavan did not grant me permission.

But just look at the compassion of the Master! The very next morning, Sri Bhagavan told me, 'Sampurnammal, I had a dream last night. I saw you worshipping in the temple of Lord Viswanatha in Benares.' I wondered whether it was just a dream. I felt he had taken me there and brought me back in order to give me a chance to worship in the temple." Sri Bhagavan was certainly very compassionate towards Sampurnammal. Those around her could only see the frailties in her character. But Sri Bhagavan overlooked all this and paid singular attention to her so that she could be lifted out of these imperfections and be elevated to that State of Spiritual Perfection.

Entering the Mother's Temple one day, Sampurnammal, with her face beaming, exclaimed, 'Ganesa! Sri Bhagavan has scattered so many diamonds before us!' Sri Bhagavan had given her the eyes to see those diamonds!

She told me whispering into my ears that, "that day I had wanted to go to Varanasi was to drop the body there (*Darsanad Abhrasadasī janānat Kamalalaye, Kasyantu maranam muktiḥ smaranad Arunachale*), so that I would not have any more birth. Look at His immaculate, Pure Spiritual Love for me, He made me stay at Arunachala, since I did not then know that dropping the body at this Sacred Arunachala *Kshetram* most assuredly gives the *jīva* 'no more birth' (according to Arunachala Mahatmyam)!"

Sampurnammal died at the Ashram on Sri Bhagavan's Aradhana day in the year 1993. I had the privilege of taking her body to the cremation ground and seeing to it that her sister's son lit the pyre.

This is one more act of Sri Bhagavan's showering Blessing on me! More than all, I was totally convinced that dropping one's body at the Sacred Soil of Holy Arunachala assured: "No more birth for the *jīva*."

* * *

Sankarammal

After my graduation in 1956, I stayed on in *Sri Ramanasramam* till I would find a job. I was twenty years old at the time; two years went by, and I still did not get a job. Sri Bhagavan made me His apprentice! I was asked to attend on the devotees, the Sages and Saints who came to the Ashram. My school teacher, *Pundit* T. K. Sunderesa Iyer took on himself the task of giving me this training. He not only introduced me to Saints and Sages, he also introduced me to the Old Devotees of Sri Bhagavan.

It was then that I noticed Sankarammal who was then in her sixties. She was always seated in a corner. She hardly uttered a word. (In fact, she didn't even speak much with Sri Bhagavan when He was still in the body. There was a reason for this. Sri Bhagavan poured His Grace on her by His mere Glance, so there was no necessity for words.) Physically unattractive, she was a thin, dark skinned lady with a dour demeanour. As she was not sociable, nobody approached her. In spite of all this and perhaps because of Sri Bhagavan's Grace, I was always attracted towards her. I would sometimes enter the kitchen and sit next to her, but she would remain silent. Finally, one day, I told her, "Tell me about Sri Bhagavan." I persisted till she ultimately opened up.

She said, "Sri Bhagavan's Silence was His Direct Teaching. He taught Self-Enquiry to those who could not comprehend His Silence; so Self-Enquiry actually takes a secondary place as far as His Teaching is concerned. He imparted His Teaching of Silence by His mere Grace filled Glance. This is the look that Muruganar and others refer to as His "Glance of Grace".

"There was never a need to talk to Sri Bhagavan. He made me mature gradually and steadily. All of Sri Bhagavan's devotees extol Sri Bhagavan's Look of Grace; however, even that Look was an external expression of His Inner Silence. Silence was the state of Sri Bhagavan; and His Direct Teaching was only through Silence. Those who received His Message of Silence had no need whatsoever to talk to Him, much less a need for His instructions. How can I possibly express in words the mysterious working of Sri Bhagavan's Silence?"

I was not prepared to leave her in peace! I was drawn towards her like an iron filing to a magnet. I noticed that she was always tranquil and quiet. She did a meticulous job in the kitchen and never stirred out of it. I was insistent in my questioning. I always asked her, "What state are you in? You are not in a state of *samadhi* because you are very active. You are open-eyed, yet in a state of silence. What is that state? Will you please tell me?" Sankarammal was not only astute, but stern. She was totally lost in her work. She did her work with great care and focus. She was never found talking to anyone. These made others avoid her, but it had the reverse effect on me! I was strongly drawn towards her.

The more I became acquainted with her, the more I came to hold her in higher esteem. I was convinced that she was an extraordinary person, and therefore I requested her to tell me the secret of her perfect equipoise. After several persistent efforts, she finally relented. She revealed, "I was myself puzzled at this Inner Felicity that I have and which is extolled in our Scriptures. I was doubtful about this state because, you see, I am an ordinary woman. The Scriptures state that even Sages and Saints perform penance for

years before attaining this Blissful State. I wondered, am I really in that State?" Boggled down by such doubts, but unsure of whom to ask, she waited for the opportune moment.

One day, after breakfast, she found herself alone with Sri Bhagavan. She was pondering on how to find out from Him whether she was genuinely in that extraordinary, tranquil state. But, how does one ask? A truly realized soul will not put forth questions like, 'Am I in that state of Realization?' As Sankarammal prostrated before Sri Bhagavan, she felt a verse of *Kaivalya Navaneetam* spring from within her. The verse was the one in which the *Guru* asks his disciple to come out with what he had understood. The disciple addresses the *Guru* with folded hands thus: *"O Lord! You are the Reality, the Truth, remaining as my very innermost Self, ruling me during all my countless births. Glory to you, who have taken a human form to redeem me through your Teaching and grant me this Perfect State of Inner Felicity. I do not see how I can repay your Grace for helping to liberate me. Glory, glory, more glory, to your Holy Feet!"*

When she recited this verse, Sri Bhagavan looked at her with compassion and said, "What is there to doubt?" and then continued, "Yes! Yes! The reply is in the very next verse." The next verse says that the *Guru* was ecstatic after listening to the explanation of the disciple. The *Guru* bid him to come near and embraced the disciple and said, "To stay fixed in the Self, in the state of this Inner Felicity without experiencing the three obstacles of 'ignorance', 'uncertainty' and 'wrong knowledge' is the highest recompense you can pay me." Sankarammal looked at Sri Bhagavan, and Sri Bhagavan again looked at her steadily for a few minutes. Sankarammal's eyes were teeming with tears as she repeatedly prostrated before Him.

(There is a translation of this book in English. I would strongly recommend that everyone read this dialogue between the *Guru* and the disciple. This small book is in two parts. The first part describes the *Guru* giving instructions to the disciple about the 'I AM' experience, and the disciple grasping it. In the second part, the *Guru* asks the disciple to explain to him what he had understood. The explanation given is not an intellectual one, but an experiential one. That is why *Kaivalya Navaneetam* is so important.)

She told me, "Ever since, I have been in that State. There are no thoughts."

No matter how much we read — whether it is about the Teachings of Jesus Christ, or the Buddha or Ramana Maharshi — we always maintain a distance from the Teachings, because we think that it is not possible for us to follow the Teachings. This is the intellectual limitation of human beings. We tell ourselves, "It is possible only for Jesus Christ, the Buddha and Sri Ramana to be so, but do I stand any chance?" I had the good fortune of being in the proximity of Sankarammal till her end, so I was able to imbibe much from her. She lived the Truth, and therefore, I received a lot of clarity from her.

Once, I requested Sankarammal to select some significant verses composed by Sri Bhagavan to help me in my *sadhana*. Instantly, she sang two verses in Tamil from Sri Bhagavan's *Marital Garland of Letters*:

(v.79) *"Let me not like a ship without a captain flounder in the storm. Guard me with your Grace, O Arunachala!"* (v.81) *"Don't be a mirror held in front of a noseless person. Lift me up and embrace me, O Arunachala!"*

Even before I could ask her about their significance, she explained, "Initially, seekers feel two deficiencies in themselves. One becomes conscious of the lack of perfection in oneself, and secondly, one doesn't understand how to overcome the insurmountable obstacles one faces while doing *sadhana*. Both plunge the seeker into desperation and possibility into depression. With these two verses, Sri Bhagavan removes such apparent fears. Total surrender to the Higher Power is the only panacea for all spiritual illnesses. If Wisdom is compared to pure milk or nectar, surrender is the vessel which holds it, preserves it and makes it one's own. Surrender helps one plunge into one's Inner Being."

Sankarammal was fully conscious when she died. She closed her eyes and gave up her body with a smile! Death did not terrify her. When she was asked to give her blessings, she smiled and said, "What is this talk of giving and receiving? Remain in the State of Inner Felicity that you already ARE, and always ARE in."

Manni Patti and Sankarammal were in our house in their last days. Manni Patti died the previous day and the very next day Sankaramma dropped her body.

Both blessed me by giving me the Golden Opportunity of carrying their Sacred Body to *Yama Lingam* and putting fire on their Hearts, chanting "*Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva*" and witnessing the Glory of Fire-God accepting their bodies and absorbing them into Father Arunachala!

No more birth for Manni Patti and Sankaramma!

ANNAMALAIKKU AROHARA !

* * *



Inside the Old Ashram Kitchen

"Guru's Words of Guidance"



When he visited the Ashram in the 1950s, after the *Brahma Nirvana* of Sri Bhagavan, like many other senior Old Devotees, H. C. Khanna of Kanpur, could not bear the absence of the physical Presence of Sri Bhagavan there. The other Old Devotees had already left the Ashram and had gone to the North India, in search of spiritual solace and ended up staying with Sages and Saints like Anandamayee Ma, Tapovan Maharaj and Swami Sivananda. Or, roaming about in holy places, mostly in the Himalayas.

H. C. Khanna too went to the Himalayas in search of a *Mahatma* who could assuage him. One day, in the isolated vastness of the snow peaked mountains, he came across a resplendent looking Sage seated in deep meditation in a cave. As Khanna was about to prostrate to him, the long-bearded *Mahatma* opened his eyes and asked, "Where are you coming from?" "From Arunachala," Khanna replied. (In those days, Sri Bhagavan's devotees identified themselves only as "*Arunachala Vaasis*" - Residents of Arunachala, and not as residents of their home town.)

Hearing this, the Sage got up and was about to prostrate to Khanna, who hastily prevented it, saying, "Swami! Swami! It is I who has to prostrate to you! Please, please!" He then fell fully prostrate at the *Mahatma's* feet.

The Sage lifted him up and started talking with a glorious smile: "Anyone coming from Holy Arunachala is like my Master to me. For it is the Sacred and Holy Abode of my *Guru*, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi." He could hardly control his emotion and tears when he said Sri Bhagavan's name. Gathering himself, he continued, "You are looking upon me as a 'holy man' and have come to receive my blessing. God! But do you know who I am?" He looked at Khanna steadily and said "I come from the thickly forested hills of Madhya Pradesh. I was a feared plunderer, a robber. And I had committed not one, but eight gruesome murders. Somehow, I escaped from being identified by the police. Even my wife didn't know about it! Soon, advancing age and disease forced me to seek spiritual

solace for my sinful past. In the early 1940s, I was fortunate to be directed to Holy Arunachala to meet Sri Bhagavan. Just, a look at the seated Maharshi, and I felt a big weight fall from my soul. I waited till everyone left the Hall. After some time, when Sri Bhagavan and I were alone He turned his Glance of Grace on me. How healing it was!"

I confessed to him, "Oh Bhagavan! I have committed eight gruesome murders. I escaped being caught by the police - even my wife did not know about it. Now, in my old age, my sins have caught up on me I am plagued by disease and deep anguish. The *shastras* say that one cannot escape the '*karmic* backlash of sinful actions'. Bhagavan! I repent each of my sins. Is there any redemption for me?"

Sri Bhagavan turned towards me, and looked at me deeply for a few minutes. Then, with a smile filled with Grace and Blessings, He said, "Yes, there is redemption! Yes, there is redemption! Yes, there is redemption!" After a pause, He emphasised, "Give up the thought, 'I committed eight murders', *here and now!*"

"As soon as Sri Bhagavan said this, I felt powerful wave of purification enveloping me and washing my entire being. My anguish had vanished and I felt cleansed of all my sins! I fell at Sri Bhagavan's Feet in gratitude. Then, raising myself up a little, I prayed, "Bhagavan! Please guide me as to what I should do." With a glorious smile, He commanded, 'Go to the Himalayas and meditate!'

"Since then, I have totally lived by His Holy Command. Surrendering one's ego to the *Guru* and abiding by the *Guru's* Words of Guidance is a must for a spiritual aspirant to become ripe and be emancipated. Go back to holy Arunachala. Cling to Bhagavan Sri Ramana! Your purpose and goal lies at His Holy Feet. Go! Go now!"

Khanna pleaded with the Sage, "But Swami, after Sri Bhagavan dropped the body, we miss his Presence in the Ashram very much. Almost all the Old Devotees have left the Ashram because of this."

Before Khanna could continue, the *Mahatma* interrupted and emphasised forcefully, "Is a *Jnani* the body? Then, how does His physical body's 'absence' disturb you? Realise in your Heart that a *Jnani* is all-pervasive, ever-living and fully present in one's Heart! Go back to the Master's Sacred Ashram and feel his Presence. Go now!"



H.C.Khanna

After this momentous meeting in a Himalayan cave, Khanna became a regular visitor to the Ashram. What is more, he even built a comfortable Guest House for himself and his family to stay in during their annual visits!

What a remarkable turnaround experience!

The Great Significance of *Darshan*



M.S. Subbulakshmi

One day, Sri Ramanathan, the General Manager of Southern Railways, Chennai, telephoned my father, the Ashram President, seeking his permission for performing the marriage of his daughter in front of Sri Bhagavan's Sacred *Samadhi* Shrine. In keeping with the then prevailing rules of the Ashram, the President firmly declined.

The very next day, my father got another phone call from Chennai. This time, it was from Sri T. Sadasivam, the well-known husband of M. S. Subbulakshmi, the world-renowned Carnatic music maestro! Sri. Sadasivam pleaded with my father to give his consent for the marriage, as the proposed bridegroom who was also the grandson of the Saint, Janaki Mata of Tanjore, was refusing to get married anywhere else except in front of Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi* Shrine.

In a quandary, my father consulted me. Now, since I held M. S. Subbulakshmi in very high regard — not only as an unparalleled Carnatic musician but also as a veritable Saint — I persuaded my father to give Sri Sadasivam the permission he sought.

The marriage took place a few months later, in 1958-59, in Sri Bhagavan's *Sannidhi*. After it was over, MS, as M. S. Subbulakshmi was popularly known, held my hands and requested me to take her and her husband to Tirukoilur.

The reason, as she confidentially told me, was Sri Sadasivam's child by his late first wife had an incurable disease. So, they wanted to have the *darshan* and blessings of Swami Jnanananda Giri, the famous Saint of Tirukoilur, who was well known for curing incurable diseases.

On the way to Tirukoilur, Sri Sadasivam sat in front with the driver, while I had the golden opportunity of sitting next to MS in the back seat. And this is what she told me, "Ganesha! Do you know what the greatest disappointment in my life is? That when I was younger, I did not have the *darshan* of the Greatest Mahatma, Sri Bhagavan, when He was still in the body." Her eyes glistened with tears as she continued, "What a great tragedy! I was prevented from going and seeing him. To console her, I replied, "Maami, don't feel sad. Bhagavan has seen you. Isn't that enough?"

She turned to me, held my hands tightly and with uncontrollable joy and emotion, exclaimed, "Has HE seen me? When? Where?"

"Yes, amma," I answered. 'Not only has Sri Bhagavan seen you, but as He watched you, He shed profuse tears of ecstasy and joy!' "How, Ganesha? When did this happen? Tell me,' MS Amma urged. I continued, "I was twelve years old and was seated next to Sri Bhagavan in the Ashram Dining Hall. We were all there to watch a special screening of your much lauded film, *Meera*. To be honest, I did not see much of your film, amma. So

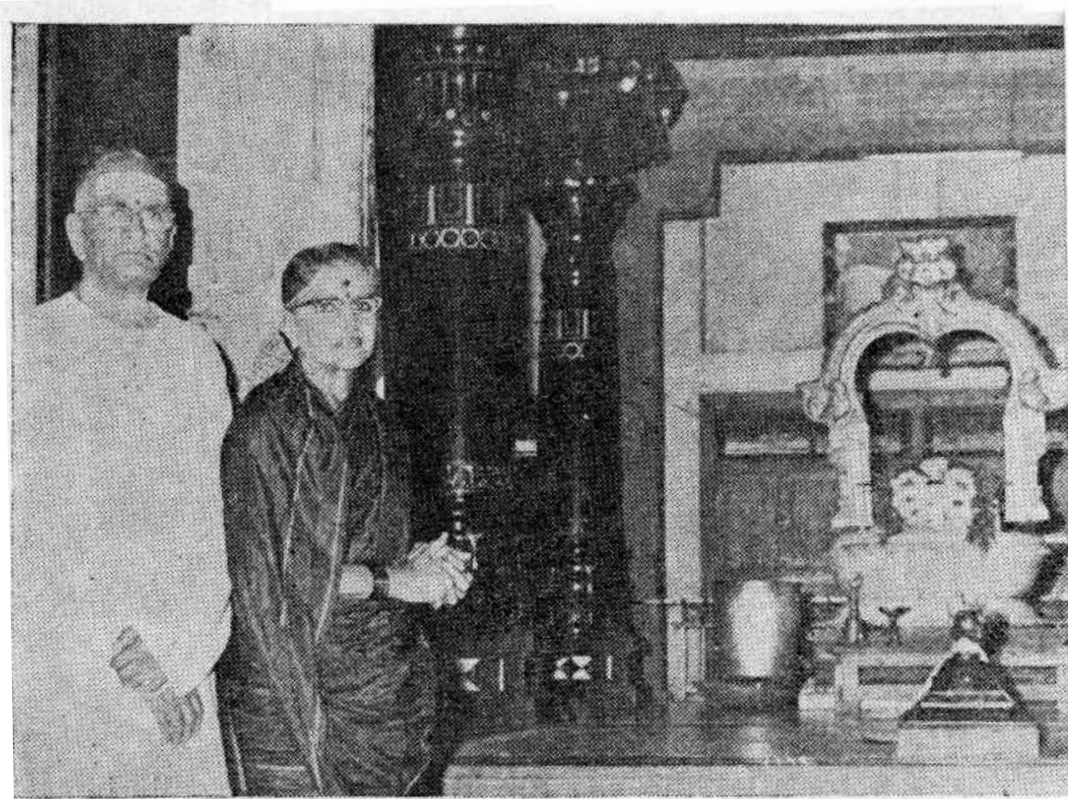
fascinated I was watching Sri Bhagavan: His eyes brimming over with devotion and ecstasy as He watched you playing, no, living the role of Meera!"

Before I could continue further, she held my hands more tightly. With tears of joy streaming down her cheeks, she sobbed softly, "Did Sri Bhagavan see me? Did Sri Bhagavan look at me? That is enough for me, Ganesha! What you have told me is precious, Sri Bhagavan looking at me is the important thing. Not me looking at him. You know, *Kanchi Periyava* once told me, 'There is a great significance in going repeatedly to *kshetras*, visiting temples and having the *darshan* of the *murtis* there. Us having the *darshan* of the *murtis* is only of secondary importance. What is of paramount importance is the deity 'seeing' you, 'looking' at you! When the deity's eyes fall on you, the impurities in your Heart are entirely and instantly wiped out! What cannot be washed away even after enormous *sadhana* by the *sadhaka*, gets instantly wiped out by one such look of God falling on you.'

"Sri Bhagavan has seen me! Sri Bhagavan has looked at me! All my inner imperfections are completely washed away, wiped out! I am emancipated! Thank you, Ganesha! Come and see me in Chennai whenever you come there."

Since then, I have had the *darshan* of MS Amma more than a dozen times! How blessed I am to have had my Heart cleansed by the look of such an exalted Saint as MS Amma!

* * *



Smt. M.S. Subbulakshmi and Sri T. Sadasivam in front of Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi (1975).



In front of a Banyan Tree, seated on a Big Rock (on the way to Skandashram)

How to Give up the “me”?

How to give up the "me"? Even to contemplate on its being given up, poses with an enormous hurdle. No theoretical methods, postulated throughout the past centuries seem to have helped us, at all. The only solution to this Herculean problem, perhaps, lies on a practical, experiential approach to it. Who will guide us with a direct and simple, yet natural experience-oriented practical solution to the dissolution of the "me"?

Most assuredly. Bhagavan Sri Ramana has already solved the insoluble conundrum!

ANNAMALAI SWAMI had elicited it from the Great *Guru*, Sri Ramana; and, years later, he shared it with fellow-seekers.

Annamalai Swami came to Sri Bhagavan in 1928 and was made an attendant to the Master. Noticing the potentiality in him as a hard worker, he was entrusted with the supervision of all important construction projects of the then growing up '*Sri Ramanasramam*'. He did it with an exemplary zeal, under the direct stewardship of Sri Bhagavan, for ten years — from 1928 to 1938.

In 1938, he had a great spiritual awakening through an embrace of him by Sri Bhagavan.

In Annamalal Swami's own words: I went to Sri Bhagavan's bathroom to help Him with His morning bath. Madhava Swami and I gave Him the usual oil bath and massage. When the bath was over, Madhava Swami asked a question: 'Bhagavan! The people who take *Ganja Lehyam* [an Ayurvedic medicine whose principal ingredient is cannabis] experience some kind of Ananda [bliss]. What is the nature of this *Ananda*? Is It the same *Ananda* the scriptures speak of? Sri Bhagavan replied: "Eating this *Ganja* is a very bad habit". Then, laughing loudly, he came over to me, hugged me and called out : *Ananda! Ananda!* This is how these *Ganja*-taking people behave! It was not a brief hug. After the first few seconds I completely lost all awareness of my body and the World. Initially, there was a feeling of bliss and happiness, but this soon gave way to a state in which there were no feelings and no experiences. I did not lose Consciousness, I just ceased to be aware of anything that was going on around me....,This experience completely changed my life. As soon as I regained normal consciousness I knew that my working life at the Ashram had come to an end."

That totally changed him. Then on, he wanted to dedicate his whole time in meditation and contemplation. He sought the guidance of the Master. He approved of his living alone outside the Ashram. Sri Bhagavan encouraged him to construct a dwelling at the adjacent '*Palakottu*', helping him with practical advices on the construction work. Sri Bhagavan gave a few personal advices, as well; for instance, not to move out towards the southern side of his tenement, but should wander about only towards the north, at the Foot of the Hill. Annamalai Swami studiously put that instruction into daily practice to its very letter — he had not stepped into the road, which lay on the southern side, the rest of his life! He had not also moved out of Arunachala, even for a single day!

Sri Bhagavan told him to lead a quiet, reclusive life and to meditate continuously on the Self. After many years of arduous and unremitting effort, he was able to stabilize himself in Self-Awareness, uninterruptedly and with effortless ease. Annamalai Swami pleaded with the Maharshi as how to give up the 'me'. He used the term 'the little self' instead of the 'me'. The Master not only gave him an answer but also totally eradicated the 'me' in him.

This is well brought out through a dialogue a Westerner had had with Annamalai Swami, long after the Master had dropped the body.

Question: What is the easiest way to be free of 'the little self'?

Annamalai Swami: Stop identifying with it. If you can convince yourself, 'This little self is not really me', it will just disappear.

Q: But, how to do this ?

AS: The 'little self' is something which only appears to be real. If you understand that it has no real existence it will disappear, leaving behind it the experience of the Real and only Self. Understand that 'the little self' has no real existence and it will stop troubling you.

Consciousness is Universal. There is no limitation or 'little self' in it. It is only when we identify ourselves with and limit ourselves to the 'body' and the 'mind' that this false self is born. If, through enquiry, you go to the Source of this 'little self', you will find that it dissolves into nothingness.

Q: But, I am very accustomed to feel 'I am this little self'. I cannot break this habit merely by thinking: 'I am not this little self'.

AS: This 'little self' will give way to the real Self only when you meditate constantly. You cannot wish it away with a few stray thoughts. Try to remember the analogy of the 'rope' which looks like a 'snake' in twilight. If you see the 'rope' as a 'snake', the real nature of the 'rope' is hidden from you. If you see only the 'rope', the 'snake' is not there. Not only that, you know that there never was a snake there. When you have that clear and correct perception that the 'snake' never at any time existed, the question of how to kill the 'snake' disappears. Apply this analogy to the 'little self' that you are worrying about. If you can understand that this 'little self' never at any time had any existence outside of your imagination, you will not be concerned about ways and means of getting rid of it.

* * *

Bhagavan Ramana clearly points out that there is only one way not to be affected by the miseries caused by the 'me' :

To quote from 'TALKS WITH Sri RAMANA MAHARSHI' :
No.532:

Devotee: Is there no way of escape from the miseries of the World?

Maharshi: There is only one way and that consists in not losing sight of one's Self, under any circumstances.

To enquire 'Who Am I?' is the only remedy for all the ills of the World. It is also perfect Bliss.

* * *

Why has Sri Bhagavan been consistent in insisting on one experiencing the Self?

No.536:

"The person soaked in the 'I-am-the-body' idea is the greatest sinner and he is a suicide. The experience of 'I-am-the-Self' is the highest virtue. Even a moment's *dhyana* to that effect is enough to destroy all the stored up age-old tendencies [*sanchita karma*]. It works like the Sun before whom darkness is dispelled. If one remains always in *dhyana*, can any sin, however heinous it be, survive his *dhyana*?"

* * *

Bhagavan Sri Ramana not only explained why one should do *dhyana* but also insisted that one should constantly be in touch with one's Self.

No.540:

Once Annamalai Swami Asked: There is more pleasure in *dhyana* than in sensual enjoyments. Yet, the mind runs after the latter and does not seek the former. Why is it so?

Maharshi: Pleasure or pain are aspects of the 'mind' only. Our essential nature is happiness. But we have forgotten the Self and imagine that the body or the mind is the Self. It is the wrong identity that gives rise to misery. What is to be done? This *vasana* [tendency] is very ancient and has continued for innumerable past births. Hence it has grown strong. That must go before the essential nature, viz., Happiness, asserts itself.

* * *

No.541:

A certain visitor asked Sri Bhagavan: There is so much misery in the World because wicked men abound in the World. How can one find happiness here?

Maharshi: All are *gurus* to us. The wicked say by their evil deeds, 'Do not come near me'. The good are always good. So then, all persons are like *gurus* to us.

* * *

Should one not run away to solitude to obtain peace ?

No.542 :

Annamalai Swami asked: I often desire to live in solitude where I can find all I want with ease, so that I may devote all my time to meditation only. Is such a desire good or bad ?

Maharshi: Such thoughts will bestow a *janma* (another birth) for their fulfilment. What does it matter where and how you are placed? The essential point is that the 'mind' must always remain in its Source. There is nothing external which is not also internal. The 'mind' is all. If the mind is active, even solitude becomes like a market place. There is no use closing your eyes. Close the mental eye and all will be right. The World is not external to you. The good persons will not care to make plans previous to their actions. Why so? For, God who has sent us into the World, has His own plan that will certainly work itself out.

* * *

In the day-to-day working, one generally experiences that doing good to others one suffers. On the other hand, one doing wicked deeds enjoys happy environments and success. How is it? This is a common doubt, to all!

No.546:

Annamalai Swami asked: A person does something good but he sometimes suffers pain even in his right activities. Another does something wicked but is also happy. Why should it be so?

Maharshi: Pain or pleasure is the result of past *karma* (past actions) and not of the present *karma*. Pain and pleasure alternate with each other. One must suffer or enjoy them patiently without being carried away by them. One must try to hold on to the Self. When one is active one should not care for the results and must not be swayed by the pain or pleasure met with occasionally. He who is Indifferent to pain or pleasure can alone be happy.

* * *

Why, did Sri Bhagavan repeatedly emphasise the efficacy of "Self-enquiry"?

No.551:

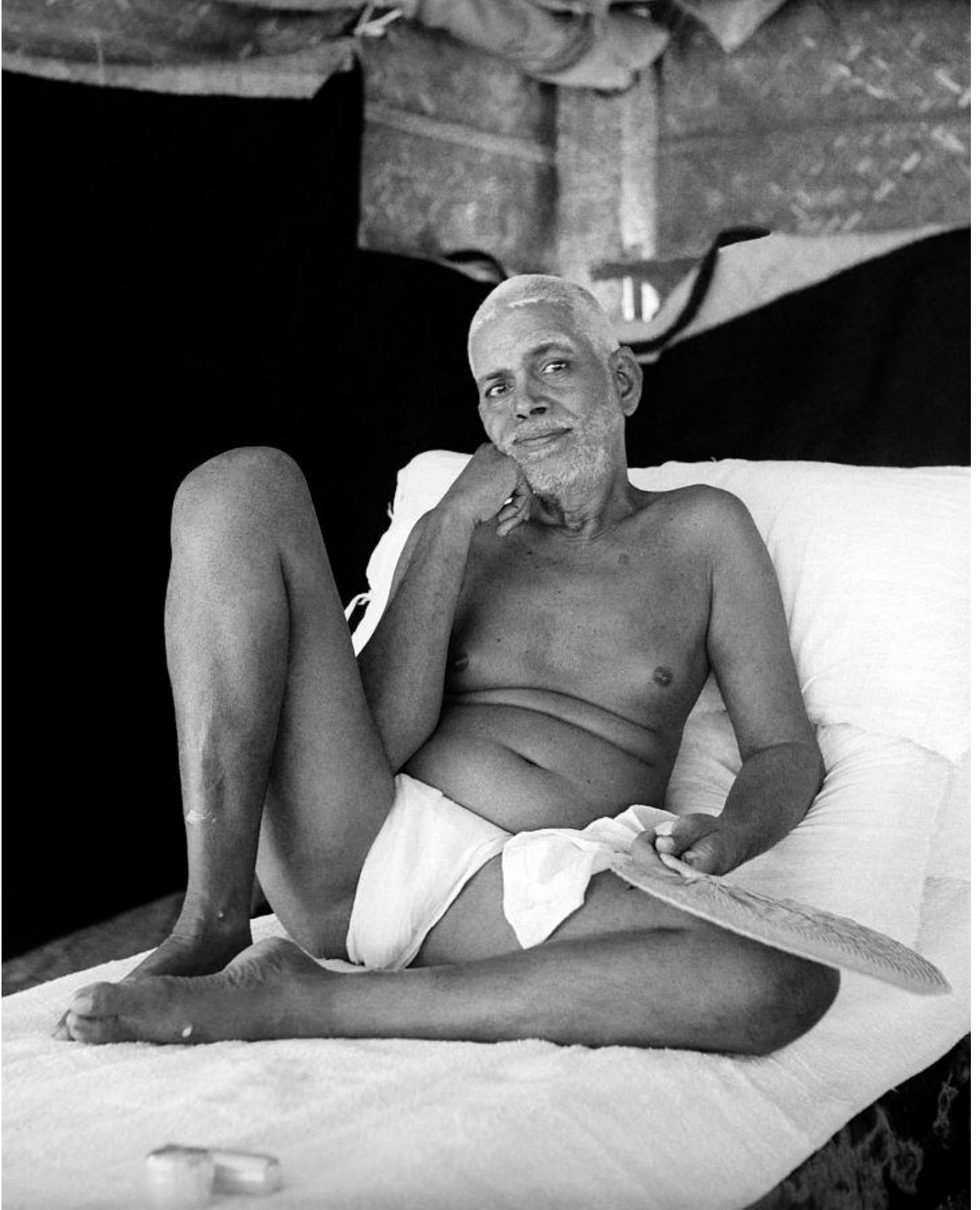
A man asked Sri Bhagavan: "How is it that *Atma Vidya* is said to be the easiest?"

Maharshi: Any other *vidya* (learning) requires a knower, knowledge and the object to be known; whereas this does not require any of them. It is the Self. Can anything be so obvious as that? Hence it is the easiest.

All that you need do is to enquire, '*Who Am I?*'.

A man's true name is *Mukti* (Liberation).

* * *



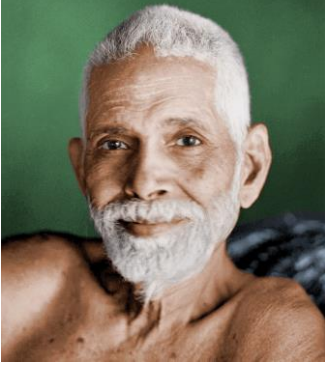
KAPOLAHASTHAM (*Right Hand on the Chin*) is a spiritual pose of Sages and Saints.
Old Devotees' very favourite photo is this !

Sri Bhagavan And *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*



Lord Krishna teaching Arjuna in the battlefield

SRI BHAGAVAN AND SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA



As stated elsewhere, in 1988-89, for one year, I was blessed to stay in the Lap of Mother Ganga at Holy Kashi. During this period, being immersed in *sadhana* and inner quietude, I was often in a state of ecstasy and altered consciousness. On Fridays, I would spend long hours in the Temples of Lord Viswanatha and Mother Annapoorni. Later, in the evenings, the Banks of Mother Ganga were my regular haunt. During these Bliss-filled hours, a few *Bhairagis* and *Siddha Purushas* used to sometimes come up to me and bless me, either silently or with a few words.

One day, a scantily dressed *Bhairagi* suddenly came up to me and asked in English, "Hey you! Have you read *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*?" On my replying in the negative, he ran away and vanished from my sight. After an hour or so, while I was still walking, he again appeared and said, "Read it from the standpoint of Lord Krishna. Don't read it from the standpoint of Arjuna." Then, he again ran away and disappeared, leaving me gazing at Mother Ganga and pondering over his words.

Yes, I told myself, it is true. Whoever reads the *Bhagavad Gita* — for the first time — invariably reads it from the standpoint of Arjuna. "This is my doubt which Arjuna is raising," they would tell themselves. Instead, if we take the position of Lord Krishna who dissolved all the doubts of Arjuna, we too would realise that we are ever the "Self" and never the 'mind'! What a great Revelation it was when the significance of the *Bhairagi's* words hit me! I suddenly felt elevated and uplifted !

After all these years, my heart still brims over with gratitude towards that unknown *Bhairagi* who imparted this 'Secret' to me! The whole set of dialogues between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the battlefield is truly taking place in each of us between the "Heart" and the 'mind'. Lord Krishna is the "Heart" and the 'mind' is Arjuna.

That the *Bhagavad Gita* is very helpful for spiritual seekers in establishing them in "inner clarity" is underlined by the following incident: A devotee wanted to know when the *Gita* should be read. Sri Bhagavan's unequivocal, one word answer was, "*Always!*" Another time, Sri Bhagavan was conversing with a visiting *Pundit* about the unmatched merits of the *Bhagavad Gita*. A devotee who was listening to this, complained that it was difficult to keep all its 700 verses in mind. So, he requested Sri Bhagavan for one verse that could be remembered as the quintessence of the whole text. Sri Bhagavan thereupon quoted the following verse from Chapter 10, v. 20:

*"I am the Self, oh Arjuna, dwelling in the Heart of every being.
I am their beginning, the middle and also the end."*

Further, at the request of Prof. G.V. Subbaramayya, Sri Bhagavan selected 42 verses from out of the *Gita's* 700 verses, and arranged them in an appropriate order to serve as guidance to spiritual aspirants and titled it "*Bhagavad Gita Saram*". Later, He also translated these 42 Sanskrit verses into *Tamil* and *Malayalam*.

***Srimad Bhagavad Gita* is also the scripture that Sri Bhagavan very often referred to in support of his repeated and relentless emphasis on the "Truth" that there exists only "One Reality", and that it resides within the Heart as one's own Self.**

***In Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, one finds umpteen quotations to prove this. Here are a few:**

* * *

Sri Bhagavan: Be sunk in the Self. What does the *Gita* teach? Arjuna refused to fight. Lord 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. Until that sense disappears you are bound to act. You are being manipulated by a Higher Power. You are admitting it by your refusal to submit to IT. (Or, to put it differently, if you refuse, you will be forcibly drawn into it.)

"Instead of being an unwilling worker, be a willing one.

"Rather, be fixed in the Self and act according to nature without the thought of doership. Then, the results of action will not affect you. That is manliness and heroism.

"Thus, inherence in the Self is the sum and substance of the *Gita's* teaching."

Finally, Sri Bhagavan added, "If a man be established in the Self, these doubts would not arise. They arise only, until he is established there."

D: Then of what use in such a reply to the enquirer?

Sri Bhagavan: The words still have force and will surely operate in due course.

(Talks No. 58)

* * *

D: When I sit down to think of God, 'thoughts' wander away to other objects. I want to control those thoughts.

Sri Bhagavan: In *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, it is said that it is the nature of the 'mind' to wander. One must bring one's 'thoughts' to bear on God. By long practice, the 'mind' is controlled and made steady. The wavering of the mind is a weakness arising from the dissipation of its energy in the shape of 'thoughts'. When one makes the 'mind' stick to 'one thought', the energy is conserved and the 'mind' becomes stronger.

(Talks No. 91)

* * *

D: How to make the 'mind' steady?

Sri Bhagavan: *Gita* says, "*Sanaissanairuaramet.*" (The 'mind' must gradually be brought to a standstill); "*Atma Samsthan Manah Kritva.*" (Make the 'mind' inhere in the Self); "*Abhyasa Vairagyabhyam.*" (By practice and dispassion).

Practice is necessary. The progress will be slow.

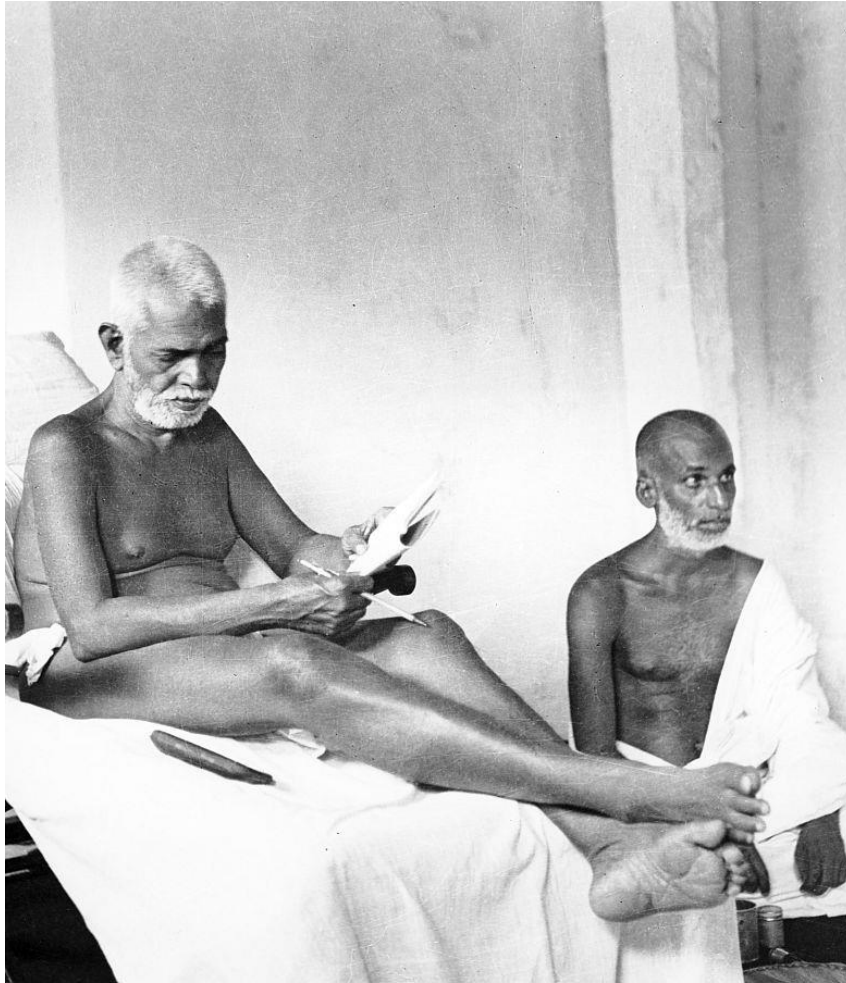
(Talks No. 565)

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Sri Bhagavan: "*Ishwaro Guruatmeti.*" (God, *Guru* and Self are identical). 'I' is only one. Egos are different. They are in the One Self. 'I' is the Truth. The whole significance is that one should hold on to the single 'I', the single Self and not swerve therefrom. Our 'thoughts' must be obliterated. The *Gita* method is the only one for it: "Whenever the 'mind' strays away, bring it back to the Self."

(Talks No. 284 -- 87)

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Sri Bhagavan with Yogi Ramiah

Sri Bhagavan And *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*

Prof. G.V. SUBBARAMAYYA



Right last is G.V. Subbaramayya

At this time, I was preparing a new edition of the "*Bhagavad Gita*" for a friend who had been annually distributing copies of the *Gita* free to local students and had exhausted the previous edition.

One day, I prayed to Sri Bhagavan to select some verses from the *Bhagavad Gita* to be printed in the first pages of the book for daily recitation and easy remembrance by students.

Sri Bhagavan at first hesitated saying that there were already so many *Gita* selections in the field. But finally heeding my repeated prayer, Sri Bhagavan selected forty-two verses and gave them a new sequence.

Sri Bhagavan followed it up by translating them Himself into Tamil and Malayalam verses; and, encouraged me to translate them into Telugu verse. All these versions with the original Sanskrit were published by the Ashram.

Sri Bhagavan added to them an Invocatory Verse in Tamil and Malayalam which was translated into Sanskrit *sloka* by Jagadiswara Sastri and into Telugu verse by myself.

" 'Thought' is the light of the 'mind'. It is said: "He who, seated in Arjuna's chariot spoke the Gospel to Arjuna and removed his distress, may that embodiment of Grace save us!"

I also wrote a Telugu verse of jubilation which stated: "*The same Lord who then spoke the Gita has now taken shape as Ramana and is Himself giving us the nectareous essence of*

Gita to taste. What a fortune!" This was later translated into Sanskrit and other languages.

Incidentally Sri Bhagavan made some interesting observations on the "***Bhagavad Gita***". Referring to '***Viswarupa-Sandarshan***' (Vision of the Universal Form), Sri Bhagavan said: "The whole episode is really a wonder. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna 'Now here within My Body you see the entire Universe movable and immovable, and also whatever besides you would like to see.'

If it were a form, however vast, how could Arjuna see in it whatever he (Arjuna) fancied? Again, the Lord says, 'You see all Gods, ***Siddhas, Maharshis*** etc. within My Body.'

Arjuna admits that he sees them all, and in the same breath he says that they are all bowing to the Lord and singing hallelujahs!

Now, where do they stand in relation to the Lord's Body, inside or outside? Where does Arjuna himself stand? These seeming inconsistencies will be obviated only when we realise that what Arjuna is being shown is not ***Viswa-rupa*** (Universal Form or shape) but ***Viswa-Atma*** (The Self as Universe)."

When Arjuna complains in the sixth canto that the 'mind' is fickle and overpowering, Krishna agrees but affirms that the mind can be controlled by '***Abhyasa***' (practice) and '***Vairagya***' (non-attachment).

A little earlier, the Lord tells Arjuna that wherever the fickle 'mind' wanders, it should be withdrawn from there and fixed in the Self.

"Now," said Sri Bhagavan, "the withdrawal of the 'mind' from its regions of wandering is true '***Vairagya***', and the fixing of the 'mind' in the Self is true '***Abhyasa***'.

"Referring to Lord Krishna's description of His ***Gospel*** as the "Supreme Secret" which should be disclosed only to His true devotees and never to others, Sri Bhagavan explained the doctrine of '***Adhikara***' (fitness). If the highest Truth is taught to the unworthy, it is bound to be perverted and abused.

"In fact, the ***Asuras*** (Demons) like ***Hiranyakasipu*** were also ***Brahmavadins*** (expounders of ***Brahman***). They too declared "I am God". Only, by the 'I' they meant their ego. So they recognised no higher authority than their 'ego', and felt free to commit any sin.

"Indiscriminate preaching of the highest Truth irrespective of the disciple's fitness will therefore spell disaster and is forbidden by the Lord. "

Referring to the 46th verse in the Second canto, Sri Bhagavan said, "All Scriptures have validity only to those who recognise their own ignorance and seek Enlightenment. Persons who are immersed in ignorance never bother about scriptures of whose very existence they are quite oblivious.

"On the other hand, the *Jnani* who sees nothing other than the Self cannot be bound by any authority—even that of the Scriptures. All Scriptures only propound *Brahman* whereas the *Jnani* is *Brahman* Itself."

When someone asked about the difference between '*Prajnana*' and '*Vijnana*', Sri Bhagavan replied, "'*Swarupajnana*' (Self-awareness) is '*Prajnana*'. '*Anubhava-jnana*' (Knowledge through experience) is '*Vijnana*'."

Another time, I asked Sri Bhagavan to explain the distinction between '*Aham Brahmasmi*' (I am *Brahman*) and '*Brahmaivaham*' (*Brahman* is I) in '*Sri Ramana Gita*' canto IV, verse I, Sri Bhagavan said, "By meditating on *Brahmaivaham*, the sense of 'indirectness' goes away. By meditating on '*Aham Brahmasmi*' the sense of 'separateness' is removed. 'Thought' is the parent of the deed."

It was Sri Krishna *Jayanthi* day. I was reciting Sri Bhagavan's "*Upadesa Saram*". Just as I sang the last words '*Ramana Vagiyam*' ("This is the utterance of *Ramana*"), the postman put into my hand a book-packet which was Sri Bhagavan's Tamil translation of '*Bhagavad-Gita-Saram*'.

At this coincidence, I felt thrilled and I realised how Sri Krishna was truly reborn for me that day and how the *Gita* of Bhagavan Krishna and the *Gospel* of Bhagavan Sri Ramana are one and the same.

As I was writing to the Ashram, I heard a street-beggar recite a Telugu song with the refrain "*This is no lie but Truth, yes, Truth. After darshan of Sat-Guru there is no more trouble of rebirth.*"

This coincidence also struck me as marvellous. Then and there I copied the song in that very letter and related the circumstances. When my Telugu rendering of the *Gita* selections reached the Ashram, B. Virabhadrayya, B. A., then Deputy Collector, Chittoor, who, it seems, was at that time in the Ashram in connection with his son's '*Upanayanam*', happened to read the poem and offered to get one thousand copies of it printed, and the devout offer was accepted by the Ashram. This was a further fruit of Sri Bhagavan's Grace.

Another touching expression of Grace by Sri Bhagavan was His practice of transliterating His works, which He alone could do, for the benefit of His devotees, unmindful of the immense labour involved. Accordingly Sri Bhagavan sent me His Malayalam version of the *Gita* selections in Telugu script.

Likewise He transliterated my Telugu version in Malayalam script for His attendant Madhava Swami. So, when the next time I went to the Ashram, I was struck with surprise and wonder when at the bidding of Sri Bhagavan, Madhava Swami repeated from memory the entire Telugu poem without a single mistake!

- "*Sri Ramana Reminiscences*"

Quotes From "TALKS"

Talk 17.

Sri Bhagavan.: For a realised man, the one who remains ever in the Self, the loss of one or several or all lives either in this World or in all the three Worlds makes no difference. Even if he happens to destroy them all, no sin can touch such a pure soul. Maharshi quoted the *Gita*, Chapter 18, Verse 17 — "He who is free from the notion of 'ego', whose intellect is unattached, though he annihilates all the Worlds, he slayeth not, nor is he bound by the results of his actions."

Talk 30.

D.: I have my professional work and yet I want to be in perpetual *dhyana*. Will they conflict with each other?

Sri Bhagavan.: There will be no conflict. As you practise both and develop your powers you will be able to attend to both. You will begin to look on business as a dream. Says the *Bhagavad Gita*: "That which is the night of all beings, for the disciplined man is the time of waking; when other beings are waking, then is it night for the Sage who seeth." (11.69.)

Talk 41.

D.: The *Gita* says that if a man fixes his attention between the eyebrows and holds his breath he reaches the Supreme State. How is that done?

Sri Bhagavan.: You are always in the Self and there is no reaching it. The eyebrow is only a place where attention is to be fixed (Seat of Meditation — *Upasanasthana*).

Talk 46.

The scriptures say that the Self is *nityasiddha*, ever present, and yet speak of the removal of *ajnana*. If Self is (*nitya*) always and (*siddha*) present, how can there be *ajnana*? For whom is the *ajnana*? These are contradictory. But such statements are for guiding the earnest seeker in the right way. He does not readily understand the only Truth if mentioned in plain words as in *natwam naham neme janadhipah* (not thou, nor I, nor these kings ...). Sri Krishna declared the Truth, but Arjuna could not grasp it. Later, Sri Krishna plainly says that people confound Him with the body, whereas in reality He was not born nor will He die. Still Arjuna requires the whole *Gita* for the Truth to be made clear to him.

Talk 58.

Mr. Ranganathan, I. C. S: In *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* there is a passage: "One's own *dharma* is the best; an alien *dharma* is full of risks." What is the significance of one's own *dharma*?

Sri Bhagavan.: It is usually interpreted to mean the duties of the orders and of the different castes. The physical environment must also be taken into consideration.

D.: If *varnasrama dharma* be meant, such *dharma* prevails only in India. On the other hand the *Gita* should be Universally applicable.

Sri Bhagavan.: There is *varnasrama* in some form or other in every land. The significance is that one should hold on to the single *Atman* and not swerve therefrom. That is the whole gist of it.

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. There will be no distraction and no fear. Troubles arise only when there is a second to oneself.

If the *Atman* be realised to be only unitary, there is no second and therefore no cause for fear. 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; there is an end of fear, and there are no doubts.

Even if interpreted as *varnasrama dharma* the significance is only this much. Such *dharma* bears fruit only when done selflessly. That is, one must realise that he is not the 'doer', but that he is only a tool of some Higher Power. Let the Higher Power do what is inevitable and let me act only according to its dictates. The actions are not mine. Therefore the result of the actions cannot be mine. If one thinks and acts so, where is the trouble? Be it *varnasrama dharma* or *loukika dharma* (Worldly activities), it is immaterial. Finally, it amounts to this:

sva = *atmanah* (of the Self)

para = *anaatmanah* (of the non-Self)

Such doubts are natural. The orthodox interpretation cannot be reconciled with the life of a modern man obliged to work for his livelihood in different capacities.

A man from Pondy interposed: *Sarva dharmaan parityajya maamekam saranam vraja* (leaving all duties surrender to Me only).

Sri Bhagavan: (All) *Sarva* is only *anaatmanah* (of the non-Self); the emphasis is on *ekam* (only). To the man who has strong hold of the *eka* (One) where are the *dharma*s? It means, "*Be sunk in the Self.*"

D.: The *Gita* was taught for action.

Talk 73.

Mr. Ekanatha Rao, the engineer, asked, "What about the despondency of not obtaining any encouragement from the Master — much less his Grace?"

Sri Bhagavan.: It is ignorance only. The quest must be made as to who is despondent and so on. It is the phantom of the 'ego' arising after sleep which falls a prey to such

thoughts. In deep sleep the person was not afflicted. Who is afflicted now while awake? The sleep state is about the normal one. Let him search and find out.

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

Sri Bhagavan.: Does not one find some kind of peace while in meditation? That is the sign of progress. That peace will be deeper and more prolonged with continued practice. It will also lead to the Goal. *Bhagavad Gita* — Chapter XIV — the final verses speak of *gunatita* (one who has transcended the *gunas*). That is the final stage.

The earlier stages are *asuddha satva* (impure Being), *misra satva* (mixed Being), and *suddha satva* (Pure Being).

Of these, the impure being is when overpowered by *rajas* and *tamas*; the mixed being is that state in which the Being — *satva* — asserts itself spasmodically; the *suddha satva* overpowers *rajas* and *tamas*. After these successive stages, there comes the state transcending *gunas*.

Talk 95.

D.: What are the obstacles to remaining steady in unbroken Bliss? How can they be overcome?

Sri Bhagavan.: The obstacles are:

(1) *Ignorance* which is forgetfulness of one's Pure Being.

(2) *Doubt* which consists in wondering if even the experience was of the Real or of the unreal.

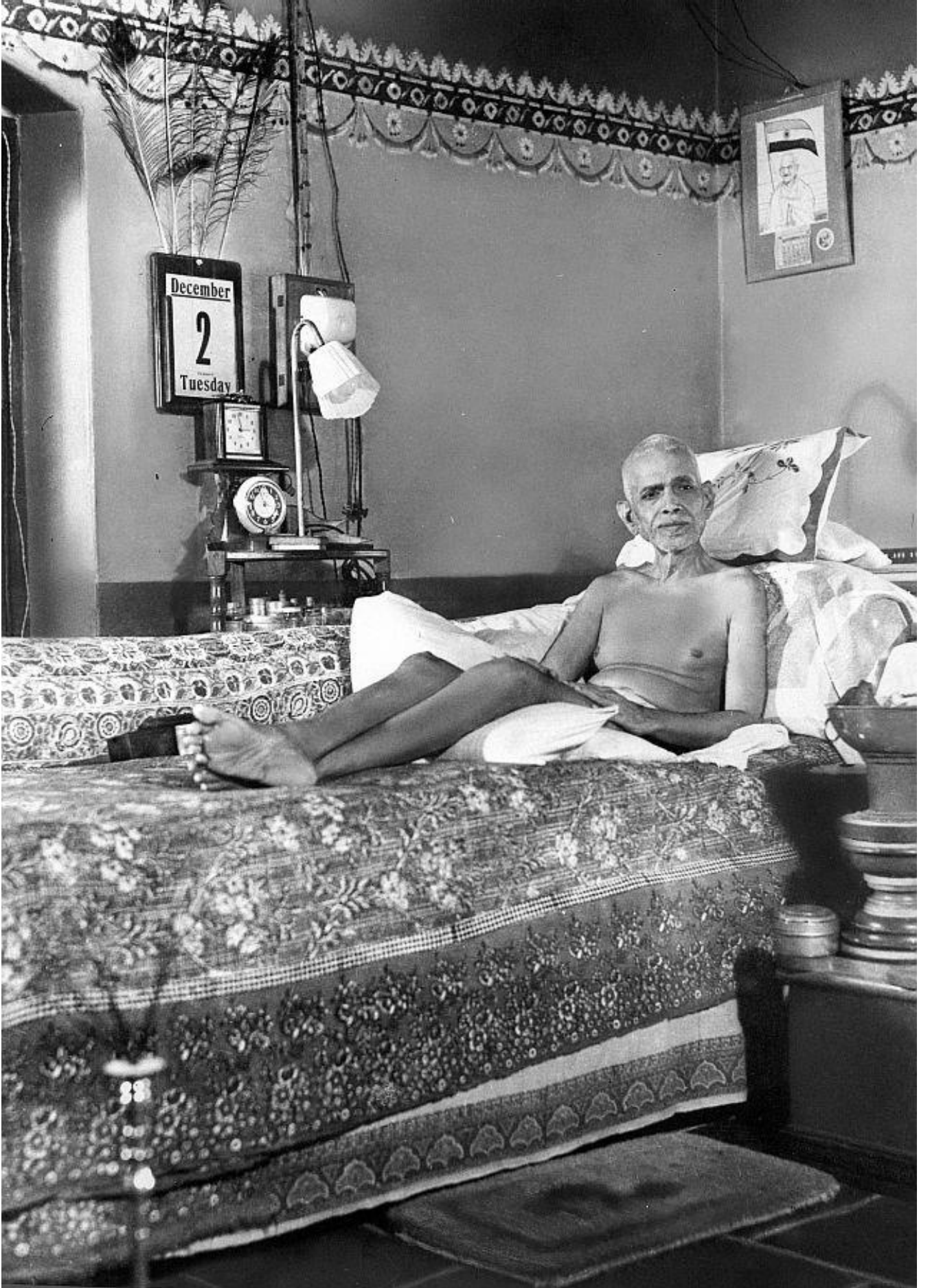
(3) *Error* which consists in the "I-am-the-body" idea, and thinking that the World is real. These are overcome by hearing the Truth, reflection on it and concentration.

The Master continued: Experience is said to be temporary or permanent. The first experience is temporary and by concentration it can become permanent. In the former the bondage is not completely destroyed; it remains subtle and reasserts itself in due course. But in the latter it is destroyed root and branch, never to appear again. The expression *yogabhrashta* (those who have fallen down from Yoga) in *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* refers to the former class of men.

Talk 145.

Mr. P. Brunton: Why do religions speak of Gods, Heaven, hell, etc.?

Sri Bhagavan.: Only to make the people realise that they are on a par with this World and that the Self alone is Real. The religions are according to the view-point of the seeker. Take the *Bhagavad Gita* for instance:



Sri Bhagavan in the Old Hall

When Arjuna said that he would not fight against his own relatives, his elders, etc., in order to kill them and gain the Kingdom, Sri Krishna said, "Not that these, you or I, were not before, are not now, nor will not be hereafter. Nothing was born, nothing was dead, nor will it not be so hereafter" and so on. Later as he developed the theme and declared that He had given the same instruction to the Sun, through him to Ikshvaku, etc. Arjuna raised the doubt, "How could it be? You were born a few years ago. They lived ages ago." Then Sri Krishna understanding Arjuna's standpoint, said: "Yes. There have been so many incarnations of Myself and yourself, I know them all but you do not know."

Such statements appear contradictory, but still they are correct according to the viewpoint of the questioner. The Christ also declared that He was even before Abraham.

Talk 181.

D.: *Yad gatva na nivartante tad dhama paramam mama*. Which is that *dhama*? Is it not the Absolute State beyond Cosmic Consciousness?

Sri Bhagavan.: Yes.

D.: 'Na Nivartante' would mean not covered by ignorance again.

Sri Bhagavan.: Yes.

D.: Does it follow by inference that those who reach Cosmic Consciousness have not escaped from the clutches of ignorance?

Sri Bhagavan.: That is what is meant by saying that all *lokas*, even the *Brahma Loka*, do not release one from rebirth. *vide*. the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Reaching ME, there is no rebirth All others are in bondage." Moreover, so long as you think that there is *gati* (movement) — as implied in the word *gatva* (having gone to) — there is *punaravritti* (return) also. Again *gati* implies your *Purvagamanam* (birth). What is birth? It is birth of 'ego'.

Once born you reach something; if you reach it, you return also. Therefore, leave off all this verbiage! *Be as you are*. See who you are and remain as the Self, free from birth, going, coming and returning.

D.: True. However often this Truth is heard, still it eludes us and we forget it.

Sri Bhagavan.: Quite so. Reminders are often necessary.

Talk 186.

D.: What happens after birth in human form, what happens to the *jiva*?

Sri Bhagavan.: Let us know first what we are. We do not understand what we are, and until we know what we are there is no room for such a question. (Bhagavan obviously here refers to the confusion of body as *Atman* — *dehatma buddhi* — which is the cause for this confusion of ideas of death and birth, for *Atman* has no birth or death, it is untainted by the elements of Earth, Fire, Air and Water, etc.) (*Gita* II, 11) — *Asochyam anvosochas tvam, prajnavadamscha bhashase*, etc. — What is it that had birth? Whom do

you call a man? If, instead of seeking explanation for birth, death and after-death matters, the question is raised as to who and how you are now, these questions will not arise. You are the same while asleep (deep sleep), in dream and in waking state. Is the 'I' thought *jiva*, or the body *jiva*? Is this thought or nature? Or is the experience that we live, etc., our nature? (Quotes the *sloka* from the *Gita: Yada te . . . II, 52.*)

Talk 189.

D.: How is work to be done ordinarily for an aspirant?

Sri Bhagavan.: Without self-identification with the actor. For instance, did you intend visiting this place while in Paris?

D.: No!

Talk 203.

The *Bhagavad Gita* says: *"The unreal hath no being; the Real never ceaseth to be; the Truth about both hath been perceived by the seers of the essence of things."* *"The Real is ever Real, the unreal is ever unreal."* Again: *"He is not born, nor doth he die; nor, having been, ceaseth he anymore to be; unborn, perpetual, eternal ancient, he is not slain when the body is slaughtered."* Accordingly, there is neither birth nor death. *Waking is birth and sleep is death.*

Talk 208.

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Still more, they assume that the individual soul becomes Pure by being divested of the 'ego' and fit for being the 'body' of the Lord. Thus the Lord is the Spirit and the purified souls constitute His body and limbs! Can there be a soul for the souls? How many souls are there? The answer must be, "There are many individual souls and One Supreme Soul." What is Soul in that case? It cannot be the body, etc. What remains over after all these are eliminated must be said to be the Soul. Thus, even after Realising the Soul as that which cannot be discarded, the Supreme Soul must be known to exist. In that case, how was the soul realised to be the Ultimate Reality after discarding all that was alien to it? Should this be right, the Soul which was described as that Inalienable Reality is not the true soul. All such confusion is due to the word 'soul' (*atma*). The same word *atma* is used to signify the 'body', the 'senses', the 'mind', the 'vital principle', the 'individual soul' and the Supreme Being. This wide application of the word has given rise to the idea that the individual soul (*jivatma*), goes to constitute the Body of the Supreme (*Paramatma*). "I, O Arjuna! am the *Self*, seated in the Heart of all beings; ..." (*Bhagavad Gita, X-20*). The stanza shows that the Lord is the *Atma* (Self) of all beings. Does it say, "the Self of the selves"? If, on the other hand, you merge in the Self there will be no individuality left. You will become the Source itself. In that case what is surrender? Who is to surrender what and to whom? This constitutes devotion, Wisdom, and investigation.

Talk 264.

D.: Does Sri Bhagavan believe in evolution?

Sri Bhagavan.: Evolution must be from one state to another. When no differences are admitted, how can evolution arise?

D.: Why does Sri Krishna say, "After several rebirths, the seeker gains Knowledge and thus knows Me." There must be evolution from stage to stage.

Sri Bhagavan.: How does *Bhagavad Gita* begin?"

Neither I was not nor you nor these chiefs, etc." "Neither it is born, nor does it die, etc." So there is no birth, no death, no present as you look at it. Reality was, is, and will be. It is changeless. Later Arjuna asked Sri Krishna how he could have lived before *Aditya*. Then Krishna, seeing Arjuna was confounding Him with the gross body, spoke to him accordingly. The instruction is for the one who sees diversity. In reality there is no bondage nor *Mukti* for himself or for others from the *Jnani's* standpoint.

Talk 270.

Mr. G. V. Subbaramayya, a lecturer in English in Nellore, asked:

Brahman is the one by whom all this is pervaded (*yena sarvamidam thatham*). But then how does Sri Krishna specify the *vibhutis* in Chapter X of *Bhagavad Gita*?

Sri Bhagavan.: The specifications are in reply to a definite question by Arjuna who required to know the Lord's *vibhutis* for convenience of worship (*upasana soukaryam*). The fact is that God is ALL. There is nothing apart from Him.

D.: The individual is said to give up decayed bodies (*jirnani sarirani*) and to take up new ones (*navani*). Would the statement apply to infant deaths also?

Sri Bhagavan.: You do not know, in the first place, what is *jirnani* and what is *navani*. Secondly, *jirna* and *nava* are relative terms. What is old to a King may be new to a beggar. The truth is that the individuality signifies the state of embodiment till the time of Liberation!

Talk 284.

D.: It is said in *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*: "Realise the Self with pure intellect and also by service to *Guru* and by enquiry." How are they to be reconciled?

Sri Bhagavan.: *Iswaro Gururatmeti* — *Iswara*, *Guru* and Self are identical. So long as the sense of duality persists in you, you seek a *Guru* considering that he stands apart. He however teaches you the Truth and you gain the insight.

D.: Kindly explain: *ahameko name kaschit nahamanyasya kasyachit naham pasyami yasyaham tam na pasyami yo mama* (I am alone; none is mine; of none else am I, I see none whose I am, none who is mine).

Sri Bhagavan.: This *sloka* occurs in different Scriptures, holy books, e.g., *Bhagavata*, *Maha Bharata*, etc. It also forms the motto of Chapter XI in *Self-Realisation*. *Aham* — 'I', is only

One. 'Egos' are different. They are in the One Self. The Self is not affected by the 'egos'. 'I' is one only. 'I' is the Truth. All that follows is meant to refute the sense of duality.

Talk 287.

Sri Bhagavan.: Peace is our Real Nature. It need not be attained. Our 'thoughts' must be obliterated.

D.: I have been trying to obliterate them but I am not successful.

Sri Bhagavan.: The *Gita* method is the only one for it. "Whenever 'mind' strays away bring it back to bear on meditation."

Talk 290.

Mr. Sagarmull, a Marwari gentleman, a cotton merchant from Bombay, seems learned in *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*. He asked:

***Srimad Bhagavad Gita* says: *mattah parataram nanyat kinchit* and later on *sut্রে manigana iva* — "There is nothing different from Me" and later on "like beads strung on a thread." If there is nothing but Sri Krishna, how can the World be said to be like "beads on a string?"**

Sri Bhagavan.: It means that the *sutra* (string) and the *mani* (jewel beads) are not apart from ME. There are no *maniganah* (row of beads) apart from the string (*sutra*) and no string apart from Me. The *sloka* emphasizes unity and not multiplicity which is only on the surface.

.....

D.: But I am imperfect.

Sri Bhagavan.: Why bring in imperfection? Why are you not perfect? Did you feel imperfection in your sleep? Why do you not remain so even now? Bring sleep into the waking state (*jagrat sushupti*) and you will be all right. *Ya nisa sarva bhootanam ... pasyato muneh* ...(That which is night for the ignorant is day for the Wise).

.....

D.: Will Peace be gradual?

Sri Bhagavan.: Yes. Make the 'mind' gradually still (*Sanaissanaih uparamet*) says the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Talk 336.

A certain Vaisya who seems to have studied the *Upanishads* and *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* asked some questions:

D.: How to realise the Self?

Sri Bhagavan.: The Self is always directly perceived. There is no moment when it is not so. How then is it to be ascertained? Find out the Self. *You are That*.

Sri Ramana Maharshi



● **D.: But the mind slips away from our control.**

**M.: Be it so. Do not think of it. When you
recollect yourself bring it back and turn it
inward. That is enough.**

No one succeeds without effort.

Mind control is not one's birthright.

**The successful few owe their success to their
perseverance.**

● **"The ego submits only when it recognises the
Higher Power."**

☆Talk 398.☆

D.: But it is said the Heart-knots are cut away and all doubts end when the Supreme is found. The word '*drishti*' is used.

Sri Bhagavan.: 'To be' the Self is the same as 'seeing' the Self. There are no two selves for the one to see the other.

.....

D.: Can we not see the Glory as million-Sun-splendour?

Sri Bhagavan.: Can you see the single Sun? Why do you ask for millions of Suns?

D.: It must be possible to do so by Divine Sight. "*Where the Sun shines not, etc. That is My Supreme Abode*". Therefore there is a state where this Sun is powerless. That state is that of God.

Sri Bhagavan.: All right. Find Sri Krishna and the problem is solved.

D.: Sri Krishna is not alive.

Sri Bhagavan.: Is that what you have learnt from the *Gita*? Does He not say that He is Eternal? Of what are you thinking, His body?

D.: He taught others while alive. Those around Him must have realised. I seek a similar living *Guru*.

Sri Bhagavan.: Is *Gita* then useless after He withdrew His body? Did He speak of His body as Krishna? *Natwewaham jatu nasam ...* (Never I was not....)

D.: But I want a living *Guru* who can say the Truth first hand.

Sri Bhagavan.: The fate of that *Guru* will be similar to the fate of Sri Krishna.

The questioner retired. Later, Sri Bhagavan said: Divine Sight means Self-luminosity. The word *divya* shows it. The full word means the Self. Who is to bestow a Divine Eye? And who is to see? Again, people read in the books, "hearing, reflection and one-pointedness are necessary". They think that they must pass through *savikalpa samadhi* and *nirvikalpa samadhi* before attaining Realisation. Hence all these questions. Why should they wander in that maze? What do they gain at the end? It is only cessation of the trouble of seeking. They find that the Self is Eternal and self-evident. Why should they not get that repose even this moment?

A simple man, not learned, is satisfied with *japa* or worship. A *Jnani* is of course satisfied. The whole trouble is for the book-worms. Well, well. They will also get on.

Talk 343.

D.: Even as the hand is cut off, one must remain unaware of it because *Bhagavad Gita* declares that the Self is different from the body.

Sri Bhagavan.: Does *jnana* consist in being unaware of the pain of injury?

D.: Should he not remain unaware of pain?

Sri Bhagavan.: Major operations are performed under anaesthetics, keeping the patient unaware of the pain. Does the patient gain "*Jnana*" too, at the same time? Insensibility to pain cannot be "*Jnana*".

Talk 376.

D.: "*Only one in a million pursues sadhanas to completion.*" (*Bh.Gita*, VII, 3).

Sri Bhagavan.: "*Whenever the turbulent 'mind' wavers, then and there pull it and bring it under control.*" (*Bh. Gita*, VI, 26.) "*Seeing the 'mind' with the 'mind'*" (*manasa mana alokya*), so proclaim the Upanishads.

Talk 385.

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D.: Is *Vaikuntha* in *Paramapada*, i.e., in the Transcendent Self?

Sri Bhagavan.: Where is *Paramapada* or *Vaikuntha* unless in you?

D.: *Vaikuntha*, etc., appear involuntarily.

Sri Bhagavan.: Does this World appear voluntarily?

The questioner returned no answer.

Sri Bhagavan.: The self-evident 'I', ignoring the Self, goes about seeking to know the non-Self. How absurd!

D.: This is *Samkhya* Yoga. Being the culmination of all kinds of other Yogas, how can it be understood to start with? Is not *Bhakti* antecedent to it?

Sri Bhagavan.: Has not Sri Krishna started the *Gita* with *Sankhya*?

D.: Yes. I understand it now.

Talk 398.

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Silence is the most potent form of work. However vast and emphatic the *Sastras* may be, they fail in their effect. The *Guru* is quiet and Peace prevails in all. His Silence is more vast and more emphatic than all the *Sastras* put together. These questions arise because of the feeling, that having been here so long, heard so much, exerted so hard, one has not gained anything. The work proceeding within is not apparent. In fact, the *Guru* is always within you.

Saint Thayumanavar says: "Oh Lord! Coming with me all along the births, never abandoning me and finally rescuing me!" Such is the experience of Realisation.

***Srimad Bhagavad Gita* says the same in a different way, "We two are not only now but have ever been so."**

D.: Does not the *Guru* take a concrete form?

Sri Bhagavan.: What is meant by '*concrete*'? Because you identify your Being with your 'body', you raise this question. Find out if you are the 'body'.

The *Gita* says: *param bhavam ajanantah* (*Bh. Gita* IX - II) – that those who cannot understand the Transcendental Nature (of Sri Krishna) are fools, deluded by ignorance.

The Master appears to dispel that ignorance. As Saint Thayumanavar puts it, he appears as a 'man' to dispel the ignorance of a 'man', just as a 'deer' is used as a decoy to capture the 'wild deer'. He has to appear with a 'body' in order to eradicate our ignorant "*I-am-the-body*" idea.

Talk 424.

In the course of conversation with a learned man who asked about *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, Sri Bhagavan said:

Purusha and *Prakriti* are only the bifurcation of the one Supreme. They are surmised because the student has the sense of duality deep rooted. *The same Gita also says that Purushottama lies beyond Purusha and Prakriti.*

Talk 436.

D.: What is *Visvarupa*?

Sri Bhagavan.: It is to see the World as the Self of God. In the *Bhagavad Gita* God is said to be various things and beings, and also the whole Universe. How to realise it or see it so? Can one see one's Self? Though not seen, can the Self be denied? What is the Truth?

D.: Is it then wrong to say that some have seen it?

Sri Bhagavan.: It is true in the same degree as you are. The *Gita* begins saying that no one was born; in the fourth chapter it says, "the numerous incarnations, yours and mine, have taken place; I know them but you do not." Of these two statements, which is the Truth? The instruction is according to the listener's understanding. If the second chapter contains the whole Truth, why should so many more chapters follow it?

In the *Bible*, God says "I AM before Abraham." He does not say "*I was*" but "*I AM.*"

Talk 439.

D.: Sri Rama asks: "*Brahman* being Pure, how can *maya* arise from Him and veil Him also? "Saint Vasishta replies: "In pure 'mind' associated with strong dispassion, this question will not arise." Of course, in *Advaita* (non-dualistic) philosophy there can be no place for

jiva, Isvara and maya. Oneself sinking into the Self, the *vasanas* (tendencies) will entirely disappear, leaving no room for such a question.

Sri Bhagavan.: The answers will be according to the capacity of the seeker. It is said in the second chapter of *Gita* that no one is born or dies: but in the fourth chapter Sri Krishna says that numerous incarnations of His and of Arjuna had taken place, all known to Him but not to Arjuna. Which of these statements is true? Both statements are True, but from different standpoints. Now a question is raised: How can *jiva* rise up from the Self? I must answer. Only know Your Real Being, then you will not raise this question.

Why should a man consider himself separate? How was he before being born or how will he be after death? Why waste time in such discussions? What was your form in deep sleep? Why do you consider yourself as an 'individual'?

Talk 467.

Yogi Ramiah: All actions take place owing to *Sakti*. How far does *Sakti* go? Can she effect anything without one's own 'effort'?

Sri Bhagavan.: The answer to the question depends on what the *Purusha* is understood to be. Is he the 'ego' or the Self?

D.: *Purusha* is *Svarupa*.

Sri Bhagavan.: But he cannot make any *prayatna* (effort).

D.: *Jiva* is the one who makes the *prayatna*.

Sri Bhagavan.: So long as egoity lasts *prayatna* is necessary. When egoity ceases to be, actions become spontaneous. The 'ego' acts in the Presence of the Self. He cannot exist without the Self.

The Self makes the Universe what it is by His *Sakti*, and yet He does not Himself act. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "I am not the 'doer' and yet actions go on". It is clear from the *Mahabharata* that very wonderful actions were effected by Him. Yet, He says that He is not the doer. It is like the Sun and the World actions.

Talk 472.

D.: The *Sastras* say that the 'thoughts', thus playing free, lead us astray, that is, to unreal and changeful things.

Sri Bhagavan.: So then, you want not to be led to unreal and changeful things. Your 'thoughts' are unreal and changeful. You want to hold the Reality. That is exactly what I say. The 'thoughts' are unreal. Get rid of them.

D.: I understand now. Yet there is a doubt. "Not a trice can you remain inactive." How shall I be able to rid myself of 'thoughts'?

Sri Bhagavan.: The same *Gita* says: "Although all 'actions' take place, I am not the doer." It is like the Sun towards the World activities. The Self always remains actionless, whereas 'thoughts' arise and subside. The Self is Perfection; it is immutable; the 'mind' is limited and changeable. You need only to cast off your 'limitations'. Your Perfection thus stands revealed.

D.: Grace is necessary for it.

Sri Bhagavan.: Grace is ever present. All that is necessary is that you surrender to It.

Talk 565.

A gentleman from Mysore asked: How is the 'mind' to be kept in the right way?

Sri Bhagavan.: By practice. Give it good 'thoughts'. The 'mind' must be trained in good ways.

D.: But it is not steady.

Sri Bhagavan.: The *Bhagavad Gita* says: *Sanaissanairuparamet* (The 'mind' must gradually be brought to a standstill); *Atma samstham manah krtva* (making the 'mind' inhere in the Self); *Abhyasa-vairagyabhyam* (by practice and dispassion).

Practice is necessary. Progress will be slow.

D.: What is the Self referred to in *Atma samstham* (fixing it in the Self)?

Sri Bhagavan.: Do you not know your Self? You certainly exist. Or do you deny your existence? The question may arise "Who is this Self", only if you do not exist, but you cannot ask anything unless you exist at the same time. Your question shows that you exist. Find out who you are. That is all.

Talk 580.

D.: Is a *Jnani* different from a *Yogi*? What is the difference?

Sri Bhagavan.: *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* says that a *Jnani* is the True Yogi and also a True *Bhakta*. Yoga is only a *sadhana* and *Jnana* is the *siddhi*.

Talk 621.

Mr. Raj Krishna found Sri Bhagavan alone on the Hill at about 5-30 p.m. and prayed: I have been desiring since my tenth year to have a glimpse of the Reality. I firmly believe that I can be helped in this only by a Sage like Sri Bhagavan. So I pray for Thy help.

Sri Bhagavan looked at him for a few minutes. The devotee interrupted, saying: "Even if I cannot realise in my life let me at least not forget it on my death bed: let me have a glimpse at least at the moment of death so that it may stand me in good stead in the future."

Sri Bhagavan.: It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Ch. VIII, that whatever may be the last thought at death, it determines the later birth of the person. It is necessary to experience the Reality now in life in order that it may be experienced at death. See if this moment be different from the last one, and try to be in that desired state.

Talk 649.

D.: How are we to understand this passage in the *Gita*:
“*This whole Cosmos forms a particle of Me.*”

Sri Bhagavan.: It does not mean that a small particle of God separates from Him and forms the Universe. His *Sakti* is acting; as a result of one phase of such activity the Cosmos has become manifest. Similarly, the statement in *Purusha Sukta*, “All the beings form His one foot (*Padosya viswa bhutani*)” does not mean that *Brahman* is in four parts.

D.: I understand it. *Brahman* is certainly not divisible.

Sri Bhagavan.: So, the fact is that *Brahman* is all and remains indivisible. He is ever realised. The man does not however know it. He must know it. Knowledge means the overcoming of obstacles which obstruct the revelation of the Eternal Truth that the Self is the same as *Brahman*. The obstacles form altogether your idea of separateness as an ‘individual’. Therefore, the present attempt will result in the Truth being revealed that the Self is not separate from *Brahman*.

Talk 650.

An Andhra gentleman of middle age asked Sri Bhagavan how he should make his *japa*.
Sri Bhagavan.: The *japa* contains the word ‘*namah*’. It means that state in which the ‘mind’ does not manifest apart from the Self. When the state is accomplished, there will be an end of the *japa*. For, the ‘doer’ disappears and so also the ‘action’. The Eternal Being is alone left. *Japa* should be made until that ‘state’ is reached. There is no escape from the Self. The doer will be automatically drawn into it. When once it is done, the man cannot do anything else but remain merged in the Self.

D.: Will *bhakti* lead to *mukti*?

Sri Bhagavan.: *Bhakti* is not different from *Mukti*. *Bhakti* is being as the Self (*Swarupa*). One is always that. He realises it by the means he adopts. What is *bhakti*? To think of God. That means: only ‘one thought’ prevails to the exclusion of all other ‘thoughts’. That ‘thought’ is of God which is the Self or it is the self surrendered unto God. When He has taken ‘you’ up, nothing will assail you. The absence of ‘thoughts’ is *Bhakti*. It is also *Mukti*. The *Jnana* method is said to be *Vichara* (enquiry). That is nothing but ‘Supreme Devotion’ (*Parabhakti*). The difference is in words only. You think that *bhakti* is meditation on the Supreme Being. So long as there is *vibhakti* (the sense of separateness), *bhakti* (reunion) is sought. The process will lead to the Ultimate Goal as is said in *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*:

*arto jignasuh arthartha jnani cha Bharatarshabha
tesham jnani nityayukta ekabhaktir visishyate*

— Ch. VII (16, 17).

— from “*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*”

The Song Celestial

Sri Bhagavan was speaking once with a visiting *pundit* about the great merits of the *Bhagavad Gita*, when a devotee complained that it was difficult to keep all the seven hundred verses in 'mind' and asked if there was not 'one verse' that could be remembered as the Quintessence of the *Gita*. Sri Bhagavan thereupon mentioned Chapter X, verse 20: "I am the Self, Oh Gudakesa, dwelling in the Heart of every being; I am the beginning and the middle and also the end of all beings."

Later He selected forty-two verses that here follow (of which that quoted above comes fourth) and arranged them in an appropriate order to serve as guidance.

Said *Sanjaya*:

1. Despondent, overwhelmed with compassion (as he sat), his troubled eyes filled with tears, Sri Krishna, the slayer of *Madhu* spoke to him. ii: 1

Sri Krishna said:

2. This body, O Son of Kunti,¹ is known as the 'Field'; and he who is aware of it is called the 'Knower of the Field' by the wise. xiii:1

3. And know that I am the Knower of the Field in all the fields, O *Bharata*. The knowledge of the 'Field' and the knower of that, in my opinion, is True Knowledge. xiii:2

4. I am the Self, O *Gudakesa*, dwelling in the Hearts of all beings. I am the beginning and the middle and the end of all beings. x:20

5. For to him who is born, death is indeed certain, and to him who dies, birth is certain. Therefore, you should not grieve for the inevitable. ii:27

6. 'That' is not born, nor does 'It' ever die; nor, having been, does 'It' ever cease to be. That Unborn, Eternal, Abiding, Primeval Being is not slain when the body is slain. ii:20

7. Invulnerable He is, not to be burnt, not to be drenched or dried. He is Eternal, All-pervading, Changeless, Motionless, Enduring. ii:24

8. Know that which pervades all this to be Indestructible. That Immutable none can destroy. ii:27

9. The unreal has no being, the Real no non-being. These two facts the Truth-seers perceive. ii:16

10. Just as the all-pervading ether, being subtle, is not affected, (tainted or contaminated by anything), even so, the Self pervading the whole body is not tainted. xiii:33

11. Neither Sun, nor Moon, nor Fire illumine this state on attaining which one does not return. And, this is My Supreme Abode. xv:6

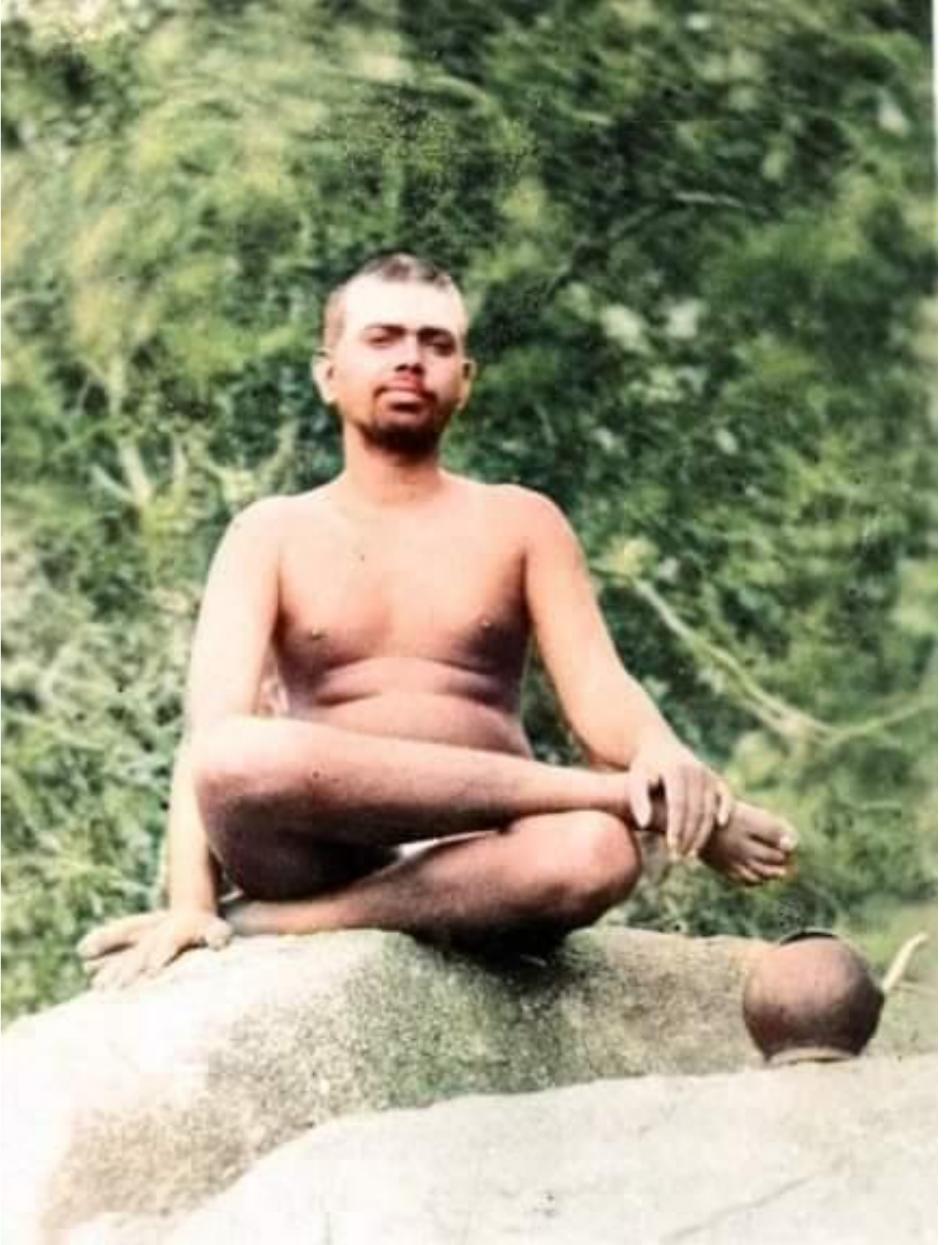
¹ Arjuna.



12. This Supreme State is called the “Unmanifest Imperishable” (*avyakto akshara*). That is My highest Abode. For those who attain to It, there is no return. viii:21
13. The undeluded, those who are free from pride and ignorance, who have overcome the evil of attachment, who are ever devoted to the Self, who have turned away from desires and are entirely beyond the dualities of pleasure and pain, attain that “Imperishable State.” xv:5
14. He who abandons the injunctions of the Scriptures and behaves according to the impulses of his desires, attains neither Perfection, nor Happiness, nor the Highest State of Salvation. xvi:23
15. He who sees the Supreme Lord, residing equally in all beings — the “Imperishable One” among the perishables — sees (truly). xiii:27
16. Only by unswerving devotion can I be known and truly seen in this form, Arjuna, and even be entered into, O tormentor of the foe. xi:54
17. The faith of everyone is according to his nature, O Bharata. Man is essentially endowed with ‘faith’. What his ‘faith’ is, that indeed is he. xvii:3
18. One who has faith and concentration and has subdued his senses attains Knowledge. Having gained Knowledge he speedily attains Supreme Peace. iv:39
19. To them ever steadfast in loving worship, I give the “Yoga of Understanding” by which they attain to Me. x:10
20. Out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their Heart, destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the “Effulgent Light of Knowledge”. x:11
21. But, in those whose unwisdom is destroyed by Wisdom, that Wisdom like the Sun, reveals the Supreme (*Param*). v:16
22. Mighty, they say, are the ‘senses’, mightier than these, the ‘mind’, mightier than that the ‘intellect’, but mightier still is “He”. iii:42
23. Thus knowing Him who is beyond the ‘intellect’, O mighty in arms, control your self by the Self and slay the enemy in the form of ‘desire’, hard though it may be. iii:43
24. As a well lit fire consumes its fuel, Arjuna, so does the “Fire of Knowledge” reduce all ‘activity’ to ashes. iv:37
25. One whose undertakings are all free from ‘desire’ and whose activity has been purified in the “Flame of Wisdom” is termed a *Sage* by those who know. iv: 19
26. *Brahma Nirvana* lies around those who have freed themselves from ‘anger’ and ‘desire’, who have subdued their ‘minds’ and have known the Self. v:26
27. One should gradually, gradually attain quietude with the ‘intellect’ (*buddhi*) held steadfast and the ‘mind’ sunk in the Self, allowing no ‘thought’ to arise. vi:25

28. To whatever side the restless, unsteady 'mind' wanders away, one should check it and bring it back controlled to the Self. vi:26
29. With the senses, 'mind' and 'intellect' subdued, the *Saint* who devoutly seeks Liberation, without desire, fear or wrath — he is indeed ever Liberated. v:28
30. One who is thus integrated in "Yoga" (*yoga yuktatma*) sees all with an equal eye, seeing himself in all beings and all beings in himself. vi:29
31. To those, however, who dwell on "Me" in single-minded worship, I guarantee fulfilment of their needs and security. ix:22
32. The foremost of these is the Wise One (*Jnani*) who is ever steadfast and devoted to the One. Very dear am I to the Wise Man and he to Me. vii: 17
33. At the end of many births the man of Wisdom comes to Me, realising that Vasudeva is all. Such a great soul is very rare to find. vii: 19
34. When a man casts out all 'desires' of the 'mind', O Son of Pritha, and is content in himself, he is said to be steadfast in Wisdom. ii:35
35. He attains Peace who abandons all 'desires', acting without 'attachment', free from 'I' and 'mine'. ii:71
36. He by whom the World is not afflicted and who is not afflicted by the World, who is free from pleasure, 'anger', 'fear' and 'anxiety' — he is dear to Me. xii: 15
37. The same in honour and dishonour, towards friends and foes; he who abandons the initiative in all undertakings, is called One beyond qualities. xiv:25
38. For him, however, who rejoices only in the Self, is gratified with the Self and content with the Self, no action is incumbent. iii: 17
39. He has nothing to gain by 'actions' done or to lose by those undone. He is not dependent on anyone for the achievement of any 'object'. iii:18
40. Satisfied with what comes to him by chance, beyond the 'pairs of opposites', free from 'envy', equal in success and failure, he is not bound by his actions. iv:22
41. The Lord resides in the Hearts of all, O Arjuna, revolving all creatures by *prakriti* as if mounted on a machine. xviii:61
42. Surrender unto Him with all your Heart, O *Bharata*. Through His Grace you will attain Supreme Peace and the Perennial Abode. xviii:62

(Translated by Arthur Osborne and Prof. Kulkarni)



***This is how pundit T.K. Sundaresa Iyer saw Sri Bhagavan at Virupaksha Cave, for the first time :
"It was not a human body that I saw. It was a living statue of burnished Gold."***

“At the Feet of Sri Bhagavan”
(extracts)
By T.K.Sundaresa Iyer

The Pontiff And Sri Bhagavan

ABOUT the year 1948 the Ashram received a letter from His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Puri (Govardhana Mutt), expressing his desire to pay a visit to Sri Bhagavan and to get certain doubts cleared. Incidentally, the letter categorically mentioned the doubts and asked that they might be solved in a reply letter. The chief of these referred to certain *Agamic* texts: "*Hara Gauri Samyogat ... avacchayah yogaha*" and the Teacher asked what this '*avacchayah yogaha*' is.

I placed this letter at the feet of Sri Bhagavan, and asked what answer should be sent to him. Bhagavan simply laughed and said that the questioner knew it all himself and needed no fresh light, but that he would know it better when he came in person. A reply was accordingly sent on these lines.

After some days the *Acharya* visited the Ashram. Sri Bhagavan gave instructions for him to be received and attended to with all care and respect for his exalted position; the Ashramites spared no pains in arranging for his reception and accommodation.

Sri Bhagavan was seated in the Golden Jubilee Hall on the granite sofa; and eager spectators had gathered in their hundreds. Quite near to Sri Bhagavan's sofa a small dais was arranged, with a deer's skin for the Pontiff to sit on, and then he was escorted to the presence of Sri Bhagavan.

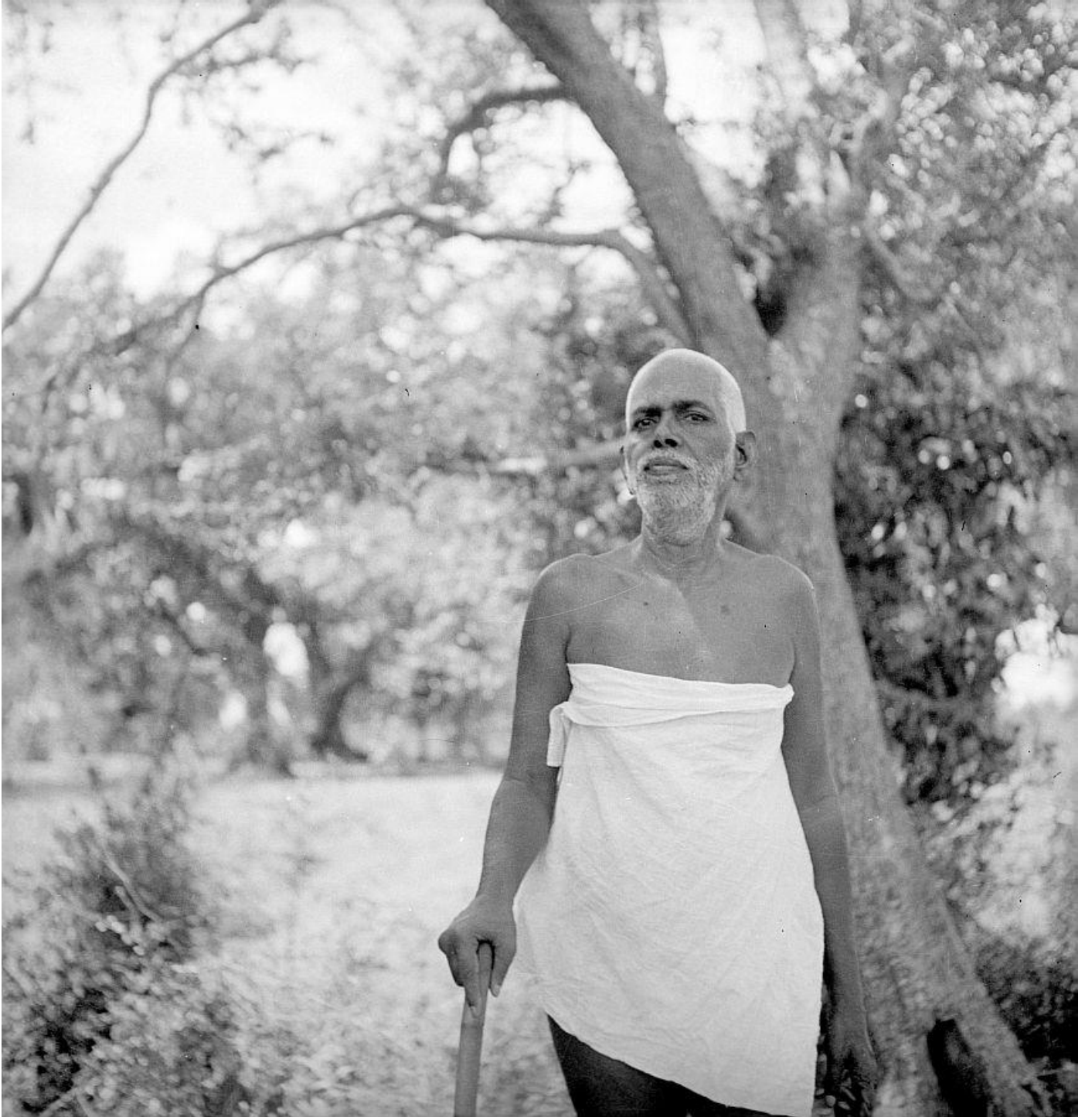
On coming before the Maharshi, the Teacher greeted Him with his staff, as is the custom of *sannyasis*, and was shown the seat arranged for him. He was surprised that so prominent a seat had been allotted; he asked the dais to be removed, spread the deer's skin on the ground, and sat on that.

After a little preliminary talk, the Teacher repeated the main question of his letter and asked Bhagavan to enlighten him on the meaning of this phrase. Sri Bhagavan gave him His Look of Grace and was silent, and the Teacher was all receptive. No words were exchanged between them. Thus, over half an hour passed.

Then Sri Bhagavan smiled and remarked: "What is there to explain? You know it already; this text represents only the very essence of Divine Knowledge — when Nature unites with the Person, then the visible becomes all shadows. It is as meaningful as pictures on the cinema screen, and then will be experienced the state of All-Self as seen... The one Being-Consciousness which projects all this out of Itself, sustains and then withdraws it again into Itself. Having swallowed all the shadows of this World, Itself dances as the Ocean of Bliss, the Reality or Substratum of all that is, was and shall be. And then It is 'I-I'."

The Teacher seemed to have received new Light and Life; he was all joy. He said that in all his wandering through the country he had tried to be enlightened upon this mystery; but it was only here that he got the Secret and the Truth of Light as explained in the texts of the *Vedanta*.

So overwhelmed with joy was he that he repeated his visit to Sri Bhagavan when the Matrubhuteswara Shrine was consecrated, and he personally supervised all the rituals in the *Yagasalas* (sacrifice halls) and saw to it that everything went off all right.



Where is the Divine World?

WHEN studying the *Upanishads* in my early days, I always visualised the Divine Abode in the Sun God and was performing the practices enjoined in certain texts. Even later, after settling at the abode of Sri Maharshi, I continued this practice (*upasana*). It proved very hard to succeed in this process, and I had to undergo very trying experiences, so I referred the whole matter to Sri Bhagavan.

"So you want to go to the "Divine World"?" asked He.

"That is what I am trying to obtain; that is what the Scriptures prescribe," I answered.

"But where are you now?" the Master asked.

I replied, "I am in Your presence."

"Poor thing! You are '*here*' and '*now*' in the "Divine World", and you want to obtain it elsewhere! Know that to be the Divine World where one is firmly established in the Divine. Such a one is Full (*Purna*); he encompasses and transcends all that is manifest. He is the substratum of the screen on which the whole manifestation runs like the movie film. Whether moving pictures run or not, the screen is always there and is never affected by the action of the pictures. You are '*here*' and '*now*' in the "*Divine World*".

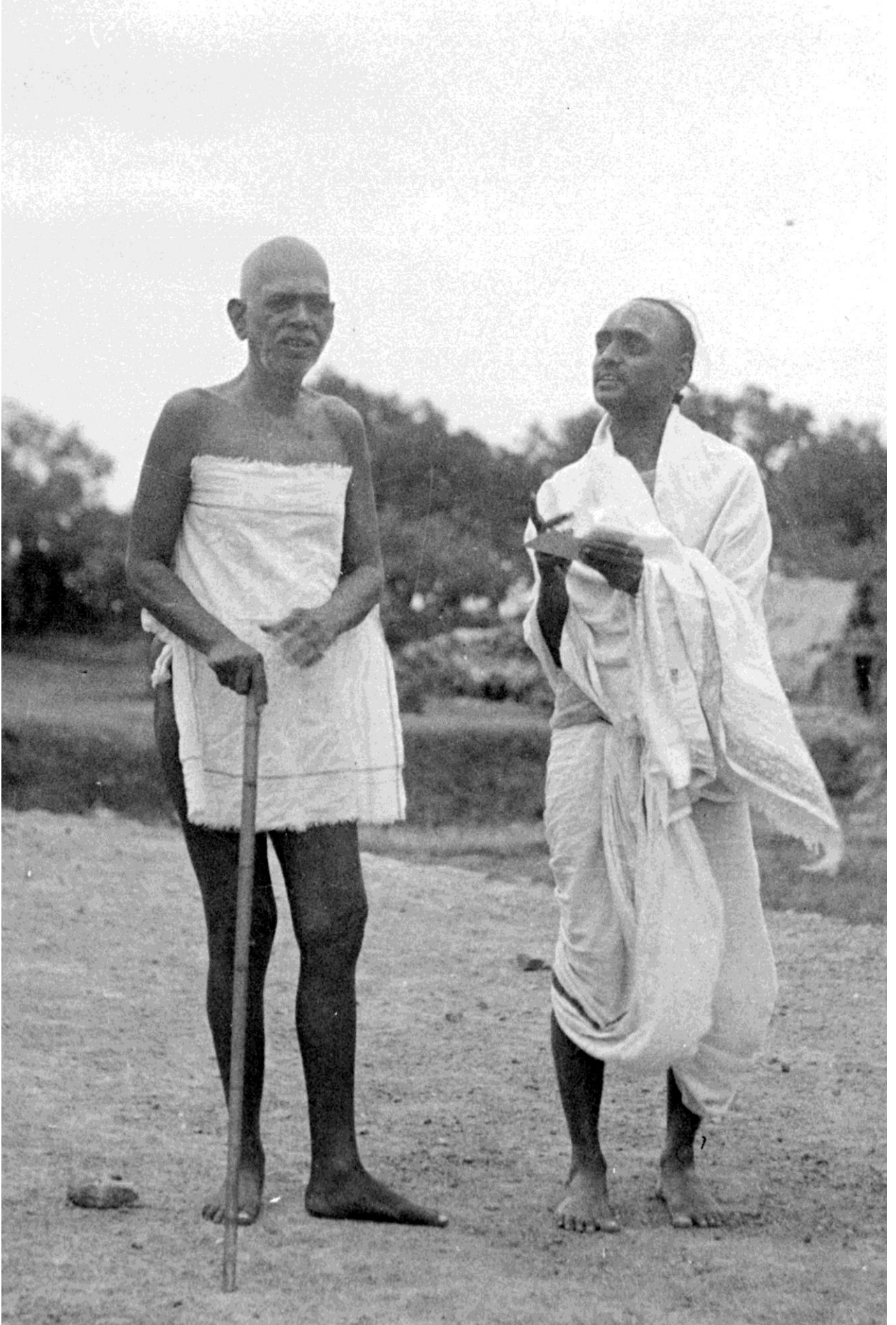
"You are like a thirsty man wanting to drink, while he is all the time standing neck-deep in the Ganga. Give up all efforts and surrender. Let the 'I', that wants the Divine World die, and the "Divine" in you will be realized *here* and *now*. For, it is already in you as the Self, not different from the Divine (*Brahman*), nameless and formless. It is already in you, and how are you to obtain that which ever remains obtained? The Self (*atman*) in you is surely not different from US?" Thus spoke Sri Bhagavan.

"So, then, Sri Bhagavan says that He is the Self (*Kutastha*) in this, the field of this soul (*jiva*), that This is already established in Sri Bhagavan as such, so this soul need do nothing but give up the sense of being a separate soul?" I asked, prostrating before Sri Bhagavan.

"Yes, yes," He replied. "That is what one must do to drop the ego-sense. If that is done, the Self will be experienced as 'I-I' *here* and *now* and at all times. There will be no going into the "Divine World" or coming out of it. You will be as you really ARE. This is the practice (*sadhana*) and this is Perfection (*Siddhi*) too."

This teaching of Sri Bhagavan, Himself being the "Divine World", is recorded for the benefit of all who are ever in Him.

— from "*At the Feet of Bhagavan*"



Jnani's Samadhi Rituals



On the day of Mother Alagammal passing away, from early in the morning, Sri Bhagavan sat next to her with His left hand on her head and His right hand on the right side of her chest. He remained like that for nearly eight hours. The devotees who had gathered there knew that her end had come. They observed the beauty and sanctity of a son elevating his mother's soul to the Infinite. Kunju Swami who was present later said that the devotees observing this felt it was a physical demonstration of the soul's journey to the Absolute — it was like heat and light spreading from a flame. When He was sure that the 'soul' and 'mind' had merged in the "Self", Sri

Bhagavan took His hands off and then said, "When the soul merges with the Self and is completely annihilated, a soft ring like sound — like that of a bell — can be felt."

It was a common practice that after witnessing a death, all those present must bathe. However, Sri Bhagavan said that in this case there was no need as there was no pollution. "She did not die. She is 'Absorbed in Arunachala'," He stated. Later, the devotees who were there enquired, "Bhagavan, what did you do by keeping your hands on her head and her chest? What exactly took place?" Sri Bhagavan explained, "'Innate tendencies' and 'subtle memories' of past experiences that lead to future possibilities became very active when my hands were placed on her. Scene after scene rolled before her in her subtle consciousness. The outer senses had already gone. The 'soul' was passing through a series of experiences, thus avoiding the need for rebirth and making possible the 'union' of the 'mind' with the "Self" or the "Heart". The soul was at last disrobed of all subtleties before it reached its Final Destination, the Supreme Peace of Liberation, from which there is no return to ignorance."

My teacher, *Pundit* T. K. Sundaresa Iyer, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer, Vedic *pundits* and a great number of devotees were at Skandashram. The question arose as to how the Mother's body should be cremated. Nayana made TKS go and ask Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan referred him to *Thirumoolar's Thirumandiram*, especially to the pages specifying as to how a *Jnani's* body be treated after its death. Kavyakantha stood firm that with Sri Bhagavan affirming the state of *Videha Mukti* to Mother Alagammal, all arguments that she was a 'woman' and that too a 'widow' and that tradition insisted on such a body should be burnt after death, did not have any value. He suggested that the body be carried down to the land at the foot of the hill where *Sri Ramanasramam* now stands, and be given a ceremonial burial. He later even gave the name '*Mathrubutheswara Maha Lingam*' to the *Shivalingam* which was placed over the spot Mother's body was interred.



***Vaidhyyanatha Sthapati is receiving guidance from SRI BHAGAVAN on the construction of Sri Mathrubuteswara Temple
– Mother Alagammal's Shrine!***

Years later, it was TKS who got the confirmation about the structure of the *Samadhi* to be built for the sacred body of Sri Seshadri Swami after he dropped it. Sri Bhagavan Himself stood there and made sure that *Thirumandiram's* specifications were meticulously followed as the body of Sri Seshadri Swami was interred.

Further, following Sri Bhagavan's instructions, *Thirumandiram's* specifications were followed not only for constructing the *Samadhis* of Natesa Swami — the head of the Kovilur Mutt — Masthan Swami, Sivaprakasam Pillai and Mudaliar Patti, but also for Cow Lakshmi, *Valli*, the deer, *Jacky*, the dog, and the anonymous but fortunate crow.

After Sri Bhagavan's *Brahma Nirvana*, the *Samadhis* of Tanjore Janaki Mata, Tirukoilur Jnanananda Swami and others were also built according to *Thirumandiram* on the suggestion of TKS. Years later, when I came for good to stay in the Ashram, following the footsteps of my teacher TKS, I had the good fortune of having the *Samadhis* of Old Devotees - beginning with Major Chadwick, Muruganar, Viswanatha Swami, Kunju Swami, S.S.Cohen, and others in strict accordance with *Thirumandiram*. Also, when Yogi Ramsuratkumar dropped the body in 2001, at the request of Justice Arunachalam and Devaki Ma, I helped in seeing to it that Yogiji's *Samadhi* too followed the same specifications. Finally, for Sadhu Natananda's *Samadhi*, Sadhu Om, Dorab Framji and I had the same thing done inside the compound of Dorab's house.

* * *

Please read the Sacred Text of this incomparable Guidance Book:

Thirumoolar's "Thirumandiram"

1910 Do not Consign *Siva-Jnani's*¹ Body to Fire; Nor Neglect it

*If the body of Siva-Jnani is to fire consigned,
The people entire will in burning fever suffer;
If his body a prey to dogs and jackals left,
Tumultous war the land will see,
And the people a prey to dogs and jackals be.*

1911 Disasters Follow if *Jnani's* Body is Consigned To Fire

*If to fire the Jnani's body is consigned
That will be unto fire the Lord's temple consigned;
No more will rains fall on the land,
Famine shall ravish the world,
Countless kings will their kingdoms lose.*

¹ A Self-Realised *Jnani* is reverentially addressed as "*Siva-Jnani*"

1912 Bury Jnani's Body in Proper Way

*Proper indeed is to bury them;
If to fire they are consigned
Destruction dogs the land;
If left to perish, uncared for,
The world its prosperity loses,
A fell prey to devastating fire falls.*

1913 Bury Jnani's Body in an Underground Sepulchre

*Let the body of Jnani,
When Lord's Grace receives,
Be in a cave seated,
Appropriate in earth's bowel dug;
Then stately rulers and people in land
Receive blessings,
Of Grace infinite.*

1914 Samadhi Rituals

*Well dig the sepulchre,
Heap the earth five cubits around,
Shape it into a triangle
Three cubits on sides;
And there in Padmasana,
Seat the body.*

1915 Samadhi Cave Locations

*One's own homestead, roadside, tank bund, riverbed,
Flowery grove, city's common
Forest dense, and mountain valley high
--These the sites appropriate,
For the sepulchre to shape.*

1916 Dimension For the Sepulchre Cave

*Five feet on four sides all,
Nine feet straight deep,
Three feet each on the triangle's sides
--These the dimensions
Appropriate for the sepulchre to shape.*

1917 Samadhi Rituals

*In abundance spread the five metals precious
And the nine gems rare;
Upon them place the seat,
Scatter the Kusha grass,
And shower the holy ashes white;
Above that scatter
Turmeric powder that is of color gold
And incenses richly mixed.*

1918 Samadhi Rituals (Cont.)

*Shape the cave inside into a square,
Upon that lay garlands of honey-dew flowers;
Sandal, musk, civet, and unguents diverse;
And pouring rose's water
Light the ritual lamp, in devotion ecstatic.*

1919 Samadhi Rituals (Cont.)

*Smear the body entire with ashes white and holy
To form a shroud protective;
Place the body on an Asana (seat) appropriate,
Spangle bright with incenses several and ashes holy;
And thus seated, cover the cave with earth.*

1920 Samadhi Rituals (Cont.)

*Having covered thus, level the four sides;
Place his sandals and ear rings,
And an image with face and eyes
Decked in dress appropriate;
Offer parched rice, food, and tender coconut.*

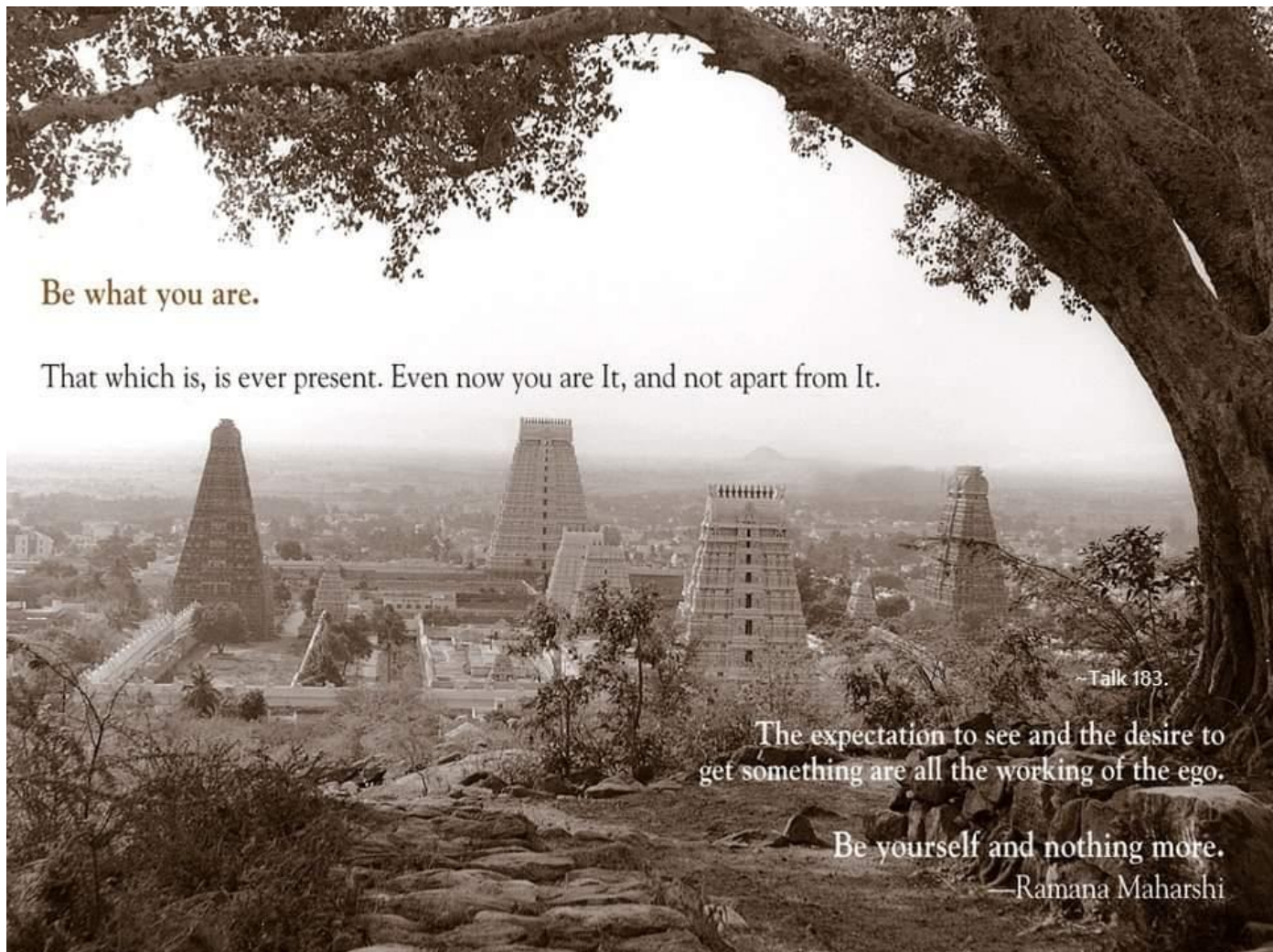
1921 Samadhi Rituals (Cont.)

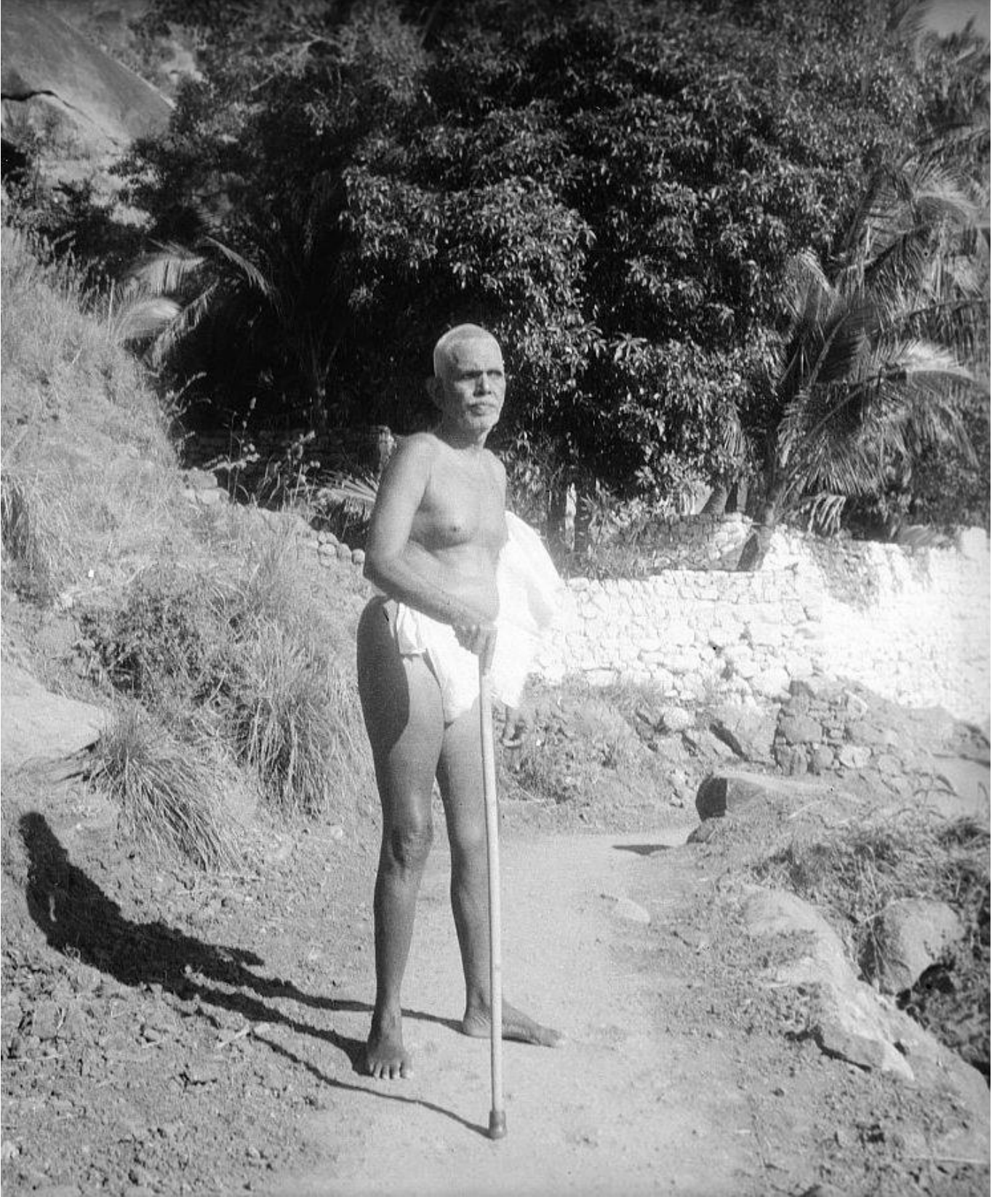
*Then pour the ashes white and powdered incense,
Shower flowers diverse, Kusha grass and Bilva leaves,
Sprinkle water holy,
And raise a platform three feet by three.*

1922 Samadhi Pujas

*Upon the platform plant
The sapling of peepal tree, or a Lingam holy,
Arrange the Sannidhi (face) toward north or east
And perform pujas with rituals sixteen,
In devotion endearing.*

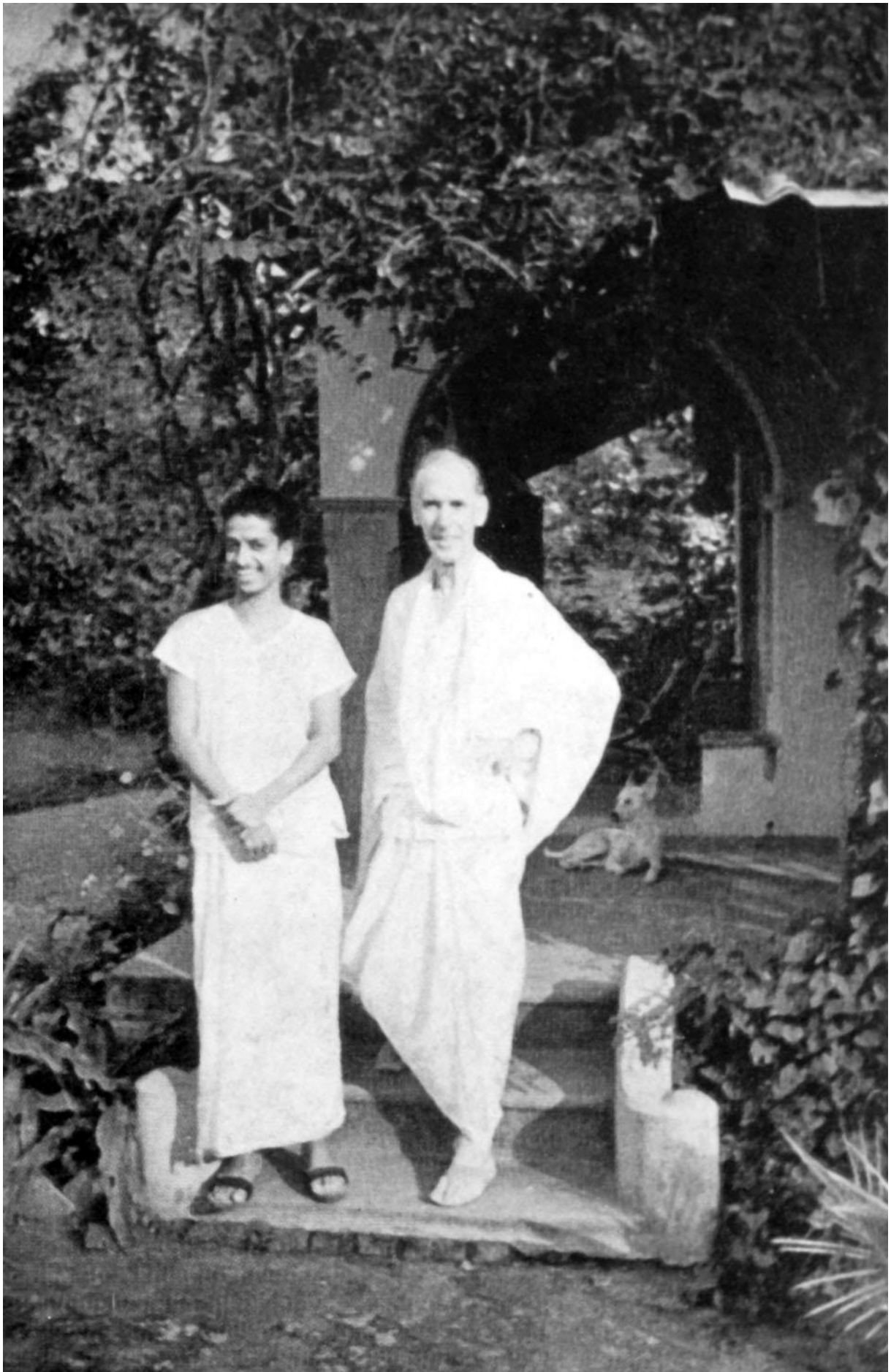
— from "Tirumular Thirumandiram –
English translation of the Tamil Spiritual Classic by Dr. B.Natarajan"





Going from Sri Ramanasramam to Skandashram in 1945 (before entering it)

The Story of the Mountain Path

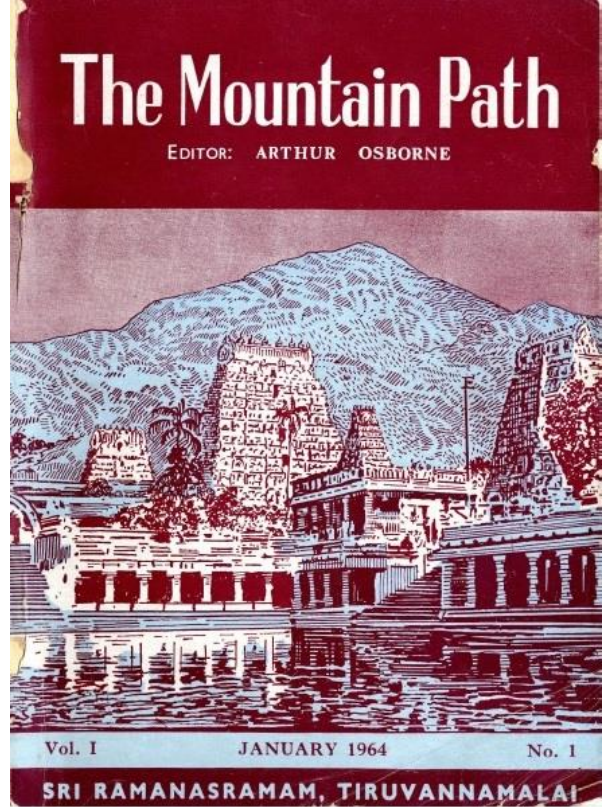


V.Ganesan and Arthur Osborne

THE STORY OF *The Mountain Path* (i) PLANNING

IN 1956-58, after taking my B.A. degree, I was in the Ashram for two years. Though my father wanted me to pursue higher studies, I stoutly refused as we could ill afford the expense. All my brothers and sisters were in the colleges and schools and my father was struggling to make both ends meet. I decided to seek some employment and thus support my family rather than be another burden on it. The two years I spent in the Ashram are memorable, indeed!

I was not spiritually inclined and had no thought of settling down to a seeker's life, though both Major A.W. Chadwick and Mr. Arthur Osborne, independently and at different times, assured me (as indicated in my horoscope) that I would be living only in the Ashram and be a serious seeker, dedicated to matters spiritual. During this period I saw how the Ashram was suffering from paucity of funds.



The Cover of the first issue

However, thanks to Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan, I joined M.A. Philosophy class. A new vista opened in my life by the study of eastern and western philosophies. Postgraduation completed, I was thrust into a bank job, where I felt literally combined and confined. Then, through Professor K. Swaminathan I got a post as sub-editor in a newspaper in Bombay. I liked the work. On a visit to my Muslim colleague's apartment in Colaba, he explained to me how a magazine could fetch money through advertisements; I was not interested in the project.

I soon found that life in Bombay was far from soul-satisfying. I was unhappy. Due to various causes and circumstances, I returned for good to the Ashram, with the full consent of my parents, to serve Sri Bhagavan's devotees, particularly the older ones. My father was happy with my hard work at the Ashram. I plunged myself whole-heartedly in Sri Bhagavan's *seva*. I took to a seeker's life in right earnest. I enjoyed the blissful and serene company of Muruganar, Major Chadwick, A. Devaraja Mudaliar, Arthur Osborne, S.S. Cohen, Munagala Venkataramaiah, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, Sadhu Om, Viswanatha Swami, Kunju Swami, N. Balarama Reddiar and others.

There was a crisis in 1963 in the Ashram finances. It dawned on me one day that I could do something tangible to save the dire situation. I recollected the long-forgotten conversation I had had with my Muslim friend in Bombay, at Colaba. Yes! That was it! I

could help the Ashram by bringing out a yearly magazine! At that time I was helping the correspondence section also. Devotees from far and near were making enquiries whether the Ashram was being run as of old and if so, what were its activities. T.K. Sundaresa Iyer and L.P. Koppikar were in charge of the correspondence section, and I was being trained by them. I used to seek Arthur Osborne's draft-replies for important foreign letters demanding spiritual clarifications. I used to be spellbound by his brief replies, so aptly worded. Yes! Here was the solution! I would prepare the 'Yearly Bulletin' — report happenings at the Ashram, print excerpts from letters and replies thereto and have the material touched up by Arthur Osborne, and have as many advertisements as possible, and thus help both the Ashram and the far-flung devotees.

I went to Arthur Osborne's house and explained to him this idea of a 'Yearly Bulletin' and how it could bring Ashram financial benefits and could keep devotees informed about the present working of the Ashram. I sought his blessings and active cooperation. He listened with keen attention and at the end held my hands and shed tears of joy! How surprising! I had never seen him so deeply moved.

"Ganesan! You do not know what a blessing you have brought me today. A few weeks back I had a dream in which Sri Bhagavan appeared. I knelt before Him. He had a few copies of a magazine which He handed over to me, and said, 'Take it'. I understood the message to mean that He wanted me to be an Editor! I had to obey my Master's wish. But, where would I fit in India? My elder brother is the reputed editor of the U.K. magazine, 'The Economist', Was I to seek employment under him, I wondered. I was pained at the thought of leaving Arunachala. Yet, if He would have it so, I should even leave Arunachala, I decided. Now, I know what Sri Bhagavan meant. What a joy!"

The torrential talk ended for a while only to be renewed with greater vigour: "You know, Ganesan! During the lifetime of Sri Bhagavan and even after, I was asked by many to run a journal for the Ashram. I repeatedly refused. Sri Bhagavan's teaching is meant only for practise; what is there to write about, that too continuously in a journal? I knew I disappointed my close friends, like Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami and D.S. Sastri. But I stood firm. Now, Sri Bhagavan has commanded me to spread His teaching of *Atma Vichara*, through the medium of this journal which we are going to start!"

I was thrilled by his enthusiasm and exchanged views on the plans for the journal.

It was agreed then that the annual Bulletin should have: (i) an Editorial, (ii) important articles based only on the practical side of *sadhana*, (iii) Book-Reviews, (iv) Letters to the Editor and (v) Ashram Bulletin, covering the happenings at the Ashram. He agreed to be its sole Editor. He advised me to consult Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami. When I met him at Madras, Dr. T.N.K. was overjoyed, but pleaded that it should not be a yearly but a monthly journal. Mr. Osborne felt that a monthly would involve too much work and might not have enough material of high quality. He added that it would interfere with our regular *sadhana*. I went back to Madras, again, and with Dr. T.N.K.'s consent it was decided that the journal should be a 'Quarterly'. He gave a cheque for Rs.100, to begin with. This was our first Life Subscription! It was the beginning of September 1963.

Then, I sought the counsel of D.S. Sastri, who happened to come to the Ashram at that time. Mr. Sastri was firm that I should be the publisher and owner of the journal, but I was equally firm that it should be an "Ashram Journal" and that its President, Sri. T.N. Venkataraman, should be its Publisher. After prolonged persuasion by Mr. Sastri, I however, agreed to be its *Managing Editor*.

Mr. Arthur Osborne was not only a steady, strenuous worker, but very quick and precise. He collected the articles in a remarkably short time. There was another big question mark. How should we name the journal? Again, it was Mr. Osborne, who came out with the brilliant title *THE MOUNTAIN PATH* — the '*Mountain*' standing for Arunachala and '*Path*' for the right-royal path of Sri Bhagavan, *Vichara Marga*! Next was, how much the subscription should be.

The next day, a money order of Rs. 5/- arrived from one Mr.H.R. Chadha of Calcutta, whom we hardly knew. In the M.O. coupon, it was written: "The annual subscription for the Ashram journal. More details follow in my letter". Yes! Bhagavan again had decided what the annual subscription should be. We were happy. The letter arrived and it read : "I had lost touch with the Ashram. Sri Bhagavan is my *Guru*, whom I met in the later thirties. He still is my all! The other day, He appeared to me in the dream, showed me a journal and I saw clearly Rs. 5/- written on the cover. I take it that there is an Ashram journal. Please enrol me as a subscriber". The first annual subscriber for this 'unborn' journal was Mr. Chadha!

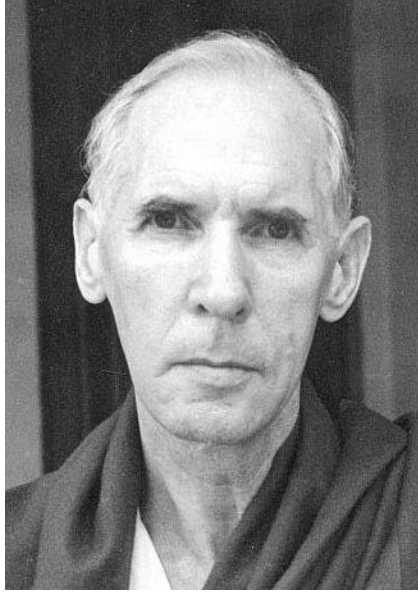
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I did not know how to collect advertisements. Before printing the rate-cards, I had sent letters of request for a few. Sri M.A. Chidambaram, the reputed industrialist and philanthropist, was the first to respond with Rs. 250/-!

I started my advertisement hunt in Madras. I used to meet many gentlemen and beg them for advertisements. For days I would walk the streets of Madras. Some received me with happiness, but many hurt and humiliated me. But I never gave up. I worked hard and managed to collect 23 pages of advertisements for the first issue. I thought that that was the end of it ! But, lo ! At the Jupiter Press I was told that one more advertisement was needed for completing the last forme. Sri Framji Dorabji, old devotee and proprietor of Wellington Talkies, who had already given his Talkies' advertisement, suddenly came to the Press with AVM Studio advertisement block, just in time to complete that forme!

The printing of the journal at the Press was itself a great excitement for me. The pressmen were surprised to see me standing next to them, nearly a fortnight from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.!

The cover page was designed by Sri Gopi, who had served in the forties at the Ashram during Sri Bhagavan's *Jayanthi*. He was working as a member of the *Sunday Times* staff under the leadership of M.S. Kamath. The very first design drawn by him and approved by Mr. Osborne featured Arunachala Hill and the temple. It was liked by all.



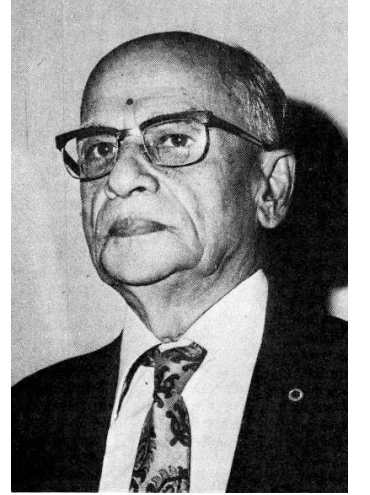
Arthur Osborne



Arthur & Lucia Osborne



Sri Viswanatha Swami



K.K. Nambiar



Prof. K. Swaminathan

With a few copies of January, 1964 issue, the first issue, I rushed to the Ashram. Arthur Osborne refused even to look at them before they were placed on the *Samadhi* of the Master! At a simple function, Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan released the first copy. When I wanted Arthur Osborne to preside, he said, "There is no need for any one to preside, since Sri Bhagavan is ever here as the Presiding Presence!"

(ii) PARTICIPATION

FROM the very first issue, Arthur Osborne knew what exactly the journal should contain and he followed the plan till his last day and he left specific, written instructions on how the journal should be run after him. He wanted every issue to carry an article on a saint's life or teachings, to introduce old devotees and to express grateful thanks to those who had done even the smallest service to the Master. *How I came to Sri Bhagavan* became another welcome feature. He bestowed special attention on *Book Reviews*. The *Ashram Bulletin* was left entirely to me; he used to touch up only its English. His answers to questions in *Letters to the Editor* were not only popular but very useful for *sadhaks*.

Running *The Mountain Path* was not always a pleasant pastime. When articles were found unsuitable, even if written by old devotees, they were promptly returned to them. Some insulted Arthur Osborne for these rejections. He reacted calmly like the Buddha; if an insult is not accepted it returns to the giver like any other gift. He would console me, thus: "Service to *Guru* is not always easy. It is not like pleasing a superior in an office." I would like to reproduce a letter that I received in reply to mine written in utter dejection and fatigue, when I was overworked and lacked proper support and co-operation from my colleagues, on the one hand, and on the other, was criticised for no valid reasons whatsoever:

23rd June 1966.

Dear Sri Ganesan,

Glad to hear that the work in Madras is going on well. We must not be too upset by people's criticism. But at the same time we must examine it to see if anything is justified in it and if so try to correct what is wrong. So long as the work is done as a service to Bhagavan it can go on whether people are helpful or not. Perhaps people who criticised do not realise how much work has to be done. After all, you know that at the Ashram there are people who criticise my work on the journal too. In fact you hold three posts — office manager, advertising editor and chief sub-editor in charge of page-making, and I can't think of anyone else who would combine them with the same enthusiasm and ability. So, you will have to continue doing Sri Bhagavan's work whether people criticise or not.

For us, what is necessary is a constant examination of motive: Do I want to dominate or to serve Bhagavan? Do I want to impress X, Y or Z or to serve Sri Bhagavan? Do I want to win praise or to serve Sri Bhagavan?

Best wishes for the work you are doing,

Yours in Bhagavan,

Sd. Arthur Osborne.

One more citation from his letter to me to prove how well he guided me:

"As for some people being jealous, I expected that. Human nature is such that nothing can succeed without provoking jealousy. They may even try to create animosity between us. Our best policy is just to take no notice and concentrate on doing Sri Bhagavan's work to the best of our ability and maintaining a high standard in every way so that people have nothing to criticise. With all best wishes. May the Grace of Sri Bhagavan support you in your work!"

On two different occasions, he gave me glimpses of his greatness, his humility and *gurubhakti*. In his January 1969 Editorial he had written: "It is not a question of whether there is a God apart from you but whether there is a *you* apart from God" (*italics*: mine). I was so much impressed by the depth and clarity of it I rushed to his house and expressed my happiness over it. He reacted pleasantly: "Do you like it? Yes, it is a great saying and contains the essence of the entire panorama of philosophies and sayings of all Saints." I was prompted to ask how he could write such magnificent truths in such clear and simple language. He replied that it was all the Grace of Sri Bhagavan.

Previously too, on reading his Editorial for October 1967, I was thrilled to the core, particularly by the sentences: "It is tremendously exhilarating to learn for the first time the truth of the One Self and the possibility of Self-Realisation. At last life has a meaning and a purpose!" When I rushed to him and congratulated him, his calm reply was: "It is all Sri Bhagavan's Grace! If you can feel so thrilled it is a proof that I have communicated the intuitive message correctly. I am grateful to you!"

A few further points of interest that I observed in him:

- (i) In following Sri Bhagavan's path of *Self-enquiry*, he combined with it true devotion and selfless service. It was *jnana*, *bhakti* and *nishkama karma* — all in one!
- (ii) He was very regular in attending the chanting of the Vedas (Vedaparayana) in front of Sri Bhagavan's Shrine, both morning and evening. He affirmed that listening to it helped in meditation.
- (iii) He was a towering example of an ascetic living a family life!
- (iv) In all the years that I knew him, I never saw him getting angry at any time under any circumstances.
- (v) He never demanded any privileges for himself as Editor!

I received from him strong support and friendly guidance. I owe much to his sympathetic and patient understanding which saved me from various pitfalls that beset the spiritual path.

Mr. Osborne's remarkable ability in presenting Sri Bhagavan's teaching of *Self-enquiry* is clearly seen in his brilliant Editorials and the numerous articles he wrote under various pseudonymns, like *Sagittarius*, *Abdullah Qutbuddin*, *Bodhichitta*, and *A.Rao*. He contributed articles on Christianity, Islam and Buddhism in each issue of the journal. When accused of using for preaching Christianity and Islam, he, explained calmly: "Ganesan! I am a staunch Christian: I still remain so. And, for some time, I was in love with

Islam and lived in mosques along with Muslims. I have studied Buddhism and known Buddhists. I know, thus, the difficulty Christians, Muslims and Buddhists find in practising Maharshi's teaching of *Atma Vichara*. By such articles I am only building a bridge through which all can reach the Maharshi and gain His Guidance."

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At first we printed only 1500 copies. Mr. Osborne had warned me that the copies would not be enough. He was proved correct; I had to reprint 500 copies more of the first two issues. As devotees started reading it, *The Mountain Path* became very popular and the circulation increased to 3000, then to 4000, then to 4500 and now it stands at 5000 copies. The distinguished writers of articles include the Dalai Lama, Joel Goldsmith, Father Thomas Merton, Mysore Maharaja, Douglas E. Harding, Wei Wu Wei, Paul Reps, Lucien Stryk, George Trevelyan, Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan and others. The entire credit for enlisting their help goes to Mr. Osborne. Also, a row of ennobling serials enriched the hearts of the readers — '*Bhagavad Gita*' '*Veda Parayana*' , '*Arunachala Mahatmyam*', '*Stories from Yoga Vasishtha*' , ' Garland of *Guru's Sayings*', etc.

The Mountain Path, now well-established, commanded respect and applause from all over the world. The main aim of starting an Ashram journal was more than fulfilled. A steady flow of visitors, *fresh* pilgrims — mostly young seekers — came to the Ashram. Many projects — the completion of Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi* shrine, the Meditation Hall , the Centenary Celebrations, a number of Guest Houses — all these became a reality, thanks largely to the good news spread through the pages of this quarterly.

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In 1968 I was introduced to a new dimension in my relationship with my Editor, Arthur Osborne. We had always had the most cordial relationship, despite occasional differences which he nipped in the bud through his intuitive understanding and magnanimity. We freely consulted each other and decisions were taken only after we reached a consensus. Mr. and Mrs. Osborne had given me full freedom to knock at their door at any time, even at odd hours! Entering the house after a week's interval I found him stretched on his bed, suddenly reduced to skin and bones. This physical debility struck me first. Then, I noticed the change, the transformation in his face and I was wonderstruck. It shone with an aura bright and peaceful. My inner voice announced; "He is realised!" He opened his eyes and gave me a warm welcome with his lustrous look. He said: "Ganesan! I am saved. *The Mountain Path* will go on. Don't worry!" I sat next to him. I was overwhelmed with joy. I held his hand and sat gazing at his radiant face. I spent half an hour with him and went to my house and announced to my mother: "Mother! Mr. Osborne is realised. Please go and see him; his face shines with light!" She went to Mr. Osborne's house in the evening and confirmed my view.

Though after a few days Mr. Osborne physically improved, he spoke to no one. He was totally drawn within and showed signs of interest only when '*Bhagavan*' or '*Arunachala*' was mentioned. Even *The Mountain Path* — his pet child — did not seem to interest him. I started telling all my friends about the change and urging them to go and see him. Some were sceptical, some delighted. I took Sri T.P. Ramachandra Iyer to Mr. Osborne after I

had tutored him how to test the change in Mr. Osborne by mentioning the journal, then some anecdote about Sri Bhagavan, and then Mr. Osborne's children (whom he knew very well) and so on.

Mr. Osborne looking at us, smiled and said nothing. TPR started praising *The Mountain Path*, particularly the Editorials. Mr. Osborne sat like a statue. TPR then said: "One day, in the hall of Sri Bhagavan..." but before he could proceed any further, Mr. Osborne sat up and said: "Yes, TPR! Tell me what happened." TPR narrated an incident. Mr. Osborne became very happy and pleaded, "TPR! Record all these incidents. You owe this to posterity." TPR, as planned already, switched the topic to his children and Mr. Osborne turned into a statue again. Next TPR spoke about Sri Bhagavan's love for Arunachala. Mr. Osborne joined enthusiastically. When again TPR went on to other subjects Mr. Osborne lapsed back into indrawn silence. When we came out TPR was extremely happy and said: "Ganesan ! Thank you! You have proved to me beyond doubt that Arthur is realised! It only proves that if one is sincere Sri Bhagavan's Grace will transform one *here and now!*"

The wonder was that our beloved Editor, perhaps anticipating the great change, had already prepared and finalized nine full issues: those of July & October, 1968, all the four of 1969 and January, April and July, of 1970 (except, of course, *Ashram Bulletin*, which in any case was my province). It was incredible, but he had done it! Later, when the burden of carrying on the journal fell on my shoulders, I realised how taxing it was even to put together a single issue in the given three months! Mr. Osborne had kept them all in different envelopes marking the date on each. A practical demonstration of how a *Jnani* is the master of *Karma*.

Mr. Arthur Osborne went to England and returned, now steadily established in inward poise. As he entered his house, he said: "Thrice I was about to die and every time Sri Bhagavan saved me! "Like a child I used to be delighted in his proximity. Friends pulled my leg: "Don't carry too far your hero-worship of Mr. Osborne." They didn't know how I enjoyed his *Brahmic* state.

He used to say: "At last Life has a meaning and a purpose! It is tremendously exhilarating to realize the truth of the One Self!" His words had come true in his life!

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On May 8, 1970 I was woken up from sleep by Mrs. Osborne, giving me the news that the body of her beloved husband, had been brought by taxi from Bangalore, I went and saw the body. He looked as if asleep. Before breathing his last, though physically unable to utter a word, he had spoken in a loud, clear voice, to Mrs. Osborne- "*Thank you!*" I missed him very much but at the same time somehow felt his guiding presence for months thereafter.

The July 1970 issue was ready and I brought copies from Madras and placed them at Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi*, symbolising its release. That night, while sleeping near the *Samadhi* of Sri Bhagavan I had a vivid dream. Mr. Osborne appeared and demanded from me the July copy and carefully went through every page. After the great change in early 1968, he had not shown much interest in the issues as they came out. Now in the first issue that I



Dr. K. Subrahmanian



Ronald Rose



T.P. Ramachandra Iyer



Lucy Cornelssen



Philip Pegler



A.R. Natarajan



David Godman



K.V. Subramanyan



Dev Gogoi



Ramamani

had brought out in his physical absence, he evinced keen interest to assure, as it were, his continued guidance in the journal's smooth running.

(iii) PINNACLE

The passing away of the Founder-Editor was so severe a blow that for some time I could not even think of who would follow him as Editor: so stunned and benumbed was I. It was then Sri Bhagavan's Grace that gave Mrs. Lucia Osborne the courage and willingness to volunteer to shoulder the entire responsibility herself. We could count on the help of M.C. Subramaniam and Ramamani who were often consulted even by Mr. Osborne. Editorship was something quite new for her, since she had never before in her life written anything, except personal letters, and she had done no "vetting" of others' articles at all. She, however, had learnt much by observing her husband during *Mountain Path* work. Her courage, the memory of her husband and her devotion to Sri Bhagavan enabled her to prove a worthy successor to one who was an adept in this line.

I need not say that she not only edited the journal well but, as time passed on, became a seasoned writer herself. One noted a mother's tenderness in her writings. Some not too intellectual readers even found her editorials better than Mr. Osborne's, saying "she is one among us and as such we are able to follow what she says!" While all the reputed writers came forward to cooperate with her, as they wholeheartedly did with her husband, she shifted the emphasis from topics of academic interest to those of practical value, from scholarliness to simplicity. However her difficulties were genuine. The strain was too much. From October 1970 to January 1974 she had borne the brunt. She pleaded with me: "Ganesh! It is really too much: I can't do it any further. You will have to find someone else to shoulder it," Seeing my predicament, she herself came out with the suggestion: "Why not our Viswanathan?"

The name sounded splendid to me! But, who is to bell the cat—who dare rope in this wild elephant? I could only pray to Sri Bhagavan. And lo and behold! Sri Viswanatha Swami himself came forward, one day, and volunteered to take up the editorship. But he laid down a condition. He should be helped by Professor K. Swaminathan. The latter was in Delhi, already burdened with the colossal task of bringing out *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. The Professor who was all along a staunch supporter and good friend of the journal, readily agreed to work with the Swami but suggested the formation of an Editorial Board. The Editorial Board was formed in July 1974, with the additional members: Ronald Rose, T.P. Ramachandra Aiyer, M.C. Subramaniam, Philip Pegler and Ramamani. The final work rested with Swami only. There was now a beautiful blend of Sanskrit, Tamil and English scholarship which the readers enjoyed. The articles, selected initially by me, would be forwarded by Swami to Delhi. Professor would do all the detailed editing in pencil and add a remark: "To be revised and approved by Viswanatha Swami". The Swami, after going through a few of the edited articles, mastered the art of editing!

Our readers who had welcomed the simplicity in the writings of Mrs. Osborne, rejoiced now in the blend of *Jnana* and *Bhakti* in the writings of Swami. His profound knowledge of Sanskrit, particularly *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, enabled him to quote from the ancient texts, ample authority in support of Sri Bhagavan's teachings. The emphasis now shifted

from articles on other religions and other teachers to articles on Sri Bhagavan and His teachings. This shift was very smoothly effected by the Swami since he had lived with the Master for so many years: the readers openly welcomed it. There was a stamp of authenticity when he wrote about Bhagavan and His teachings. Sri Bhagavan used to consult Viswanathan in dealing with spiritual writings while correcting, confirming or commenting on them. So, the work of Viswanatha Swami as the new Chief Editor brought about a welcome change reminding one of the old days in Sri Bhagavan's Presence.

Many topics of interest and importance would have never seen the light of day but lain buried in the bosom of Swami had he not brought them out as Editorials and special articles from his pen, like *Dasamaha Vidyas*. For full five years the Swami joyously kept the journal on a bright, ascending path. It was recognised in India and abroad as an authoritative spiritual journal, answering the questions of modern minds. The Swami's spiritual stature encouraged readers to scale new peaks of spiritual fulfilment.

As time passed by Dr. K. Subrahmanian, Lucy Cornelssen, Jim Grant and David Godman joined the Editorial Board and contributed fresh substance and style. When the devotees were building up momentum to celebrate Sri Bhagavan's *Birth Centenary* in 1980 and the journal was making efforts to reflect the great event in its pages, suddenly and peacefully Viswanatha Swami dropped his body. This was a very great set-back, for his friendly love and cooperative approach which dissolved so many problems, were no longer there. Again, I was thrown into despair!

I blame myself for such diffidence. For, is not Sri Bhagavan everywhere extending His Helping Hand? David Godman, who was doing the Book Reviews column, came forward to shoulder the responsibility. He had merged the two separate libraries within the Ashram compound (the Ashram Library and *The Mountain Path Library*) into one "*Sri Ramana Centenary Library*" in a new building in the Morvi Complex. Jim Grant gave him sustained assistance. Now, on top of this Library work, Godman undertook the Editorship; this is proof of his enthusiasm and efficiency. He took the journal along a different route. He wrote searching Editorials having delved deep in the Archives of the Ashram, and penned several authentic documents on Sri Bhagavan and His teachings. Some provoked controversy; but his articles made one sit up and take note of other viewpoints, and of contradictory reports found in old records.

I have to record here my immense debt to David Godman and Jim Grant, but for whose responsible handling of the journal and other literary works, I could not have devoted my time and energy to the *Birth Centenary Celebrations*.

In July 1981, we switched from letter-press printing to offset printing. The next year David Godman had to go home to England. I consulted, as usual, Professor K. Swaminathan. He promptly named K.K. Nambiar, one of the old and staunchest devotees of the Master! "Yes, he is the person", I agreed. Here again, I saw the *Guiding Presence of Sri Bhagavan!* With the new Editor at the helm, a different orientation was given to the journal. Articles on Sri Bhagavan and His teachings dominated its pages. With offset printing coming handy, I gave more importance to the display of Ashram Bulletin: this column suddenly became the favourite of the readers since I ventured to put in as many photos of visiting-pilgrims and of functions connected with Sri Ramana-celebrations. I defended my move (as a few opposed such a "propaganda touch") by citing Sri Bhagavan

who always expressed gratitude for help rendered. These pilgrims and function-organising *bhaktas* deserved grateful mention in the columns of Sri Bhagavan's journal.

Sri A.R. Natarajan contributed brilliant Editorials which helped readers follow the Master's teaching with clarity and certitude. After the passing away of K.K. Nambiar, the whole brunt fell on Professor's broad shoulders. Dr. K. Subrahmanian provided lucid Editorials which were very well received because of their directness and simplicity.

Thus, twenty-four years rolled by!

For various reasons, I suddenly felt tired and wanted to quit or close down the journal. I thought that the journal had more than fulfilled the purpose of its creation — all the aspects of Sri Maharshi's Teachings and the practical aspects of other religions had been brought out and all Old Devotees of the Master had been given due recognition. There was a dearth of fresh articles on Sri Bhagavan and His Teachings. I was also tired of begging for advertisements. I felt I should quit.

However, I also felt strongly that I should do my utmost to make the issues of the *Silver Jubilee year* a grand success. I sought Professor Swaminathan's counsel. He fully realised my predicament, but yet said: "*Sri Bhagavad Gita* has been commented upon all these centuries by various scholars, yet still new commentaries are coming up, every day! The teachings of Masters like Sri Bhagavan never become stale, the more you write about them the fresher they are." After some time, he continued: "All right! Don't worry. I shall take the entire responsibility of the journal. I will help you, first, to complete the four issues of the *Silver Jubilee*: and then let us leave it to Sri Bhagavan"! This 91 year 'youngster' came to the relief of a 51 year 'old man'!

The purpose of the journal has never been to propagate a cult. In January 1964, in the very first para of his Editorial, Arthur Osborne has explained the purpose of the journal:

"It is related that after attaining Enlightenment the Buddha's first impulse was to abide in the Effluence of Bliss without turning back to convey the Incommunicable to mankind. Then he reflected: 'Some there are who are clear-sighted and do not need any teaching, and some whose eyes are clouded with dust who will not need it though given, but between these two there are also some with but little dust in their eyes, who can be helped to see; and for the sake of these I will go back among mankind and teach.' It is for those with little dust in their eyes that this journal is intended."

"The purpose of the journal is to show that there is a more satisfactory state than that of ignorant, confused, unguided, frustrated modern man, and a higher, more satisfying and more durable alternative for him than any provided by wealth or luxury, art or music, or the love between man and woman; that such a state can be attained in this lifetime and that the purpose of all religions has been to lead men towards it, although in many different ways. I say 'towards' rather than 'to' because even though the Supreme State may not be attained in this lifetime, the mere approach to it can bring a peace of 'mind' and sense of well being not otherwise attainable."

The Mountain Path is Sri Bhagavan's journal !



Thank You!

After many decades of dedicated service to the Ashram — especially in the Publications section — V. Ganesan retires from all the official positions that he has been holding hitherto at Sri Ramanasramam. He will however, continue to be available between 8 and 11 in the morning for seekers to meet him and have spiritual discussions with him. He will also continue to give talks on Sri Maharshi and His Teachings whenever invited by devotees.

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V. Ganesan expresses his limitless gratitude and thanks to the following who helped him edit The Mountain Path, for the past eight years. "It is their willing and unconditional assistance which enthused me to carry on this sacred but very heavy burden, all these years."

K.V. Subramanyan



David Godman



Dev Gogoi



Nadhia Sutara



Anuradha



J. Jayaraman
who is in charge of
Book Reviews



T.V. Venkataraman
who has been printing
the journal from its
inception



"My only resident-friend in 1000-pillared Mantap coming and offering salute as a great gesture of friendship and joy !"

True Efficacy of Spiritual Sharings

True Efficacy of Spiritual Sharing

A spiritually advanced aspirant comes at the 'right moment' when an exceptionally eager and serious seeker needs a push to go up the spiritual ladder. The *Sat-Guru* takes care of this without fail. In spiritual sharing, neither the *dwandhwas* (dyads) of teacher and taught, nor the *triputi* (triads) of object, its giver and receiver, operate; there is only *Ekam* (One). When the Truth, 'I AM,' is being shared, only the 'I AM' is there, neither the speaker nor the listener. There are no two, no three, nothing else, but the single, non-dual Truth, 'I AM'! That is why spiritual sharing is revered as Sacred *Sat-sangh*, the union with *Sat*, the one indivisible Truth, 'I AM.'

Remarkable transmission between two ripe seekers

Swami Abishiktananda: "The first time that I met H.W.L. Poonjaji was in the cave of *Arutpal Tirtham*, up on the Mountain ARUNACHALA, on March 13, 1953. It was about four in the afternoon. I was sitting on my stone seat outside the cave. I asked him, 'How did you manage to get here? Who could have told you about me? Who directed you to my cave?' 'You called me,' replied Poonjaji, looking me straight in the eye; 'And here I am. Let me say it again; it was you who called me. The Self attracts the Self. What else do you expect?'

"We spoke about the Maharshi, His teaching and His disciples — all of which he was perfectly familiar with. Near me lay some books, including *The Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*. As our conversation passed from the subject of the Maharshi to that of the Scriptures, I picked up one of my books to quote a text from it. 'And, what is the use of all that?' asked Poonjaji bluntly. 'All your books, all the time lost in learning different languages! Which language do you use to converse with the *Atman* (Self)?'

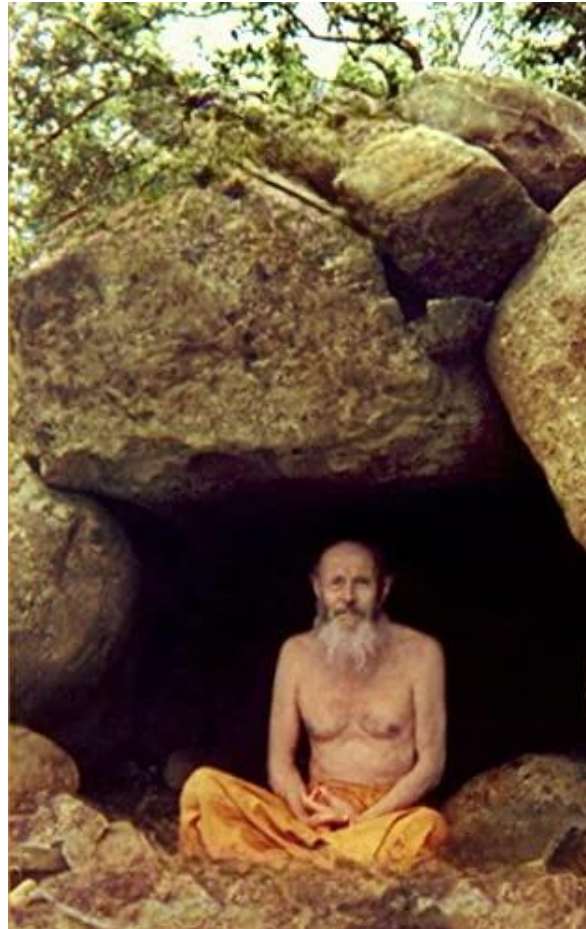
"As I attempted to defend my point of view, he cut in again, 'Forget about it! In fact, apart from the Self, what else is there? So, your English, Sanskrit and the rest, how do they benefit you? Are they any use for conversing with the Self, for speaking to yourself? None of that leads anywhere useful. The Self has nothing to do either with books, or with languages, or with any Scriptures whatever. It "IS" – that's all!

"I, also,' he continued, 'was mad about reading once; but I never learnt anything from it. Now I read nothing, or so little as makes no difference. Not even the *Gita*, whose words in the old days were all the time ringing like music in my Heart. I don't meditate any more either – the Self has nothing to do with meditation. It is the same with *japa*, repetition of divine names, *mantras*, litanies, *bhajans*, every kind of devout prayer and lyric. At one time, I quite naturally made use of all these – and with great fervour.'

"When I expressed surprise at this, and reminded him of the teaching of Sri Ramana, he was willing to go so far as to say that as the time of the 'crossing over' approached, when worship and prayer become too artificial, and even unnatural, then –



Sri Papaji celebrating SRI BHAGAVAN's JAYANTHI at Lucknow



Swami Abhishiktananda seated in the Cave at Arunachala

with the *Guru's* approval, of course – one might abstain. I therefore reacted pretty vigorously to Poonjaji's remarks.

“‘Who realizes or has realized the Self?’ he replied. ‘That is all a matter of words. The *Atman* cannot be reached. Apart from the Self, what else is there? Who reaches the Self, except the Self? Non-realisation is simply an excuse that one gives for trying to escape from the Real; and, continuing to lead with a clear conscience, a stunted life of prayers, devotions, and even asceticism, all no doubt very satisfying to the ‘little ego’, but in fact utterly useless. Has the Sun really set, merely because I have closed the shutters? The fundamental obstacle to Realisation is precisely the notion that this Realisation is still awaited.

“‘Of course,’ he conceded, ‘reading is not to be entirely rejected. It is better to read than to daydream or gossip. And, meditation is better than reading. However, it is only in the ultimate Silence that the *Atman* is revealed, if one may so speak. But once again, we have to guard carefully against supposing that this Silence has anything to do with either thinking about it or not thinking about it. For, the *Atman* cannot be reduced to anything capable of being said, thought or taught, or equally to the negation or absence of thought. You are a lover of Silence. You have done so remarkably well. You are quite ready. What are you waiting for?’

“I responded, ‘Ready for what? Alas, I feel myself so feeble when before God I recall what I ought to be.’ He roared, ‘Enough of this nonsense! Stop talking about differences. There are no differences anywhere. There is only the Self. God is the *Atman* – the Self of all that is. I am the *Atman*. You are the *Atman*. Only the Self exists, in Itself and in all.’

“But, how do you know that I am ready?” ‘When a woman is ready to give birth, can she be unaware of it? When every woman who has already been a mother knows the signs without a shadow of doubt. It is the same with those who are near to the Awakening, or rather, whose ‘I’ is on the point of disappearing in the Light of the essential and unique ‘I’. I saw it in your eyes this morning when we passed each other in the bazaar without you noticing; that is when you called me.’

“You are speaking as if you had been sent here expressly to give me this news. But if, as you say, I am so near to the Awakening, why do you not go ahead and awaken me?” He asserted, ‘There is no question of Awakening anyone at all. Who indeed is the sleeper? How could one awaken that which does not sleep and has never fallen asleep? Sleeping, dreaming, being awoken – all that is a matter of the body and the senses, which are located in the body, including, of course, thought, desires and will. Are you this body? Are you this thought which you have of being or existing within the limits of this body? When you are in deep sleep, do you still have any thought or awareness that you are? But still, even then you exist, you ARE. You are in truth neither this body which sleeps or alternatively keeps awake, nor this thinking mind, sometimes clear and sometimes confused, which flutters about within you, constantly picking up impressions on every side, nor are you even the awareness that you have, beyond all these thoughts, of being – an awareness which vanishes in deep sleep, in coma and at the dissolution of the body.

“It is through YOU that it is seen and heard, through YOU that it is thought and willed. You are what remains when nothing is any more seen or thought, willed or heard. That is the *Atman* — the Self — it is what YOU ARE yourself in reality and beyond all outward appearances which change and pass away. *Tat Tvam Asi* — YOU ARE THAT! What prevents you from realizing this?

“Can you remember the time when you were born? Can you discover in your memory some moment which would have been the first moment of your existence? Have you any awareness of beginning to exist? Did you not exist already, well before the time when you can remember that you existed? If your being is tied to the memory that you have of it, then what happened to you in the times of which you have no recollection? What happens to you at the moment when consciousness goes to sleep?

“After a pause, he asserted, ‘Let me tell you again, there is only one thing that you lack. Enter into the *Guha* – the Cave of your Heart – and there realize that YOU ARE!’”

— from “*The Secret of Arunachala*” pp. 81—86

Recent Sharing: A Series

This series was shared in recent years with late Dr. P.V. Rao, who adhered to the Direct Teaching of Sri Bhagavan and attained His Lotus Feet in 2022; and, with earnest and devoted *sadhaks* like V.Venkatesan and Dr. Meenal Rana and others.





"SPIRITUAL SHARING"

""SURRENDER' and ENQUIRE 'Who Am I ?'"

The lad Venkataraman — in His seventeenth year of age — had already surrendered to Father ARUNACHALA, at Madurai itself. When Father ARUNACHALA, the 'FIRE MOUNTAIN' came to Him as "Death", as a dutiful 'Son', instead of running away in fear, the youth totally surrendered to 'DEATH' by welcoming IT. He underwent 'Death'. The Glory is that by His 'dying he Lived'! He saw His dead body. Then, some 'Force' from within made Him enquire: "The body is dead. I see my dead body lying down. But, who is this "I" who witnesses his own body being dead?"

Instantly the 'boy' Venkataraman got transformed into a 'Sage of Steady Wisdom'. Then, at the behest of Father ARUNACHALA's commandment 'Son' Venkataraman reached His Father's 'Abode' "ARUNACHALA". On reaching His Father's 'Abode', 'Son' entered into

the Temple's *sanctum sanctorum* and reported, as a dutiful 'Son' should do: "Father! At Thy bidding, I have come! **THY WILL BE DONE!**"

This was not just an external incident alone. This act of total 'Surrender' got formulated into SRI BHAGAVAN's future "Teaching", as well:

(1) 'SURRENDER'

(2) 'SELF-ENQUIRY' [ENQUIRE within "Who Am I ?"]

Guru RAMANA thus taught us — devotees of SRI BHAGAVAN — what we should do, through His own doing it to His Guru ARUNACHALA:

(1) We have to 'Surrender' to Guru RAMANA — body, 'mind' and soul — (as He did to His Guru ARUNACHALA); and, to

(2) His Teaching of: 'ENQUIRE' "Who Am I ?"

When we do that, assuredly our GURU RAMANA will accomplish all our spiritual aspirations.

How do I so emphatically say so? Because, look! How Father, Guru ARUNACHALA fulfilled all the needs of His 'Son' RAMANA, after He totally surrendered to Father ARUNACHALA:

Before the act of spreading "Son's Glory and Message" took place, Guru ARUNACHALA saw to it that *TWO* preparatory steps were accomplished.

(1) *The First Step*: His 'Teaching' had to be organised. For this, Father ARUNACHALA sent to 'Son' RAMANA, three people. First, 'Son's' own mother ALAGAMMAL in 1898 to Pavalakundru. His first 'Teaching' was written out on a piece of paper:

"The Ordainer prevailing everywhere makes each one play his role in life according to his karma. That which is not destined, will not happen despite every effort. What is destined to happen is bound to happen. This is certain. Therefore, the best course is to remain in Silence."

Then, at Virupaksha Cave, through Gambiram Seshayya (1901) he enunciated by writing down the Teaching of "SELF-ENQUIRY". Again, through Sivaprakasam Pillai (1902), by writing only, He enunciated the Teaching of "Who Am I ?"

(2) *The Second Step*: Recognising 'Son's' Greatness by giving him a 'Name'. For this ARUNACHALA chose the greatest scholar of that time, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni. The young *Brahmana Swami* (as the 'Son' was known at that time) was given the Name :

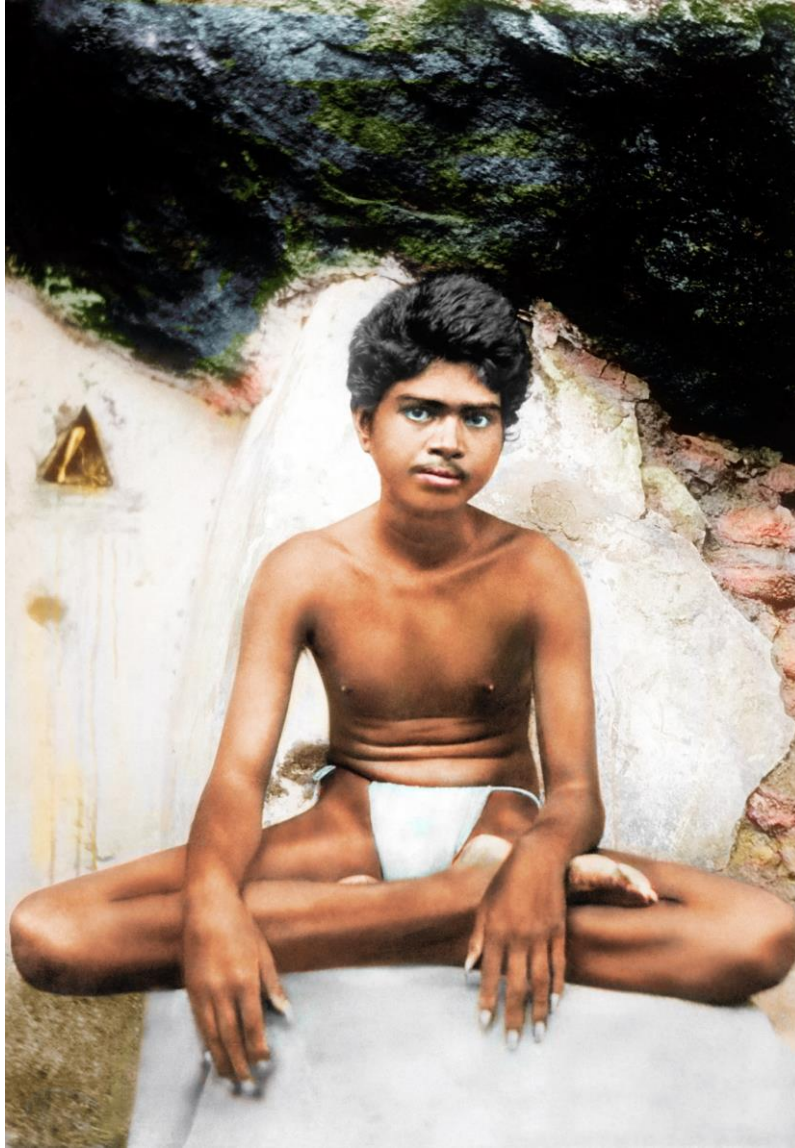
"BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI".

This well accomplished, Father ARUNACHALA sent His 'Son' RAMANA down from His Lap to His Feet, because time had come (1922) for FATHER's "TRUTH" and "MESSAGE" of "*I AM* " has to spread all over the World.

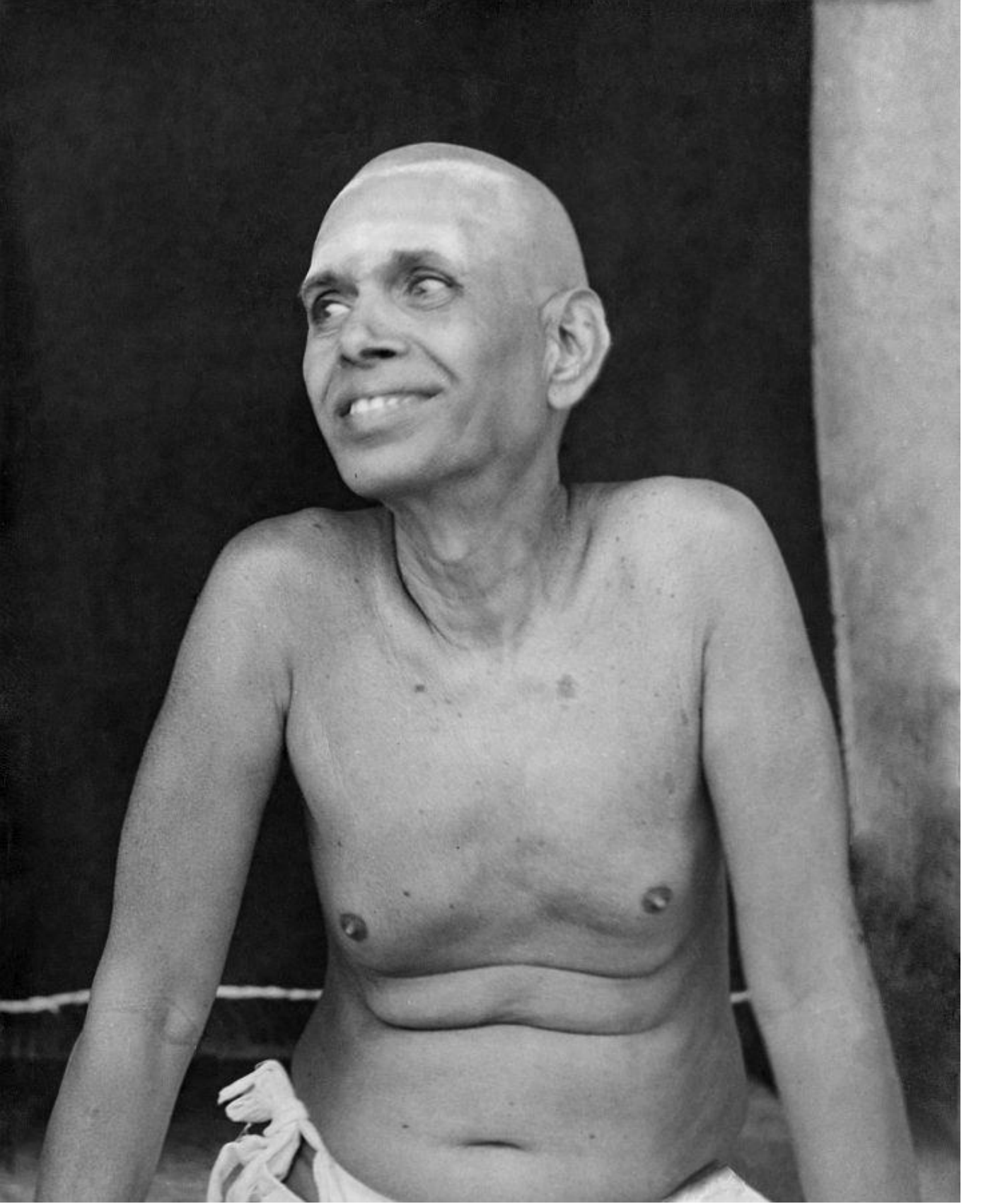
For this *Third Step*, Father ARUNACHALA sent three scholars to write 'Son's' Biography: B.V. Narasimha Swamy, Sudhhananda Bharati and Krishna Bhikshu; and, they wrote BHAGAVAN RAMANA's Biography in English, Tamil and Telugu, respectively.

If we all know today about SRI BHAGAVAN, it is possibly because of these three biographies.

Let us be grateful to all these illustrious devotees of SRI BHAGAVAN on this sacred day of "*Vinayaka Chathurthi* ", when we are inaugurating this "WHO AM I? — HALL", newly raised in honour of G. RAMASWAMY PILLAI, the inimitable Old Devotee who lived upto 101 years — one who never left the Ashram, once he came and surrendered to the Master at Skandashram, in 1917.



First photograph at the age of 21 inside the Virupaksha Cave



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.1

In chaste Tamil poetry, SRI BHAGAVAN describes the "SELF" as "இருந்து ஒளிர்" = "Yirundhu Olir"! ('Yirundhu = 'Existing' + 'Olir' = 'Shining') Two simple words, while reading them itself will make the reader (*sadhak*) recognise that SRI BHAGAVAN is emphatic in making the reader realise the "NOW-ness" of the state of SELF-hood! He used the English word "happening" to indicate the continued 'presence' of the SELF = NOT 'happened' or 'will happen'! "SELF-REALISATION" is NOT a '*noun*' but a '*verb*' = it is a "*continuum*" = it is all the time '*existing*' as the True State of your "*Being*"!

This "body" with which we easily identify (as "You"), every moment changes, alters and finally collapses and disappears! Who we really ARE = 'body' or "SELF"? Thus, raising the question: "WHO AM I?" to oneself is not only the paramount 'challenge' of LIFE, but also "*the only purpose of LIFE*"! Let us together plunge ourselves in this 'Vital Quest' — not only '*now*' and imminently, but *all the time* too!

Today is "Sri RAMA Navami" = His sacred Birthday = "*Punarvasu Nakshatra*"! BIRTHDAY for the birthless ONE!

Sri Bhagavan's birth *Nakshatra* (Star) is also "*Punarvasu*"! Every month — for twelve months — the Star-day is religiously being celebrated in our Ashram!

Again, the BIRTHDAY for the birthless !

Let us celebrate it in our Heart of Hearts by ourselves realising that we too are "Birthless"!

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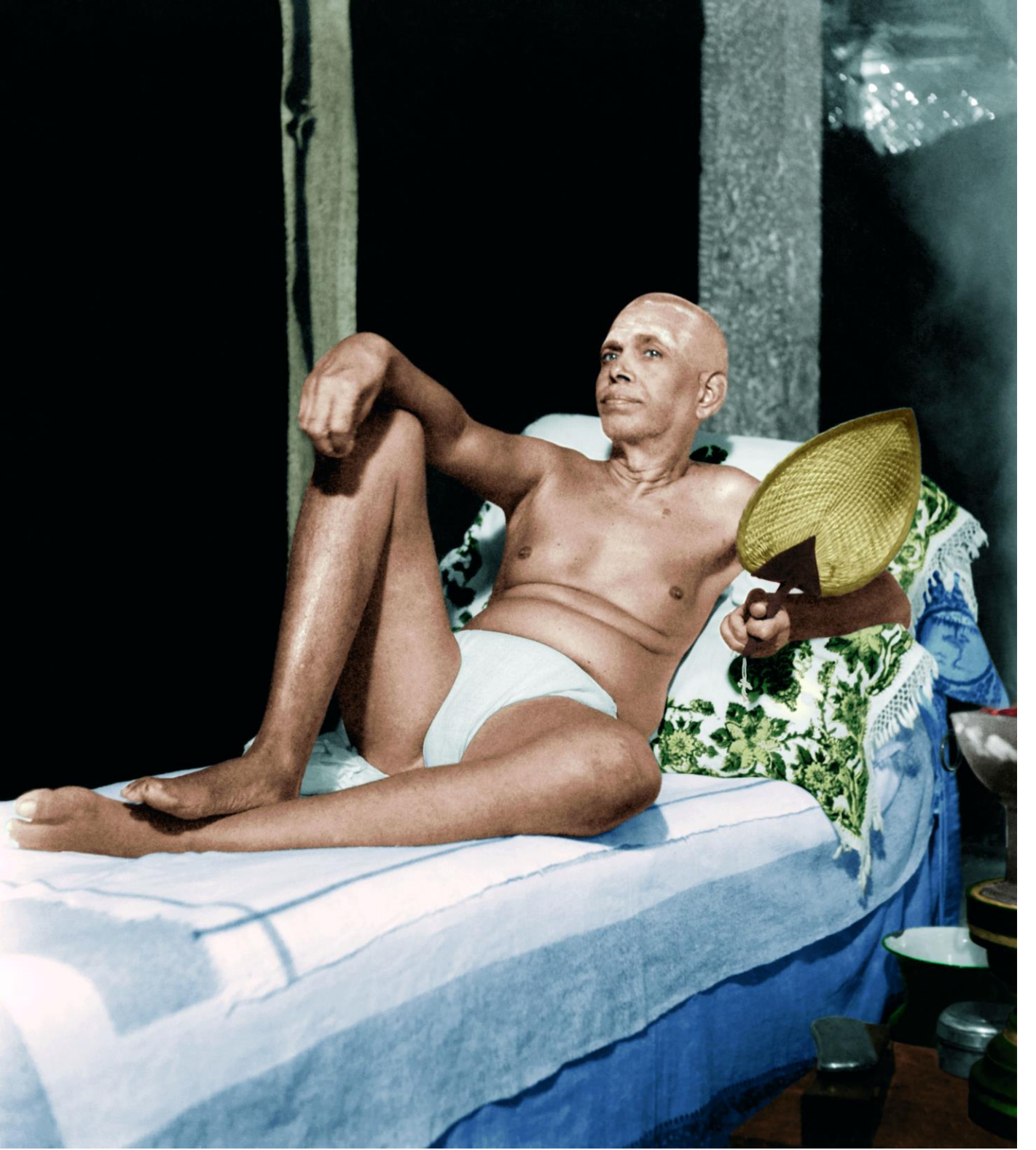
19-6-46

G. Mehta: Is there a rebirth?

Sri Bhagavan: If there is birth there must be not only one rebirth but a whole succession of births. Why and how did you get this birth? For the same reason and in the same manner you must have succeeding births. But, if you ask who has the birth and whether birth and death are for 'you' or for somebody distinct from 'you', then 'you' realize the Truth and the Truth burns up all *karma* and frees 'you' from all births. The books graphically describe how all *sanchita karma*, which would take countless lives to exhaust, is burnt up by one little spark of *Jnana*, just as a mountain of gunpowder will be blown up by a single spark of fire. It is the 'ego' that is the cause of all the World and of the countless Sciences whose researches are so great as to baffle description, and if the 'ego' is dissolved by enquiry all this immediately crumbles and the Reality or Self alone remains.

— from "*Day by Day with Bhagavan*"

* * *



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.2

Sri Bhagavan's emphasis on the spiritual aspirant making 'effort' — in following the Teaching as imparted to him (without bothering over its result, 'fruit') by the Scriptures or one's own *Guru* — is unassailable and emphatic. From the 'angle' of the disciple putting relentless 'effort' by him; and, from the 'perspective' of the *Guru*, illimitable and total "Compassion" poured on the disciple, are imperative. When one reads the lives of Sages and Saints — *Vasishta, Vyasa, Valmiki, the Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mohammad, Shirdi Sai Baba, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Bhagavan Sri Ramana* — one's attention should be NOT on the dates and events that took place (which are based on 'time', 'space' and 'causation' — which are ephemeral) but should totally be pivoted on the spiritual attainment of the Sage.

The Old Devotee — A. DEVARAJA MUDALIAR — was simple and was finding it difficult to progress spiritually. Therefore, on many occasions, he appealed to SRI BHAGAVAN: "You should save me. I cannot save myself." One day, Mudaliar came across a Tamil song in which the poet laments that he is not like a tenacious young 'monkey' that can hold on to its mother tightly, but rather like a purring 'kitten' that must be carried by the neck in its mother's jaws. The poet prays God should take care of him. Mudaliar showed the song to SRI BHAGAVAN and told Him: "My case is exactly the same. You must take pity on me, BHAGAVAN, hold me by the neck and see that I don't fall and get injured." SRI BHAGAVAN's answer was characteristically emphatic:

"That is impossible. It is necessary both for you to strive and for the *Guru* to help. The endeavour of the disciple IS the Grace of the *Guru*. There is no difference. The devotee's effort and *Guru's* Grace are synonymous. The devotee has to hold on tightly to the *Guru* like a baby 'monkey' and the *Guru* will take care of the devotee like a mother 'cat'."

Let us abide by the guidance so graciously given to us by GURU RAMANA!

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11-1-46 Afternoon

A young man from Colombo asked Sri Bhagavan, J. Krishnamurti teaches the method of effortless and choiceless awareness as distinct from that of deliberate concentration. Would Sri Bhagavan be pleased to explain how best to practice meditation and what form the object of meditation should take?

Sri Bhagavan: Effortless and choiceless awareness is our Real Nature. If we can attain it or be in that State, it is all right. But one cannot reach it without effort, the effort of deliberate meditation. All the age-long *vasanas* carry the 'mind' outward and turn it to external 'objects'. All such 'thoughts' have to be given up and the 'mind' turned inward. For that, effort is necessary for most people. Of course, everybody, every book says, "சும்மா இரு" i.e., "Be Quiet or Be Still". But it is not easy. That is why all this 'effort' is necessary. Even if we find one who has at once achieved the *Mouna* or Supreme Silent State indicated by "சும்மா இரு", you may take it that the effort necessary has already been finished in a previous life. So that, effortless and choiceless awareness is reached only after deliberate meditation. That meditation can take any form which

appeals to you best. See what helps you to keep away all other 'thoughts' and adopt that method for your meditation.

In this connection, Sri Bhagavan quoted verses 5 and 52 from "பாயப் புலி" and 36 from "உடல் பொய்யுறவு" of Saint Thayumanavar.

Their gist is as follows. "Bliss will follow if you are still. But however much you may tell your 'mind' about this Truth, the 'mind' will not keep quiet. It is the 'mind' that won't keep quiet. It is the 'mind' which tells the 'mind', 'Be Quiet and you will attain Bliss'. Though all the Scriptures have said it, though we hear about it every day from the Great Ones, and though even our *Guru* says it, we never are quiet, but stray into the World of '*maya*' and sense 'objects'. That is why conscious, deliberate effort or meditation is required to attain that *Mouna* state or the state of Being Quiet."

— from "*Day by day with Bhagavan*"

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Sri Bhagavan using 'Country Umbrella' !



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.3

Sri Bhagavan clarified about '*Bhakti*' and '*Jnana*': "*Bhakti is Jnana Mata*"! That is, "Devotion (*Bhakti*) is the Mother of Wisdom (*Jnana*)"! Smt. Kanakamma once said that Sri Bhagavan confirmed: "*Jnaanam Muththinaal Bhakti*" = meaning, "When WISDOM (*Jnana*) ripens — matures — it is Devotion (*Bhakti*)"!

On another occasion, SRI BHAGAVAN said: "*Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga, Karma* — all are 'words' only. Their end-result — 'Experience' — is the same = that is, one gets rooted in one's own 'Inner Silence'!"

Bhakti says "Surrender the 'I' to GOD". *Jnana* says " 'I' ['I AM'] is GOD." Losing the spurious 'I' is the aim and Goal of both the *Margas* (Paths) = *Bhakti Marga* emphasises: " 'I' is NOTHING" — *Jnana Marga* makes it clear: "'I' (I AM) is EVERYTHING"! SRI BHAGAVAN quoted Saint Nammalvar stating: "In ignorance, I took the 'I' to be myself; however, with *Jnana* dawning, the 'I' is nowhere to be found; and, only YOU, Oh GOD, remain as 'I' ['I AM'] within". SRI BHAGAVAN also quoted the *Brihadarnyaka Upanishad*:

"'*Aham*' Nama *Abhaavaath*" = "GOD became 'I-AM'-named"! The same *Upanishad* also confirms: "AHAM ['I AM'] is the First Name of GOD. "In the *BIBLE*, says SRI BHAGAVAN, it is stated: "'I AM' is the Name of GOD."

SRI BHAGAVAN wrote and clarified in a verse, as to "who actually GURU RAMANA is":

"In the recesses of the Lotus-shaped HEART of every living being — beginning with Lord VISHNU — there shines as PURE AWARENESS — (*Paramatman*) — who is the same as ARUNACHALA RAMANAN."

In the beginning of the forties, Mrs. Roda MacIver had a great desire to touch the Sacred Feet of her Beloved *Sat-Guru* Sri Bhagavan. That day, while taking the breakfast at the Ashram, surprisingly Sri Bhagavan was found all alone — not even accompanied by the attendant! Roda rushed to touch His Feet and to put her head on them. When He was near Roda, He said making gestures showing His feet: "Why do you want to touch these feet? Are they Bhagavan's Feet? His feet are ever implanted in your HEART." On listening to these "Words of Nectar" from Him, her desire to touch His Feet disappeared, completely. She started feeling that she is always blessed by His Holy Feet in her Heart. The 'Inner Silence' which wells up in one's HEART when one turns one's attention WITHIN, is the (Spiritual) Holy Feet of the *Sat-Guru* !

Worship of one's *Guru*'s Sacred Feet is truly of immense importance in one's spiritual progress! As firmly emphasised by the Greatest of *Gurus* — Sri Bhagavan — they are shining — ever pouring Their Grace on the aspiring spiritual *Sadhaka* — from one's own

HEART! Hold tightly to the Twin Sacred Feet of the GURU by turning one's attention WITHIN to one's own HEART! "Aantareeka Mouna is Ishwara Sannidhi" "Aantareeka Mouna is Guru Sannidhi" ("Inner Silence is the Presence of God" "Inner Silence is the Presence of the Guru!")

Sri Bhagavan as if to confirm and emphasise His "Direct Teaching" of "Turn your 'attention' WITHIN", selected the following Sacred Verses of *Adi Sankara*.

Let us together surrender ourselves, meditate and pay our total 'attention WITHIN' and abide in the HEART where our *Sat-Guru* Ramana eternally LIVES and His ever-active Sacred Feet are guiding us and carrying us — through and through — in our long 'journey' —WITHIN!

* * *

"Sri Bhagavan has selected 10 stanzas from the famous work of *Sri Adi Sankara* — " *Sivananda Lahari*" — describing devotion (*Bhakti*):

(1) What is *Bhakti*?

Just as the *ankola* fruit falling from the tree rejoins it or a piece of iron is drawn to magnet, so also thoughts, after rising up, lose themselves in their original "Source". This is *Bhakti*. The original Source of thoughts is the Feet of the Lord, *Ishvara*. Love of His Feet forms *Bhakti*. (61)

(2) Fruit of *Bhakti*:

***The thick cloud of Bhakti*, formed in the transcendental sky of the Lord's Feet, pours down a rain of Bliss (*Ananda*) and fills the lake of 'mind' to overflowing. Only then the *jiva*, always transmigrating to no useful end, has his real purpose fulfilled. (76)**

(3) Where to place *Bhakti*?

Devotion to Gods, who have themselves their origin and end, can result in fruits similarly with origin and end. In order to be in Bliss everlasting our devotion must be directed to its Source, namely the Feet of the ever Blissful Lord. (83)

(4) *Bhakti* is a matter only for 'Experience' and not for 'words': How can Logic or other polemics be of real use? Can the *ghatapatas* (favourite examples of the logicians, meaning the pot and the cloth) save you in a crisis? Why then waste yourself thinking of them and on discussion? Stop exercising the vocal organs and giving them pain. Think of the Feet of the Lord and drink the Nectar! (6)

(5) Immortality is the fruit of Devotion:

At the sight of him who in his heart has fixed the Lord's Feet, Death is reminded of his bygone disastrous encounter with *Markandeya* and flees away. All other Gods worship only Lord Siva, placing their crowned heads at His Feet. Such involuntary worship is only natural to Lord Siva. Goddess Liberation, His consort, always remains part of Him.(65)

(6) If only Devotion be there — the conditions of the *jiva* cannot affect him.

However different the bodies, the 'mind' alone is lost in the Lord's Feet. Bliss overflows! (10)

(7) Devotion always unimpaired:

Wherever or however it be, only let the 'mind' lose itself in the Supreme. It is Yoga! It is Bliss! Or the Yogi or the Bliss Incarnate! (12)

(8) Karma Yoga also is *Bhakti*:

To worship God with flowers and other external 'objects' is troublesome. Only lay the single flower, the Heart, at the Feet of Lord Siva and remain at Peace. Not to know this simple thing and to wander about! How foolish! What misery! (9)

(9) This *Karma Yoga* puts an end to one's *samsara*:

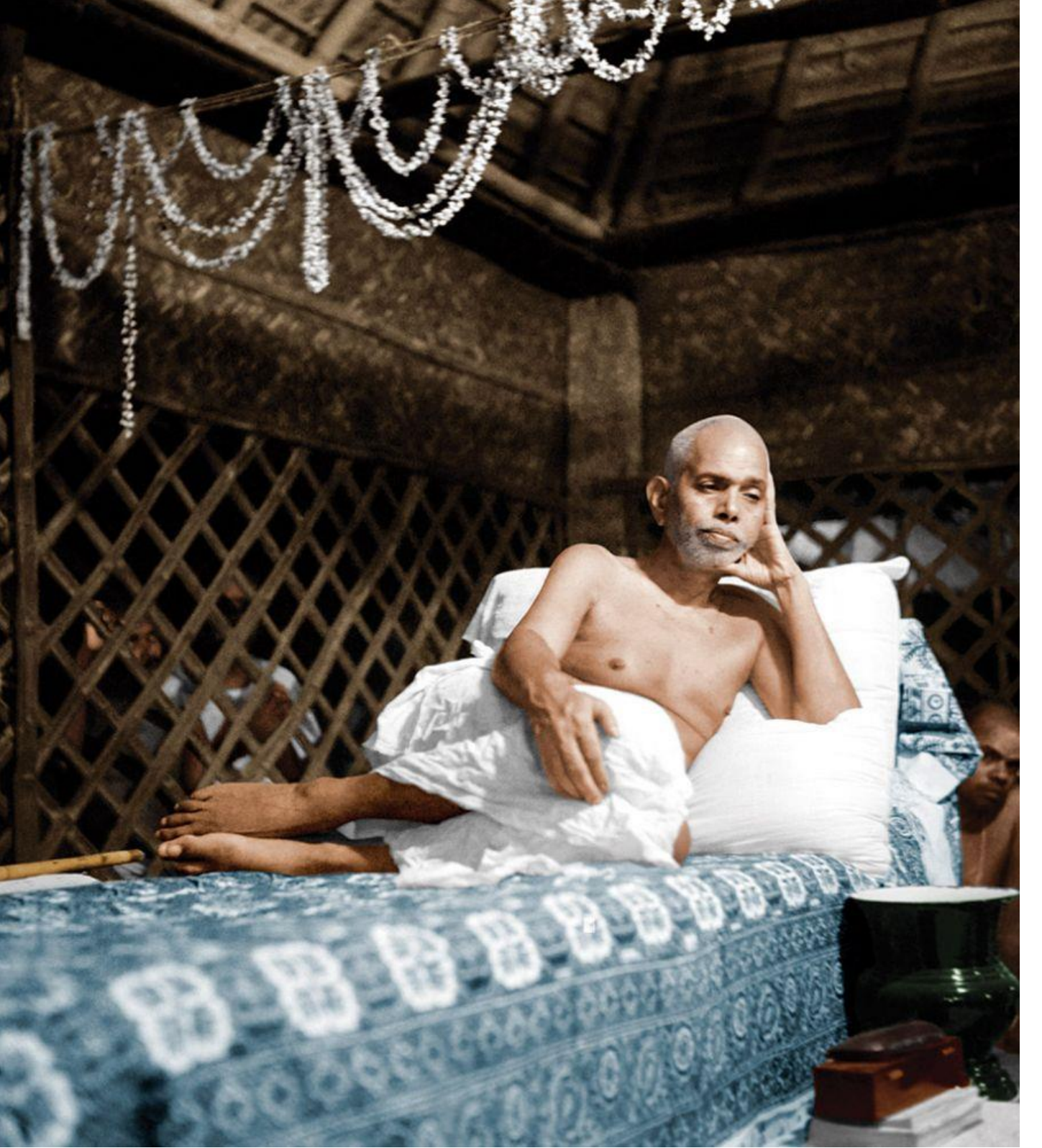
Whatever the order of life (*asrama*) of the devotee, only once thought of, Lord Siva relieves the devotee of his load of *samsara* and takes it on Himself. (11)

(10) Devotion is *Jnana*:

The 'mind' losing itself in Lord Siva's Feet is Devotion. Ignorance lost! Knowledge! Liberation! (91)"

— from "*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*", No. 428

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SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.4

We shared that '*Bhakti*' is the 'Mother of Wisdom' ['*JnanaMata*']; and that, holding on to the Sacred Twin Feet of the *Sat-Guru* is the highest form of 'Surrender' ['*Bhakti*']. That, the *Sat-Guru* ever resides in one's Heart; and, the only duty of a spiritual aspirant is to "turn one's attention WITHIN to one's Heart". Also, that there reigns supreme the "Inner Silence" which is the "Presence of GOD" = the "Presence of the Sacred Twin Feet of the *Sat-Guru*"!

NOW! We turn our full attention — with surrendered devotion and dedication — to what SRI BHAGAVAN declares in the following verse, composed by Him at Virupaksha Cave:

"ARUNACHALA RAMANA is the Supreme Being who sports within the Lotus Heart of all beings, beginning with Lord Vishnu, in the form of Full Awareness." = this is Pure Wisdom! "In the rest of the lines of the poem, SRI BHAGAVAN guides us as to how oneself could steadily stay in that Highest State of Pure Wisdom: "If one enters — with a Heart melting with devotion — the Abode in which the Supreme Being is shining — his [aspirant's] 'Eye of Wisdom' will be opened and he will realise that he himself in Truth IS that Full Awareness Itself. The TRUTH will thus become explicit to him." **

The above gives a clear picture of: "What is '*Bhakti*' [Devotion]" and "What is '*Jnana*' [Wisdom]".

As to how a spiritual aspirant could 'attain' that Pure State of AWARENESS is given hereunder — culled from the pages of "*Day by Day with Bhagavan*".

Let us plunge ourselves together — with a surrendered 'mind' — and, enter the "Heart" — wherein resides the Supreme *Sat-Guru* Arunachala Ramana!

P.S. ** The original Tamil verse written by SRI BHAGAVAN is:

"ஹரியாதி இதர ஜீவரது அகவாரிஜ குஹையில்
அறிவாய் ரமி பரமாத்துமன் அருணாசல ரமணன்
பரிவால் உளம் உருகா நல பரன் ஆர்ந்திடு குஹை ஆர்ந்து
அறிவாம் விழி திறவாய் நிஜம் அறிவாய் அது வெளியாம்."

* * *

8-5-46

In the afternoon there was the following talk with a young *sadhu* from North India:

Sadhu: I want to know who I am. The *Arya Samajists* say that I am the *jivatma* and that if I purify the 'mind' and '*buddhi*' I can see God. I don't know what to do. If Sri Bhagavan thinks fit, will Sri Bhagavan please tell me what to do?

Sri Bhagavan: You have used a number of terms. What do you mean by '*jivatma*', '*mind*', '*buddhi*' and God? And, where is God and where are you that you should want to go and see God?

Sadhu: I don't know what all these terms mean.

Sri Bhagavan: Then, never mind what the *Arya Samajists* tell you. You don't know about God and other things, but you do know that you exist. You can have no doubt about that. So, find out who you are.

Sadhu: That is what I want to know. How can I find out?

Sri Bhagavan: Keep all other 'thoughts' away and try to find out in what place in your body the 'I' arises.

Sadhu: But, I am unable to think about this.

Sri Bhagavan: Why? If you can think about other things you can think about 'I' and 'where in your body it arises'. If you mean that other 'thoughts' distract you, the only way is to draw your 'mind' back each time it strays away and fix it on the 'I'. As each 'thought' arises, ask yourself: "To whom is this 'thought'?" The answer will be, "to me"; then hold on to that "me".

Sadhu: Am I to keep on repeating "Who am I?" so as to make a *mantra* of it?

Sri Bhagavan: No. '*Who am I?*' is not a *mantra*. It means you must find out where in you arises the 'I-thought' which is the Source of all other thoughts. But, if you find this *Vichara marga* too hard for you, you can go on repeating "I, I" and that will lead you to the same Goal. There is no harm in using 'I' as a *mantra*. It is the First Name of God.

God is everywhere, but it is difficult to conceive Him in that aspect, so the books have said, "God is everywhere. He is also within you. You are *Brahman*." So, remind yourself: "*I am Brahman*". The repetition of 'I' will eventually lead you to realise "*I am Brahman*".

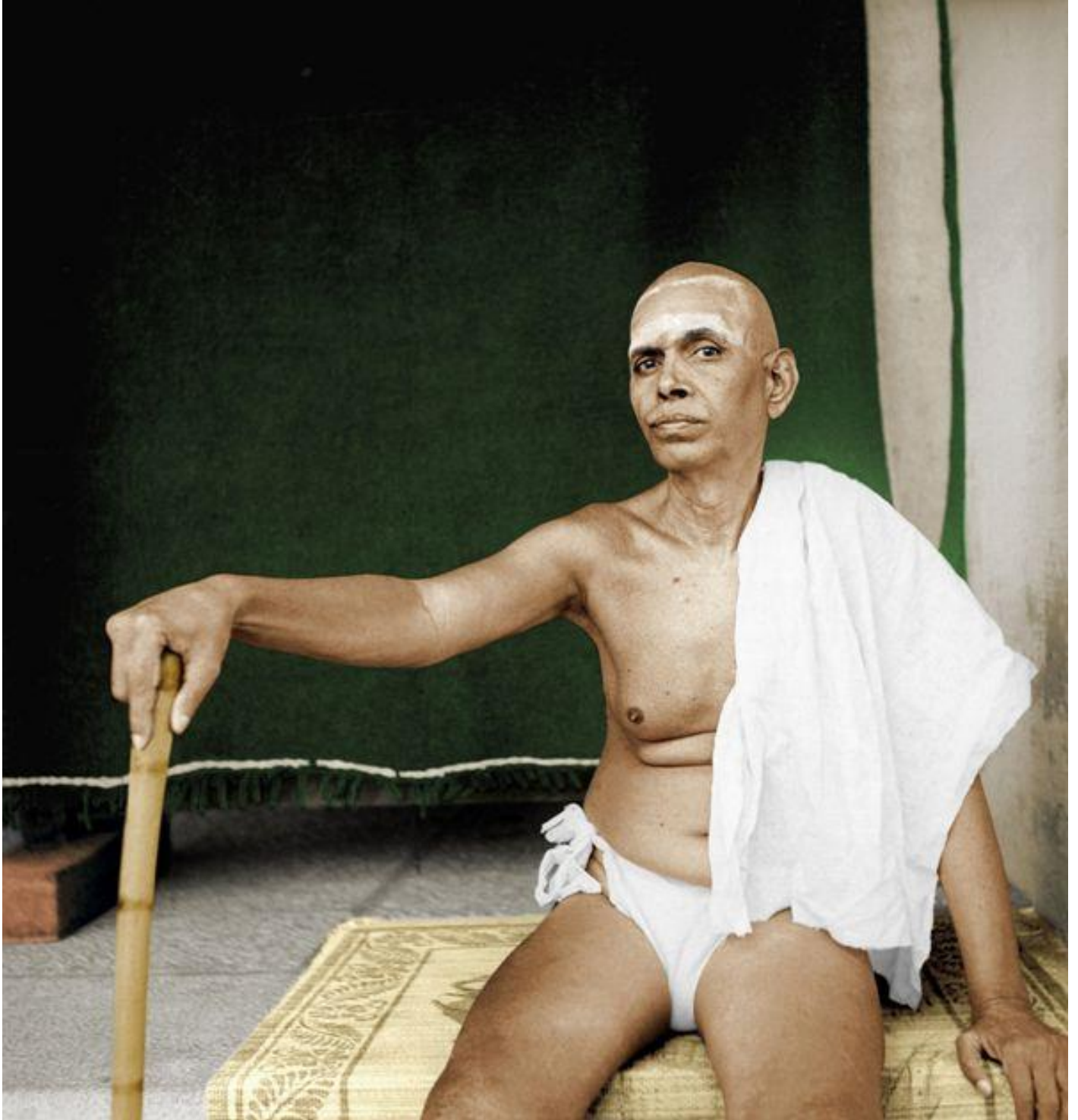
* * *

A young man called Krishna Jivrajani from Karachi said, "When I reach the thoughtless stage in my *sadhana*, I enjoy a certain pleasure, but sometimes I also experience a vague fear which I cannot properly describe."

Sri Bhagavan: You may experience anything, but, you should never rest content with that. Whether you feel pleasure or fear, ask yourself who feels the pleasure or the fear and so carry on the *sadhana* until pleasure and fear are both transcended and all duality ceases and the Reality alone remains.

There is nothing wrong in such things happening or being experienced, but you must never stop at that. For instance, you must never rest content with the pleasure of *laya* experienced when 'thought' is quelled but must press on until all duality ceases.

— from "*Day by Day with Bhagavan*", pp 223-224



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.5

As every one of us is 'placed' in LIFE (in whatever material position or financial condition or mental capacity or spiritual maturity) each one of us is left with only TWO courses — either one of them to be adopted:

(a) "Accept things as they ARE"; or

(b) "Either fret or gloat over what is left with you — accuse GOD for being partial to others giving them 'favours', whereas 'you' are left with all forms of defects, deficiencies and difficulties.

SRI BHAGAVAN simplifies them within two remarkable "Words of Clarity": as,

(a) "ACTION"; and,

(b) "RE-ACTION"

(a) "Action" = in Sri Bhagavan's vocabulary truly means "no action", that is, to remain in "Inner Silence".

Look! How Muruganar clarifies it in his "*Garland of Guru's Sayings*, v.943:

"Not thinking about what has happened in the past and not thinking about what is to come [in the future], but remaining as an 'unattached Witness' even to all that is happening [in the 'present'] and being Blissful because of abundant Peace, is the sign of *granthi-bheda* (the severance of the knot of identification with the body). "

Similarly,

(b) "Re-action" simply means "the act of thinking"! "Thinking is not your nature!" "Your only 'enemy' is thinking. Give it up; never indulge in it," says SRI BHAGAVAN.

How to eschew — give up — 'thinking' and how to remain in "INNER SILENCE"?

Kindly read the following "Sacred Words of SAT-GURU RAMANA" — in 'Silence' and with 'one-pointed attention'.

* * *

"Sri Bhagavan: Destroy the power of 'mind' by seeking it. When the 'mind' is examined its activities cease automatically.

Looking for the source of 'mind' is another method. The Source may be said to be God or Self or Consciousness.

Concentrating on one 'thought', all other 'thoughts' disappear; finally that 'thought' also disappears. It is necessary to be *aware* while controlling 'thoughts', otherwise it will lead to sleep.

Devotee: How to seek the 'mind'?

Sri Bhagavan.: Breath-control may do as an aid but can never lead to the Goal itself. While doing it mechanically, take care to be alert in 'mind' and remember the 'I-thought' and seek its source. Then you will find that where breath sinks, there the 'I-thought' arises. They sink and rise together. The 'I-thought' also will sink along with breath. Simultaneously another luminous and infinite "I-I" will manifest and it will be continuous

and unbroken. That is the Goal. It goes by different names — God, Self, *Kundalini-Sakti*, Consciousness, "I AM", etc., When the attempt is made it will of itself take you to the Goal."

* * *

"Sri Bhagavan: The 'mind' is a bundle of 'thoughts'. The 'thoughts' arise because there is the 'thinker'. The 'thinker' is the 'ego'. The 'ego', if sought, will automatically vanish. The 'ego' and the 'mind' are the same. The 'ego' is the 'root-thought' from which all other 'thoughts' arise."

* * *

"Devotee: There are times when persons and things take on a vague, almost transparent form, as in a dream. One ceases to observe them as from outside, but is passively conscious of their existence, while not actively conscious of any kind of selfhood. There is a deep quietness in the 'mind'. Is it, at such times, ready to dive into the Self? Or, is this condition unhealthy, the result of self-hypnotism? Should it be encouraged as a means of getting temporary peace?

Sri Bhagavan.: There is Consciousness along with quietness in the 'mind'; this is exactly the State to be aimed at. The fact that the question has been framed on this point, without realising that it is the Self, shows that the state is not steady but casual.

The word 'diving' is appropriate to the state of outgoing tendencies when the 'mind' is to be diverted and turned within so as to dive below the surface of externalities. But, when deep quietness prevails without obstructing the Consciousness, where is the need to dive? If the state be not realised as the Self, the effort to do so may be called 'diving'. The state may in that way be said to be suitable for realisation or 'diving'. Thus, the last two questions in the paragraph are unnecessary.

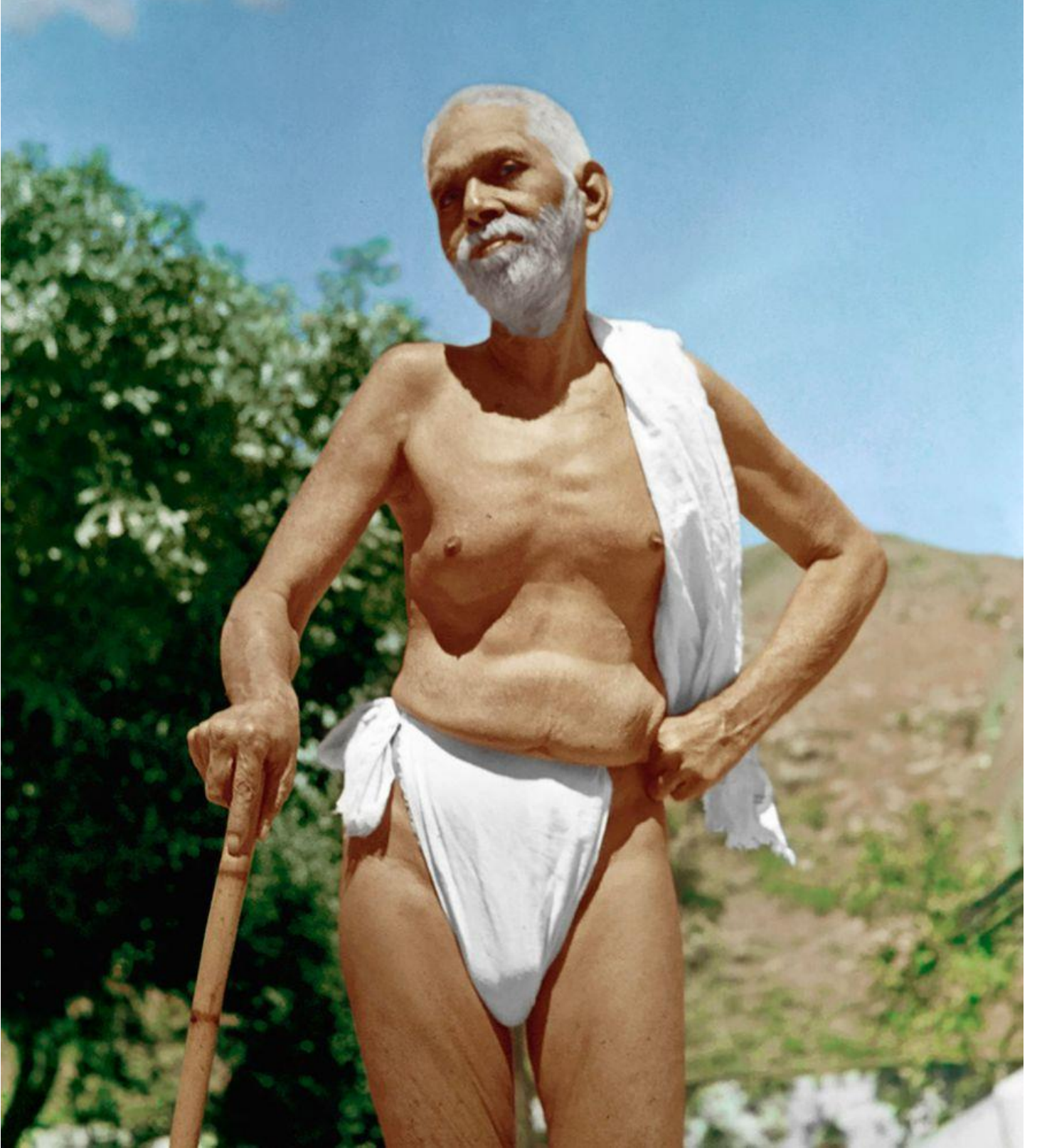
D.: The 'mind' continues to feel partial towards children, possibly because of the form sometimes used to personify the Ideal. How can this preference be outgrown?

Sri Bhagavan.: Hold the Self. Why think of children and reactions towards them?

D.: This third visit to Tiruvannamalai seems to have intensified the sense of 'egoism' in me and made meditation less easy. Is this an unimportant passing phase or a sign that I should avoid such places hereafter?

Sri Bhagavan.: It is 'imaginary'. This place or another place is within you. Such 'imaginings' must end so that the places have nothing to do with the activities of the 'mind'. Even your surroundings are not of your own accord; they are there as a matter of course. You must rise above them and not get yourself involved. "

— from "Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi", No.345,347,348



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.6

Today is the Sacred Memorial Day [*"Maha Puja"*] of Sri Bhagavan's Mother Alagammal! Let us with a prayer-filled, dedicated Heart remember how our Great *Sat-Guru* Ramana while staying at Virupaksha Cave (1914), wrote the soul-melting *"Prayer to Arunachala"*:

***"Arunachala! Thou Blazing Fire of Jnana!
Deign to wrap my Mother in Thy LIGHT!
And, make her One with THEE!"***

Did Sri Bhagavan make that "prayer" for the Emancipation of His Mother only? No! He did it on behalves of 'you', 'me' and 'every one'! Let us bow down to Him and abide by His Will!

You **"ARE"** right now **"ALIVE"** — so too 'me' and 'others' around us — *'here', 'there', 'everywhere'!*

Most assuredly, also others who are reading it — right **'NOW'!**

What greater **"Wonder"** could there be more than this simple **TRUTH** of our simple **BEING** (alive)! Just, take a minute off and ponder over the simplicity of this **"Profound TRUTH"**, please! Are "you" alive or just, you **"ARE"** alive? To assist 'you', 'me' and 'others', **SRI BHAGAVAN** emphatically says: "In the *Upanishadic* declaration: *"Tat Tvam Asi"* = **"YOU ARE THAT"**, the important 'word' is neither *"Tat"* nor *"Tvam"* [neither **"You"** nor **"That"**], but **"ASI"** = **"ARE"**, **"BEING ALIVE"** **"right NOW"** **"இருக்கின்றேன்"** — **Principle!**

In 1910-11 at Virupaksha Cave, a 'mysterious devotee' **SATYAMANGALAM VENKATARAMA IYER**, aptly described Sri Bhagavan's True State of **'EXISTENCE'** in one of his verses in praise of **SRI BHAGAVAN**, in the Poem: *"Sri Ramana Sat-Guru"* as:

"Oh, Sat-Guru Ramana! Ocean of Goodness beyond all forms of characteristics! The 'Righteous One' in the eyes of the Wise! Syrup of Sweeteness! Your Form is the Pristine Pure State of Existence alone — "இருக்கின்றேன்" — the True State of 'ARE', the True State of merely Being — 'I AM' ("Irukkindren" = "Asi" = "அசி") — devoid of any 'form' and 'name'! "அசி பதத்து உரு ஆனவன்"

— *"Five Hymns to SRI RAMANA" -- "Sri Ramana Sat-Guru" v.19*

Sri Bhagavan had been rooted in that Pure State was not the only wonder, but many of the Old Devotees were also submerged in that Divine State! The exhibition of **"Wonder"** doesn't stop there with them alone — it continues even **NOW** if one chooses to turn one's attention **Within** — to the **"Inner Silence"** at any moment of time! Yes! It is absolutely **True!**

One's own state of **"Inner Silence"** is nothing but that remarkable State of **"Asi Padam"**! Kindly — patiently — read the following **"Gems"** from Sri Bhagavan.

Talk 246.

Language is only a medium for communicating one's 'thoughts' to another. It is called in only after 'thoughts' arise; other 'thoughts' arise after the 'I-thought' rises; the 'I-thought' is the root of all conversation. When one remains without thinking, one understands another by means of the Universal Language of Silence.

Silence is ever-speaking; it is a perennial flow of language; it is interrupted by speaking. These words obstruct that mute language. There is electricity flowing in a wire. With resistance to its passage, it glows as a lamp or revolves as a fan. In the wire it remains as electric energy. Similarly also, Silence is the eternal flow of language, obstructed by 'words'.

What one fails to know by conversation extending to several years can be known in a trice in Silence, or in front of Silence - e.g., *Dakshinamurti*, and his four disciples.

That is the highest and most effective language.

— from "*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*", No.246

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Talk 451.

Mr. S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, Reader in Philosophy, Madras University, arrived this night. He had a doubt which he said had been cleared on reading Lakshmana Sarma's commentary on "*Knowledge of Self*". The doubt was:

How can the World be an imagination or a 'thought'? 'Thought' is a function of the 'mind'. The 'mind' is located in the 'brain'. The 'brain' is within the skull of a human being, who is only an infinitesimal part of the Universe. How then can the Universe be contained in the cells of the 'brain'?

Sri Bhagavan: So long as the 'mind' is considered to be an entity of the kind described, the doubt will persist. But what is 'mind'? Let us consider. The World is seen when the man wakes up from sleep. It comes after the 'I-thought'. The head rises up. So the 'mind' has become active. What is the World? It is objects spread out in space. Who comprehends it? The 'mind'. Is not the 'mind', which comprehends space, itself space (*Akasa*)? The space is physical ether (*bhootakasa*). The 'mind' is mental ether (*manakasa*) which is contained in Transcendental Ether (*Chidakasa*). The 'mind' is thus the ether principle, *akasa tattva*. Being the principle of knowledge (*jnana sattva*), it is identified with ether (*Akasa*) by metaphysics. Considering it to be ether (*akasa*), there will be no difficulty in reconciling the apparent contradiction in the question. Pure 'mind' (*Suddha Manas*) is Ether (*Akasa*). The dynamic and dull (*rajas* and *tamas*) aspects operate as gross objects, etc. Thus the whole Universe is only 'mental'.

Again, consider a man who dreams. He goes to sleep in a room with doors closed so that nothing can intrude on him while asleep. He closes his eyes when sleeping so that he does not see any object. Yet, when he dreams he sees a whole region in which people live and move about with himself among them. Did this panorama get in through the doors? It was simply unfolded to him by his 'brain'. Is it the sleeper's 'brain' or in the 'brain' of the dream individual? It is in the sleeper's 'brain'. How does it hold this vast country in its tiny cells? This must explain the oft-repeated statement that the whole Universe is a mere 'thought' or a series of 'thoughts'.

— from "*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*", No. 451



Hastamalaka Stotra

Translated into Tamil by *Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*

The following famous Sanskrit stotra was translated by Sri Bhagavan into Tamil. He also composed for this piece a Tamil introduction, together with the 15th or concluding verse.

Introduction

A *Brahmin* woman went to the River *Jamuna* to bathe. Finding a Yogi sitting in meditation on the bank, she left her only child, a boy of two years, near him, asking him to take care of it until she returned from bathing. On returning she found to her dismay that the child had drowned while the Yogi was absorbed in meditation. The bereaved mother lamented his death so loudly that the Yogi awoke. On understanding what had happened, he was moved to pity and, in order to console the poor woman, gave up his own 'body' by Yogic power and entered that of the dead child. Seeing the child revive the mother was overjoyed, took him up and returned home without troubling to find out the secret of his miraculous recovery.

The boy did not grow up as a normal child. He was too contemplative to learn, lisp, play or entertain his parents in any way, so they thought he must be 'deaf' and 'dumb'.

A few years later *Adi Shankaracharya* was travelling in the neighbourhood. The parents took their child to him and prayed that he might be pleased to restore it to normal health by means of his Divine Powers. The Acharya took in the situation at a glance and addressed a number of questions to the boy; the boy in his turn replied immediately, astonishing the audience with the Sublimity of his Wisdom.

When the parents learnt the truth about their son, they left him with *Adi Shankara*. He was known from that time as *Hastamalaka* and became one of the four leading disciples of the great master.

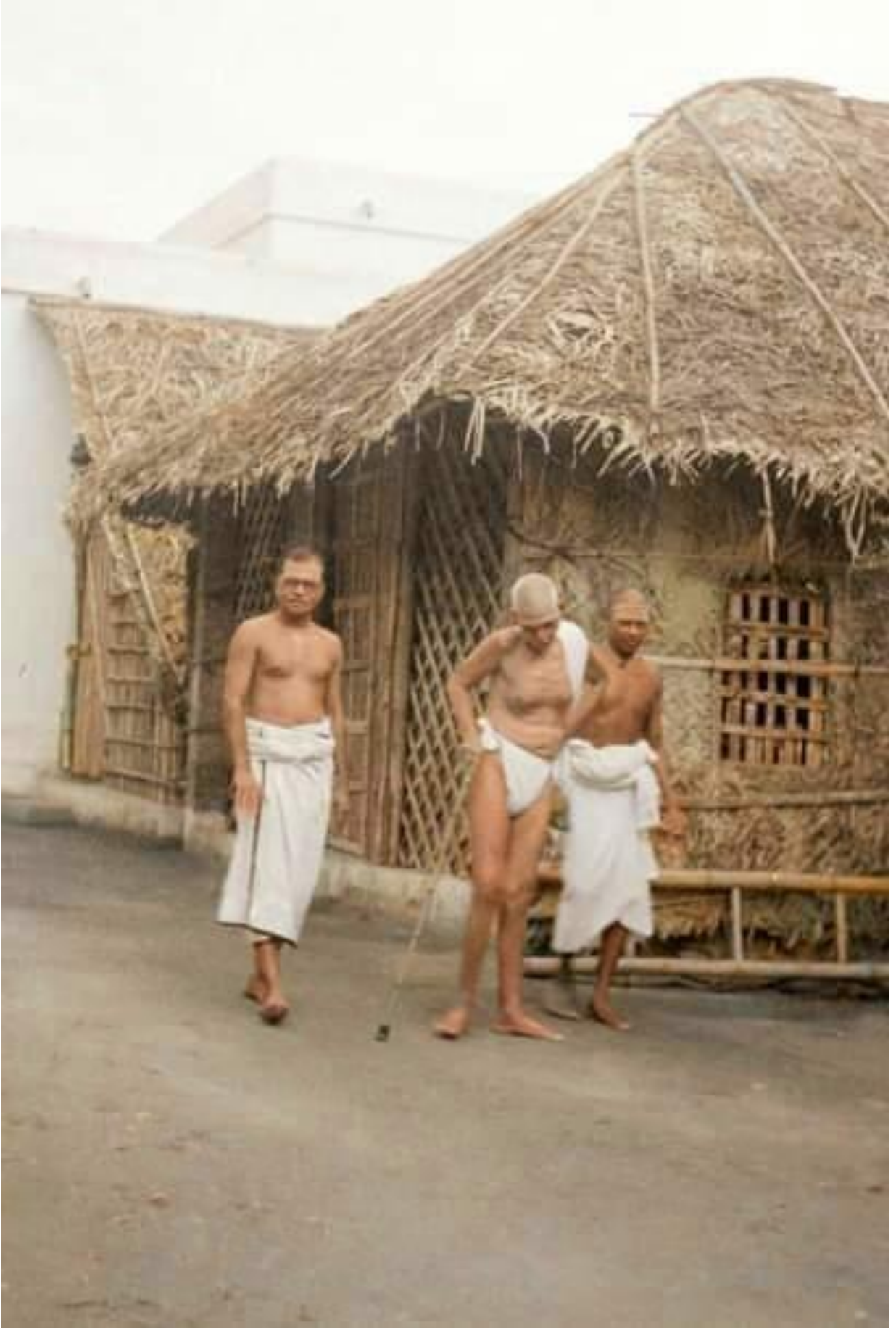
<p>1. "Who are you? Whose child are you? Whither are you bound? What is your name? Whence have you come? O child! I should like to hear your reply to these questions".</p> <p><i>Thus spoke Sri Shankaracharya to the boy, and Hastamalaka replied as follows:</i></p> <p>2. "I am neither man, God, <i>yaksha</i>, <i>Brahmin</i>, <i>Kshatriya</i>, <i>Vaisya</i>, <i>Sudra</i>, <i>brahmachari</i>, householder, forest-dweller, nor <i>sannyasin</i>; I am Pure Awareness alone.</p> <p>3. "Just as the Sun causes all Worldly movements, so do I — the Ever-Present Conscious Self — cause the 'mind' to be active and the 'senses' to function. Again, just as the Ether is all-pervading yet devoid of any specific qualities, so am I free from all qualities.</p> <p>4. "I am the Conscious Self, Ever-Present and associated with everything in the same manner as heat is always associated with fire. I am that eternal, undifferentiated, unshaken Consciousness, on account of which the insentient 'mind' and 'senses' function, each in its own manner.</p> <p>5. "I am that conscious Self of whom the 'ego' is not independent, as the image in a mirror is not independent of the object reflected.</p> <p>6. "I am the unqualified, Conscious Self, Existing even after the extinction of '<i>buddh'i</i>'; just as an object remains ever the same even after the removal of the reflecting mirror.</p> <p>7. "I am Eternal Consciousness, dissociated from the 'mind' and 'senses'. I am the 'mind' of the mind, the 'eye' of the eye, 'ear' of the ear and so on. I am not cognizable by the 'mind' and 'senses'.</p> <p>8. "I am the Eternal, Single, Conscious Self, reflected in various 'intellects', just as the Sun is reflected on the surface of various sheets of water.</p>	<p>9. "I am the Single, Conscious Self illumining all 'intellects', just as the Sun simultaneously illumines all eyes so that they perceive objects.</p> <p>10. "Eyes can see objects only if they are enabled to do so by the [light of] the Sun. The Source from which the Sun derives its power is my "Self".</p> <p>11. "Just as the reflection of the Sun on agitated water seems to be broken up, but remains perfect on a calm surface, so also am I, the Conscious Self, unrecognizable in agitated 'intellects' though I clearly shine in those which are calm.</p> <p>12. "Just as a fool thinks that the Sun is entirely lost when it is hidden by dense clouds, so do people 'think' that the Ever-Free Self is bound.</p> <p>13. "Just as the Ether is all-pervading and unaffected by contact, so also does the Ever Conscious Self pervades everything without being affected in any way. I am that "Self".</p> <p>14. "Just as a transparent crystal takes on the lines of its background, but is in no way changed thereby, and just as the unchanging Moon on being reflected on undulating surfaces appears agitated, so has this 'doubt' come to you [O Sankara]!</p> <p>15. Since this hymn reveals the Reality of the Self as clearly as an <i>amalaka</i> fruit (similar to a gooseberry) in one's hand (<i>hasta</i>), it became known "<i>Hastamalaka Stotra</i>". This boy, a fully ripened fruit of <i>Jnana</i> (Wisdom) even from his boyhood, has himself come to be known as "<i>Hastamalakan</i>", revered by all.</p>
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Five Verses on the Self

These are the last verses composed by Sri Bhagavan. They were written at the instance of a devotee, Suri Nagamma, the author of Letters from Sri Ramanasramam. He wrote them first in Telugu, but to a Tamil metrical form called Venba, and then translated them into Tamil. Since there was already a composition of Adi Shankaracharya called the Atma Panchakam, Sri Bhagavan decided to call his composition Ekatma Panchakam.

1. When, forgetting the Self, one thinks
That the body is oneself and goes
Through innumerable births
And in the end remembers and becomes
The Self, know this is only like
Awaking from a dream wherein
One has wandered over all the World.
2. One ever is the Self. To ask oneself
'Who and whereabouts am I?'
Is like the drunken man's enquiring
'Who am I?' and 'Where am I?'
3. The body is within the Self. And yet
One thinks one is inside the 'inert body',
Like some spectator who supposes
That the screen on which the picture is thrown
Is within the picture.
4. Does an ornament of Gold exist
Apart from the Gold? Can the body exist
Apart from the Self?
The ignorant one thinks '*I am the body*';
The enlightened knows '*I am the Self*'.
5. The Self alone, the Sole Reality,
Exists for ever.
If of yore the First of Teachers (*Dakshinamurti*)
Revealed it through unbroken silence
Say who can reveal it in spoken words?

— from "*The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*", pp.130-131



*Sri Bhagavan walking towards 'Goshala' (cowshed)
(l to r) T.P.Ramachandra Iyer and Sivananda Swami (Attendants)*

SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.7

In the 1990's, while being seated on the banks of Mother Ganga at Hardwar, the Sacred Mother — Ganga Mata — commanded me [in English] to chant — three times — the following *mantra* (along with / after Her):

- 1). *"There is NO 'Ganesan'.*
- 2). *"I AM Brahman".*
- 3). *Jai! Ganga Mata Ki Jai."*

Look at the Beauty and Compassion of the Divine Mother! The first portion (denial of identification with a 'body' and 'name') completely removes the entire gamut of impediments, hurdles and obstructions that prevented me from being Free to Experience or to Realise the "Truth". The middle portion confirms that such 'total removal', 'total denial' did not mean "Emptiness", "Nothingness", "Void" = "*Sunya*", but only raises the fundamental question: "*Who Am I?*" confirming (as "answer", as an "experience") what I have always been, what I AM and what I will henceforth be too = "*I AM Brahman*"! How could this "dual spiritual role" of "Denial and Completion" be simultaneously achieved? Mother Ganga asserts that it could easily be attained through "doing *Japa*" — by which 'act' one does total surrender of oneself to the 'Divine'! Now! There prevailed / prevails — powerfully, experientially and effortlessly — the "*Inner Silence*" only! This is the operation of *Guru's Anugraha (Grace)*!

"You Are" right now "Alive" — so too 'me' and 'others' around us — '*here*', '*there*', '*everywhere*'! What greater "wonder" could there be more than this pure TRUTH of our simple BEING (alive)! Just, take a minute off and ponder over the simplicity of this "Profound TRUTH", please! Are "you" alive or just, you "ARE" alive?

When Paul Brunton was seated along with SRI BHAGAVAN on a rock up on the Hill, he wanted Him to make him 'experience' that he is the *Truth* — "right *Here* and *Now*"! Sri Bhagavan responded: "You are right '*Now*' and '*Here*' aware that you ARE (alive) — is it not? Being fully 'aware', suppose, you do not identify yourself with — from your head to foot as 'Paul Brunton' — what happens?"

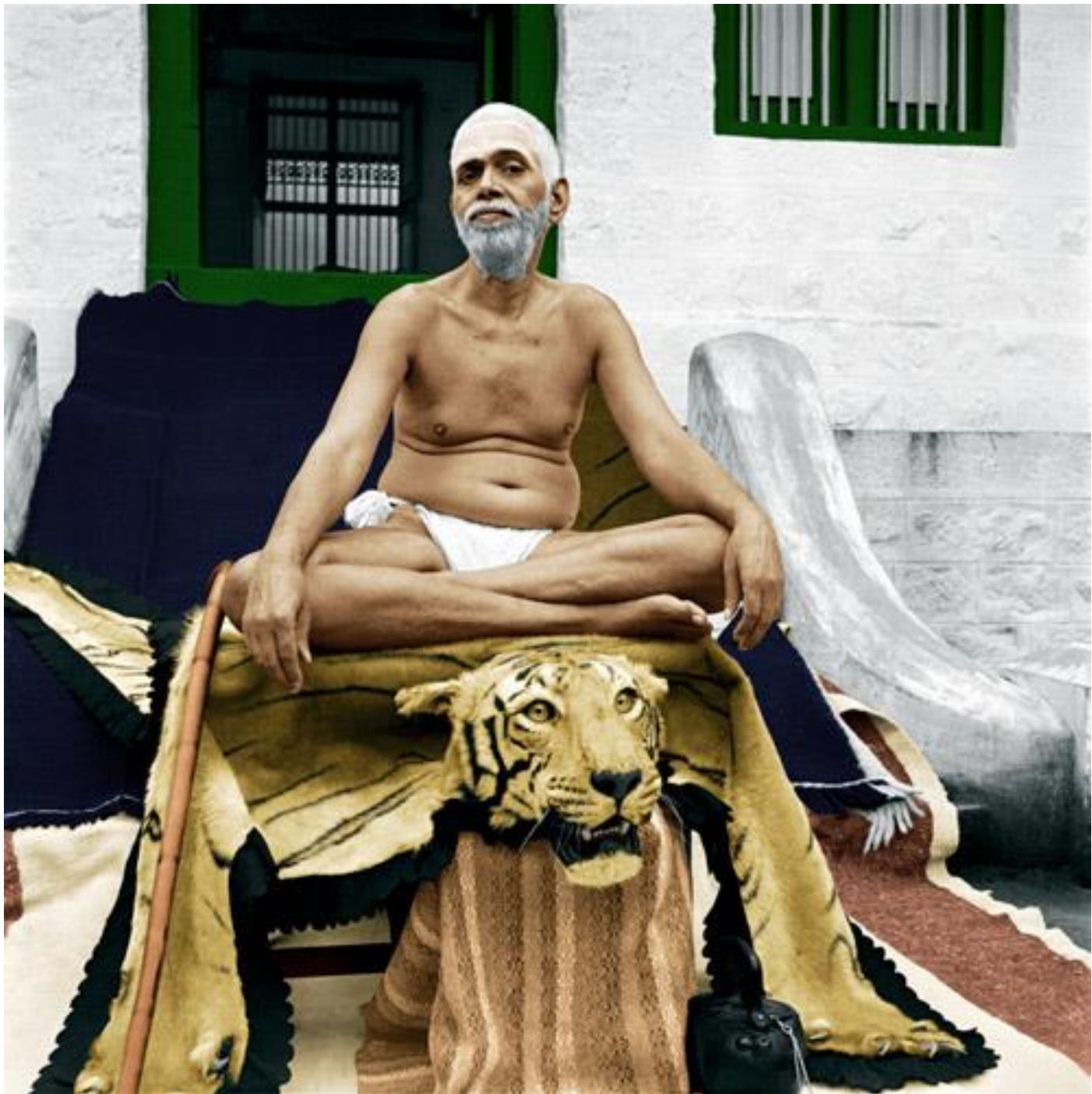
Sri Bhagavan looked — focusing His Attention — on Brunton. That's all! Paul Brunton had a 'direct experience' that "he IS the TRUTH (devoid of his 'name', his 'body' and 'everything' else around him = there prevailed only and merely the "*Inner Silence*"! This is the operation of *Guru's Anugraha (Grace)*!

SRI Bhagavan's Compassion is ever 'overflowing'! HE offers prayers, on our behalves also, to His *Guru Father Arunachala*:

"Those who take refuge at the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord of Mercy presiding over ARUNACHALA — their minds freed of attachment to riches, lands, relatives, caste and to the four stages of life (ashramas), and ever made purer by seeking Thy Benign Grace — these rid themselves (of the misery) of darkness, and in the steady Light of Thy ever-

***protecting Grace, which shines like the golden rays of the rising Sun, they abide happy,
sunk in the Ocean of Bliss."***

— from **SRI BHAGAVAN's** "*The Necklet of Nine Gems*", v. 3



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.8

While engaged in '*sadhana*', at every stage of 'thought-arising', bring back to awareness the glorious declaration of Sri Bhagavan : "***Change the angle of vision!***"

As long as one holds on to the 'me' making efforts to attain God/*Guru*/Self-Realisation, this miserable, endless struggle would continue — sucking away all one's already stored up 'spiritual energy' — through strenuous *sadhana* done/doing/continue to do, henceforth as well. This '*moola avidhya*' = that, one is going to 'gain' Spiritual Perfection through one's own efforts, 'drown' one in "***the bottomless abyss of ignorance, dense darkness.***"

"***Not 'I', Oh Lord! But 'Thou'!***" is the perfectly right attitude — the 'correct angle of vision'! One should, therefore, surrender one's body, 'mind' and soul at the Holy Feet of the *Sat-Guru*! As we have already made it clear that the *Sat-Guru*'s Holy Feet are already implanted in one's Heart — the "***INNER SILENCE***" — *Guru Sannidhi* = "***Guru's Presence***"! (** Please read the attached important instruction by Sri Bhagavan to Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer on *Guru Sannidhi* = "***Guru's Presence***")!

Changing the angle of vision is NOT a 'mental trick' — be very firmly clear about it. It is a pure spiritual "action" recommended by Sri Bhagavan. "Body, 'mind' and soul" surrendered ("***Not 'I', Oh! Lord!***") to the *Sat-Guru* (***but, 'Thou'!***) is the greatest "***Action***" a true spiritual aspirant has to do — all the time, under all circumstances. That could be given effect to only by shifting one's attention from 'I' to "Thou"! "Do it; and, don't think about it" — is the additional commandment of Sri Bhagavan. Please refer to His specific instruction to Swami Abhishiktananda:

"Do not meditate — *just BE!*

Do not think you are — *just BE!*

Do not think about being — *you ARE!* "

* * *

Talk 526.

A visitor asked Sri Bhagavan: People give some names to God and say that the name is sacred and repetitions of the name bestow merit on the individual. Can it be true?

Sri Bhagavan.: Why not? You bear a name to which you answer. But your 'body' was not born with that name written on it, nor did it say to anyone that it bore such and such a name. And yet a 'name' is given to you and you answer to that 'name', because you have identified yourself with the 'name'. Therefore, the '***Name***' signifies something and it is

not a mere 'fiction'. Similarly, God's *Name* is effective. Repetition of the *Name* is remembrance of what it signifies. Hence its merit.

But, the man did not look satisfied. Finally, he wanted to retire and prayed for Sri Bhagavan's *Grace*.

Sri Bhagavan now asked how mere 'sounds' assuring him of Grace would satisfy him unless he had faith.

Both laughed and the visitor retired.

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Talk 525.

Another visitor asked: 'Actions' are bondage. One cannot remain without some kind of 'activity'. So, bondage goes on increasing. What is one to do under the circumstances?

SRI BHAGAVAN.: One should act in such a manner that the 'bondage' is not strengthened but gets weakened. That is "selfless action".

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Talk 527.

A group of respectable Coorg ladies was in the hall.

One of them asked: I have received a *mantra*. People frighten me saying that it may have unforeseen results if repeated. It is only '*Pranava*'. So I seek advice. May I repeat it? I have considerable faith in it.

Sri Bhagavan.: Certainly, it should be repeated with faith.

D.: Will it do by itself? Or, can you kindly give me any further instructions?

Sri Bhagavan.: The object of '*mantra japa*' is to realise that the same *japa* is already going on in oneself even without effort. The '*oral japa*' becomes mental and the '*mental japa*' finally reveals itself as being Eternal. That *mantra* is the person's "Real Nature". That is also the State of Realisation.

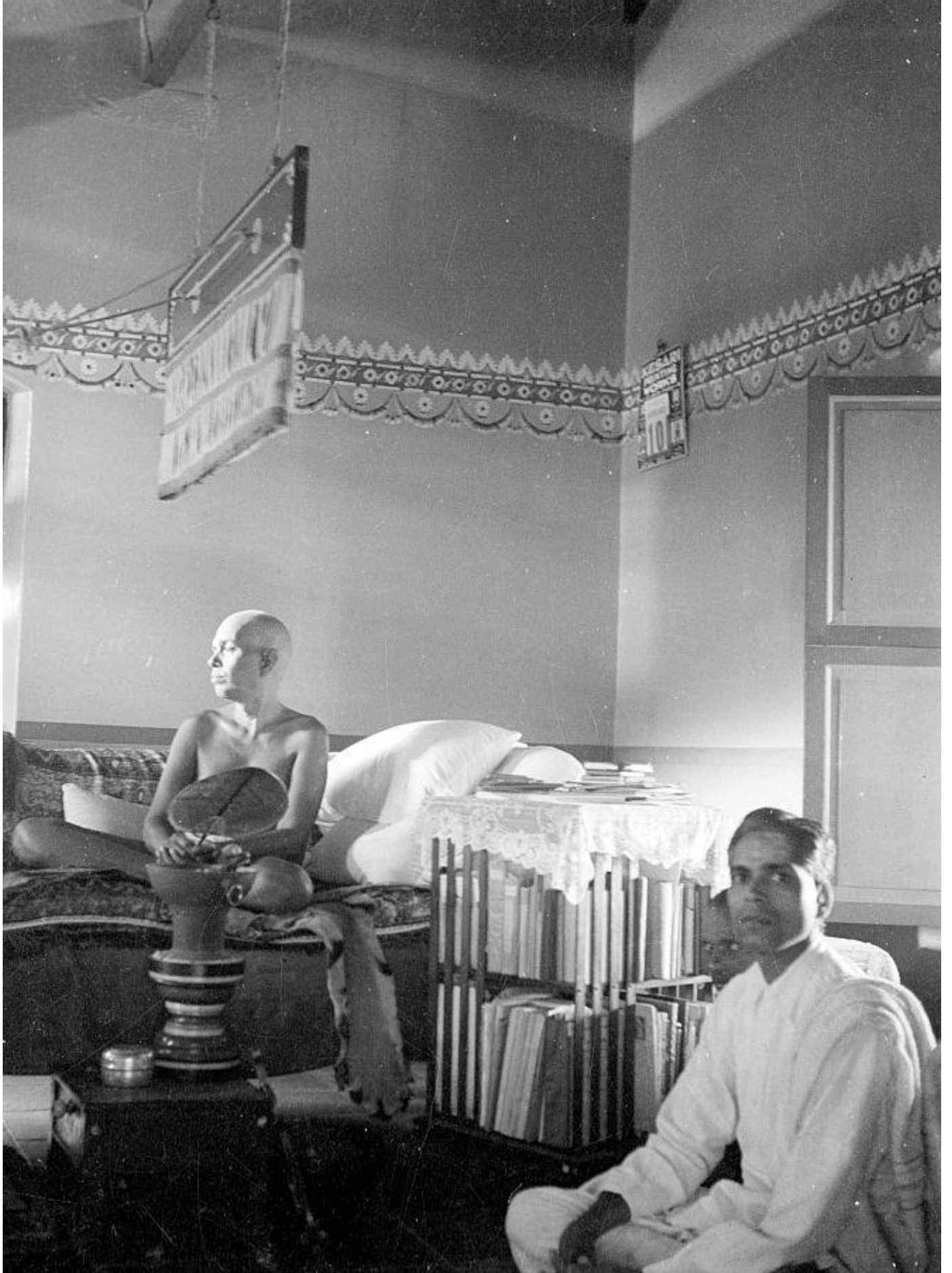
D.: Can the Bliss of *Samadhi* be gained thus?

Sri Bhagavan.: The "*japa*" becomes 'mental' and finally, reveals itself as the "Self". That is *Samadhi*.

D.: Please show Grace to me and strengthen me in my efforts!

— from "*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*" , Nos. 526, 525, 527

* * *



Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer seated inside the Old Hall

Cry of the Destitute **

By Sub-Registrar Narayana Iyer

One day, when I was sitting by the side of Sri Bhagavan, I felt so miserable that I put the following question to him: "Is the *sankalpa* of the *Jnani* not capable of warding off the destinies of the devotees?".

Sri Bhagavan smiled and said:

"Does the *Jnani* have a '*sankalpa*' at all? The *Jivanmukta* can have no '*sankalpas*' whatsoever. It is just impossible."

'I continued: "Then what is the fate of all us who pray to "You" to have "Grace" on us and save us? Will we not be benefited or saved by sitting in front of "You", or by coming to "You"? What use is there then for family men like me to gain by coming here to "You"?".

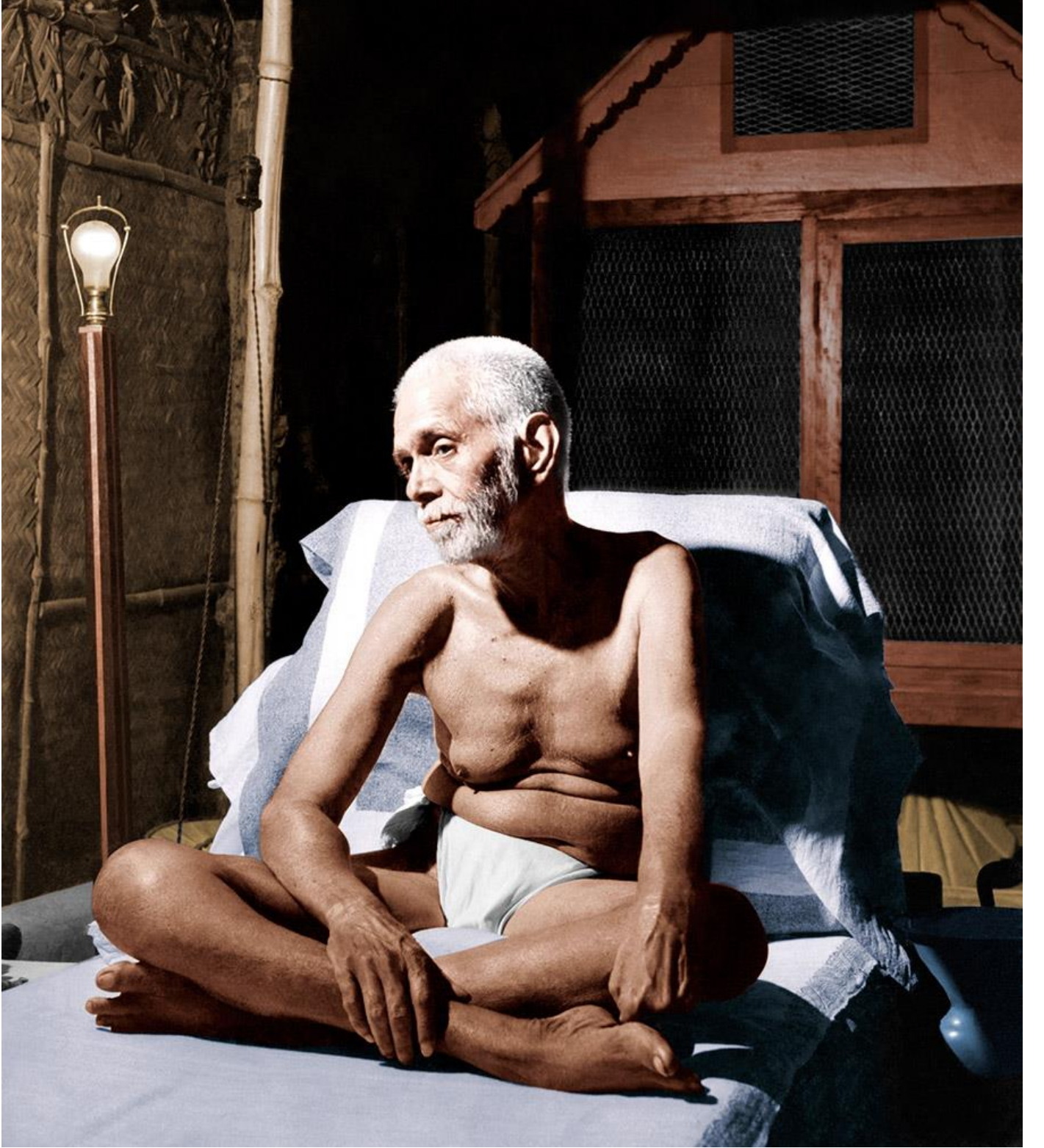
Sri Bhagavan turned graciously to me and said: "Just as a trouble (or arrow) that comes to destroy the head, goes away carrying with it only the *turban*, so a person's 'bad *karma*' will be considerably reduced while he is in the presence of a *Jnani*."

"A *Jnani* has no '*sankalpas*' but his '*Sannidhi*' (Presence) is the most Powerful Force. He need not have '*sankalpa*', but his 'Presiding Presence' — the most Powerful Force — can do wonders: save 'souls', give peace of 'mind', even give "Liberation" to ripe souls. Your prayers are not answered by Him but absorbed by His Presence. His Presence saves you, wards off the '*karma*' and gives you the boons as the case may be, [but] involuntarily. The *Jnani* does save the devotees, but not by '*sankalpa*', which is non-existent in Him, only through His Presiding Presence, his '*Sannidhi*.'"

I was filled with joy. Even today [1968] 'His Presence' is the most powerful thing and that alone, I am confident, saves me! *Guru Sannidhi* = 'Presence of the *Guru*' — is always available to all if one turns the attention within to the Heart!

It is the "I AM"! It is the "INNER SILENCE"!

— from "*The Mountain Path*", Vol. 5, July 1968



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.9

"Mind" denotes 'movements' = either moving towards 'external objects' or moving inwardly as and in 'thoughts' — all the time! Even in 'deep sleep', when it moves, it results in as 'dreams'. Sri Bhagavan once said: "You are so fond of the 'waking state' ["மன அலைவு" = 'restless movements of the mind'] that you drag it to the 'deep sleep' state also. The result is: 'dreams'!"

Remember! The Sanskrit word for 'mind' is '*manas*'. The word for 'man' is '*manusha*'. "*Manusha*" — literally means: "One who possesses the '*manas*' ('mind')". GOD is known as '*Ishwara*' = meaning, the 'state of Pure Awareness'! The state of 'NOW-ness', the state of 'I AM-ness', the state of 'IS-ness'! The pure state of 'ASI' = 'இருக்கின்றேன்'! Researchers in languages assert that very many 'words' in many languages of the World have come from Sanskrit. One of these derivations is that the word (along with its real meaning): "IS" came from the Sanskrit word "*Ishwara*"! Nisargadatta Maharaj said: "The only thing man can never do at any time of his Life is to say, 'I AM not '!"

"Your glory lies in your being '*alive*'! "Respect the state of '*aliveness*' in you! From that "Source" only sprouted 'mind', 'intellect', 'five senses', 'understanding', 'pleasure', 'pain' — in short, the 'body', and the 'World' that one 'sees' and 'indulges' in. The 'aliveness in you' is a totally 'movementless' state possessing dynamic Power"! Only, the 'body', 'mind' and the 'seen World' — all the time — 'changes', that is, in constant "movement".

Bring back to your "conscious attention" — not an intellectual understanding, grasping alone — Sri Bhagavan's declaration: "*ARUNACHALA*" outwardly adorns the 'body' of a "*Mountain*"; and, 'you', 'me' and 'all others' seem to have the 'body-mind complex' of a human frame as the 'body'. Inwardly, both are the same "*Pure Awareness*" alone. *Aruna* + *Achala* meaning, "Being" + "Movementless" = "*Pure Awareness*". "Hence, Sri Bhagavan's "*Direct Teaching*" is to instruct: "Trace to the "Source" ["*Pure Awareness*"] by turning the attention inward and recognising, recollecting [*pratyabhijna*] that 'you too are the same '*Movementless Awareness*' alone!"

One could — with effortless clarity — arrive at as how to remain in that state of "*Movementlessness*" by relinquishing all that moves in one = 'body', 'mind' and the 'seen objects all around'. In short, by surrendering oneself at the Holy Feet of the *Sat-Guru* = the "*Movementless Awareness*" within!

Isn't it the easiest? Say: "Yes, it is"! Be a "*Dheera*"!

Therefore, Sri Bhagavan sings: "ஐயே!அதி சுலபம்!ஆன்ம வித்தை!" = "*Self-Knowledge* is Easy! The Easiest thing that there is!"

Devotee: How is the *Guru* found?

Sri Bhagavan: God, who is Immanent, in His Grace, takes pity on the loving devotee and manifests Himself according to the devotee's development. The devotee thinks that he is a man and expects a relationship as between two physical bodies. But, the *Guru* who is God or the Self-incarnate, works from within, helps the man to see his mistakes and guides him in the right path, until he realises the "Self" within.

D.: What should the devotee do then?

Sri Bhagavan: He has only to act according to the "Words of the Master" and work inwardly. The Master is both '*within*' and '*without*'. So, he creates conditions to drive you inward and at the same time prepares the 'interior' to drag you to the "Centre", the "Source". Thus, he gives a '*push*' from '*without*' and exerts a '*pull*' from '*within*', so that you may be fixed at the "Centre" ("Source").

You think that the World can be conquered by your own efforts. When you are frustrated externally and are driven inwards, you feel:

"Oh! There is a "Power" higher than man."

The 'ego' is a very powerful elephant which cannot be brought under control by any creature less powerful than a Lion, which in this instance, is none other than the *Guru*, whose very looks make the elephant-like 'ego' tremble and die.

You will know, in due course, that your glory lies where you cease to exist. In order to gain that state, you should surrender yourself.

Then, the Master sees that you are in a fit state to receive guidance and He guides you.

* * *

Sri Bhagavan: So long as you seek Self-Realisation, the *Guru* is necessary. *Guru* is the "Self". Take *Guru* to be the real "SELF" and yourself to be the individual Self. The disappearance of this sense of duality is the removal of ignorance. So long as duality persists in you, the *Guru* is necessary. Because you identify yourself with the 'body', you think the *Guru* too is the 'body'. You are not the 'body', nor is the *Guru*. You are the "Self" and so is the *Guru*. This '*Knowledge*' is gained by what you call "*Self-Realisation*".

You mistake the 'body' for the *Guru*. But the *Guru* himself does not make that mistake. He is the formless "Self". That is '*within*' you. You are the "Self" and so is the *Guru*. He appears outwardly only to guide you.

* * *

D.: Isn't "Grace" the gift of the *Guru*?

Sri Bhagavan: *God*, *Grace* and *Guru* are all synonymous and are, both external and immanent. Isn't the "Self" already '*within*'?

Is it for the *Guru* to bestow it by his '*look*'? If a *Guru* thinks so, he does not deserve that name.

* * *

Sri Bhagavan: If the 'individual' is sought, he is nowhere to be found. Such is the *Guru*. Such is *Dakshinamurti*. What did He do?

He sat 'Silent'. The disciples appeared before him. He maintained 'Silence'; and, their 'doubts' were dispelled — which means that they lost their 'individual' identities. *JNANA* (Spiritual Wisdom) is that 'Silent Understanding'; and, not the verbal definitions that are usually given for it. 'Silence' is the most potent form of work. However vast and emphatic the Scriptures may be, they fail in their effect.

The *Guru* is 'quiet' and "Peace" prevails in all. His 'Silence' is vaster and more emphatic than all the Scriptures put together. These questions arise because of the feeling that in spite of having been here so long, heard so much, striven so hard, you have not gained anything.

The 'process' that goes on inside you, is not apparent to you. In fact, the *Guru* is always 'within' you.

* * *

D.: Sri Bhagavan says He has no disciples?

Sri Bhagavan: Yes.

D.: He also says that a *Guru* is necessary if one wishes to attain '*Liberation*'.

Sri Bhagavan: Yes.

D.: What then must I do? Has my sitting here all these years been just waste of time? Must I go and look for some *Guru* in order to receive 'initiation', seeing that Sri Bhagavan says he is not a *Guru*?

Sri Bhagavan: What do you think brought you here from such a long distance and made you remain here so long? Why do you doubt it?

If there had been any need to seek a *Guru* elsewhere, you would have gone away long ago. The *Guru* or *Jnani* (Enlightened One) sees no difference between himself and others. For him, all are *Jnanis* — all are One with Himself, so how can a *Jnani* say that such and such is His disciple?

But, the unliberated one sees all as multiple, he sees all as different from himself, so to him the *Guru*-disciple relationship looks a reality.

D.: Then, Sri Bhagavan does have 'disciples'?

Sri Bhagavan: As I said, from Bhagavan's point of view, there are no disciples, but, from that of the disciple, the Grace of the *Guru* is like an 'Ocean'. If he comes with a cup, he will get only a cupful. It is no use complaining of the niggardliness of the Ocean — the bigger the vessel, the more he will be able to carry. It is entirely up to him.

— from "The Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words" Edited by Arthur Osborne, pp.100, 102 & 104

* * *

D.: Is there no way of escape from the miseries of the World?

Sri Bhagavan.: There is only one way and that consists in not losing sight of one's "Self" under any circumstances.

To enquire "*Who Am I?*" is the only remedy for all the ills of the World. It is also perfect Bliss.

— from "Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi", No.,532"

Although the Existence-Consciousness [*Sat-Chit*] that shines abundantly in the [state of] Self-Abidance — in which the 'mind' has turned inwards [through the inquiry "*Who am I?*"] and the 'ego' has [thereby] subsided — is devoid of characteristics and qualities and is beyond the 'mind', it appears as *Guru*, [having characteristics such as 'name' and 'form']. [Such is] the Grace of God, who is "Self". "

— "Garland of Guru's Sayings", v. 967



First time using an Umbrella!



Taken by the reputed Cartier Bresson from "LIFE" Magazine (USA)

SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.10

"Surrender to the Holy Feet of the *Sat-Guru*," is a very powerful guidance given by Sri Bhagavan. He declared that one who has obtained the Grace of the *Guru* would never be abandoned. He said: "He who has earned the Grace of the *Guru* will undoubtedly be saved and never forsaken, just as the prey that has fallen into the tiger's jaw will never be allowed to escape."

Who is that *Sat-Guru*?

* * *

Devotee: Sri Bhagavan says, "The influence of the *Jnani* steals into the devotee in Silence". Sri Bhagavan also says, "Contact with Greatmen — Exalted Souls — is one efficacious means of realising one's true Being"...

Sri Bhagavan: Yes. *Sat-Guru*, *Jnani*, Great Men, Exalted Souls — all are synonymous and the same. The *Sat-Guru* is not the physical form. Contact will remain even after His physical form vanishes."

* * *

28th December, 1937

Talk No.434

Devotee: Can Sri Bhagavan help us to realise the Truth?

Sri Bhagavan: Help is always there.

Devotee: Then there is no need to ask questions. I do not feel the ever-present help.

Sri Bhagavan: Surrender and you will find it.

Devotee: I am always at your feet. Will Sri Bhagavan give us some *upadesa* to follow? Otherwise, how can I get the help, living 600 miles away.

Sri Bhagavan: That *Sat-Guru* is within.

Devotee: *Sat-Guru* is necessary to guide me to understand it.

Sri Bhagavan: The *Sat-Guru* is within.

Devotee: I want a visible *Guru*.

Sri Bhagavan: That visible *Guru* says that He is within.

Devotee: Can I throw myself at the mercy of the *Sat-Guru*?

Sri Bhagavan: Yes. Instructions are necessary only so long as one has not surrendered oneself.

* * *

Let us abide by His Holy Command: "Surrender"! The 'Surrender' should not be limited to intellectual declaration alone — it should come as an "ACTION" from the HEART and in its full capacity, as well. This act of 'Surrender' will equip us, empower us to take us to the next step of following His *Upadesa*. Without fail, let us honestly adhere to the second Command of *Sat-Guru* Ramana. By our totally "surrendering" to Him, we will be completing the act of the "baby monkey" holding on tightly to the Sacred Feet of the *Sat-Guru* and also, having put His Teaching into practice.

NOW! It is HIS turn to be the "Mother Cat" and take not only complete possession of us, but also to dissolve us into Himself = "ஐக்கியம் ஆக்கிக்கொள்" = "Bless me by Absorbing me into You"!

* * *

THE TEACHING

Sri Bhagavan: For the subsidence of the 'mind' there is no other means more effective than Self-enquiry. Even though the 'mind' subsides by other means, that is only apparently so; it will rise again.¹

This is the direct method. All other methods are practiced while retaining the 'ego' and therefore many doubts arise and the ultimate question still remains to be tackled in the end. But in this method the final question is the only one and is raised from the very beginning.²

Self-enquiry leads directly to Self-Realisation by removing the obstacles which make you think that the "Self" is not already realised.³

Meditation requires an object to meditate on, whereas in Self-enquiry there is only the subject and no object. That is the difference between them.⁴

D.: Why should Self-enquiry alone be considered the Direct Path to Realisation?

Sri Bhagavan.: Because, every kind of path except Self-enquiry presupposes the retention of the 'mind' as the instrument for following it, and cannot be followed without the 'mind'. The 'ego' may take different and more subtle forms at different stages of one's practice but it is never destroyed. The attempt to destroy the 'ego' or the 'mind' by methods other than Self-enquiry is like a thief turning policeman to catch the thief that is himself. Self-enquiry alone can reveal the Truth that neither the 'ego' nor the 'mind' really exists and enable one to realise the Pure, Undifferentiated Being of the Self or the Absolute.⁵

* * *

By steady and continuous investigation into the nature of the 'mind', the 'mind' is transformed into That to which 'I' refers; and that is in fact the "Self". The 'mind' has necessarily to depend for its existence on something gross; it never subsists by itself. It is the 'mind' that is otherwise called the 'subtle body', 'ego', '*jīva*' or 'soul'.

That which arises in the physical body as 'I' is the 'mind'. If one enquires whence the 'I'-thought arises in the 'body', in the first instance, it will be found that it is from the *Hridayam* or the Heart. That is the "Source" and stay of the 'mind'. Or again, even if one merely continuously repeats to oneself inwardly 'I-I' with the entire 'mind' fixed thereon, that also leads to the same "Source".

¹ Who Am I §12

² Talks 146

³ Talks 298

⁴ Talks 390

⁵ Maharshi's Gospel p.38

The first and foremost of all thoughts that arise in the 'mind' is the primal 'I'-thought. It is only after the rise or origin of the 'I'-thought that innumerable other 'thoughts' arise. In other words, only after the first personal pronoun, 'I', has arisen, do the 'second' and 'third' personal pronouns ('you', 'he', etc.) occur to the 'mind'; and they cannot subsist without it.

Since every other 'thought' can occur only after the rise of the 'I'-thought, and since the 'mind' is nothing but a bundle of 'thoughts', it is only through the enquiry, 'Who am I?' that the 'mind' subsides. Moreover, the integral 'I'-thought implicit in such enquiry, having destroyed all other 'thoughts', itself finally gets destroyed or consumed, just as a stick used for stirring the burning funeral pyre gets itself too finally consumed.⁶

* * *

D.: What is the Goal of this process?

Sri Bhagavan.: Realising the "Real".

D.: What is the nature of Reality?

Sri Bhagavan.: (a) Existence without beginning or end – eternal.

(b) Existence everywhere, endless – infinite.

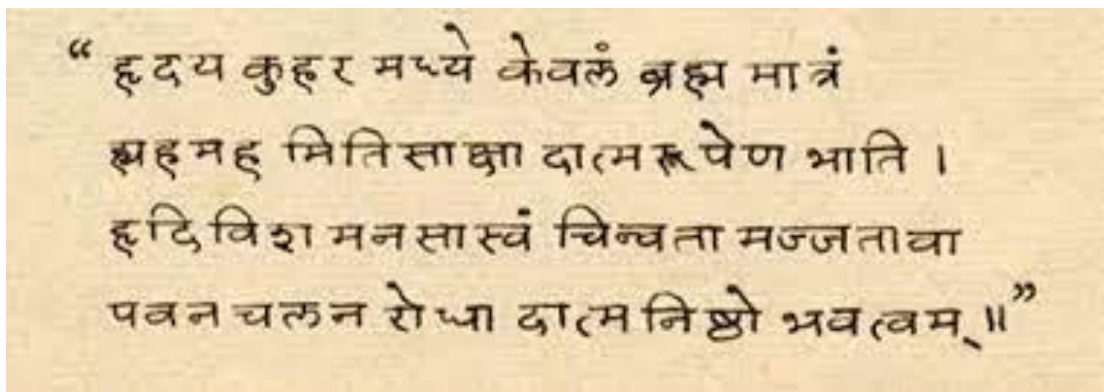
(c) Existence underlying all forms, all changes, all forces, all matter and all spirit. The many change and pass away, whereas the One always endures.

(d) The One displaces the triads such as knower, knowledge and known. The triads are only 'appearances' in time and space, whereas the "Reality" lies beyond and behind them. They are like a mirage over the "Reality". They are the result of delusion.

D.: If 'I' am also an 'illusion', who casts off the 'illusion'?

Sri Bhagavan.: The 'I' casts off the 'illusion' of 'I' and yet remains 'I'. Such is the paradox of Self-Realisation. The Realised do not see any contradiction in it.⁷

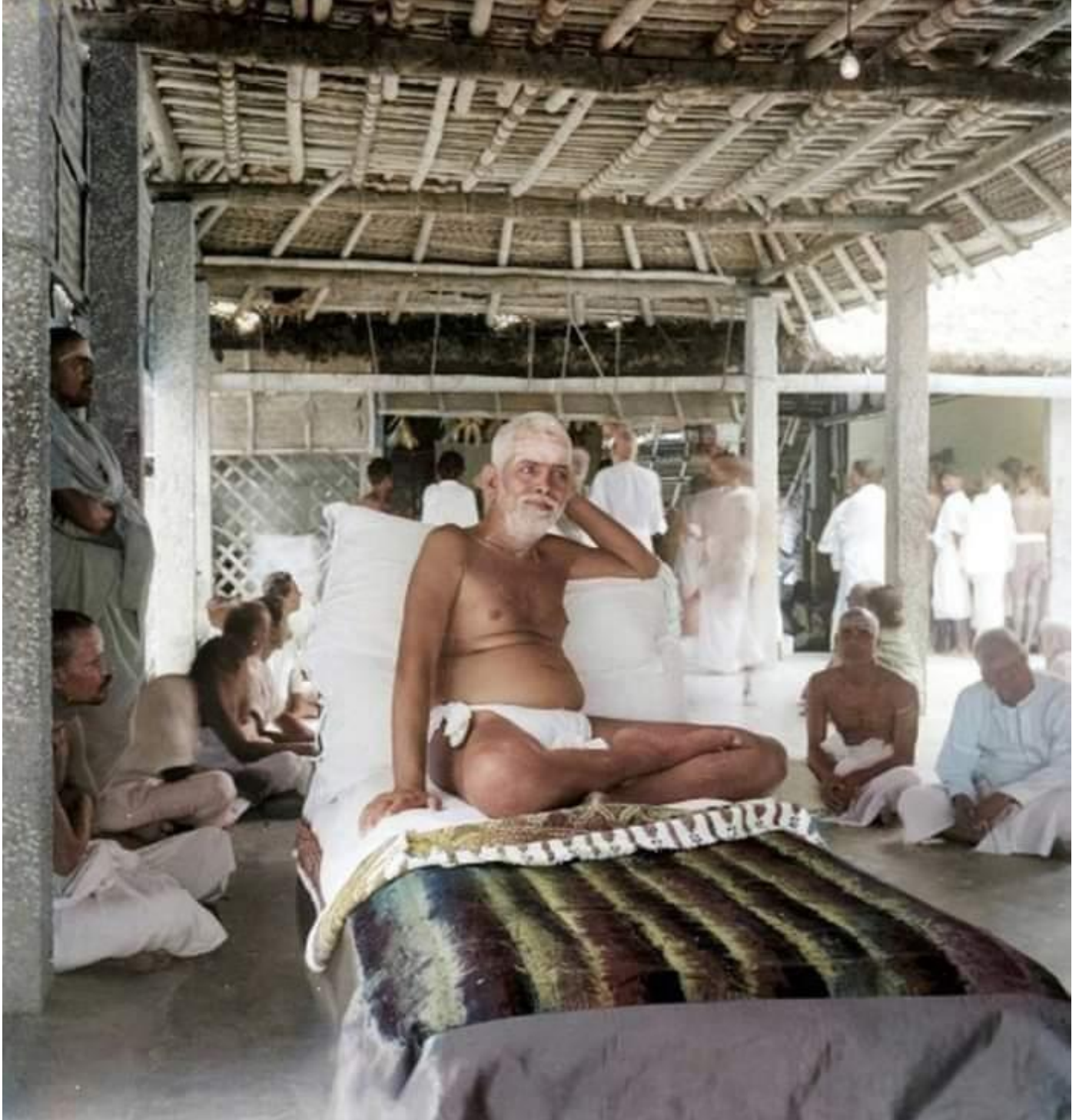
— from "The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi in his Own Words", pp.109-110, 111-112, 179-180



Sri Bhagavan's Core Teaching in His Own Handwriting

⁶ Who Am I §10

⁷ Talks 28



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.11

Guru's Grace and Blessings are our only "Shield" to protect ourselves from being attacked by the nescience = 'Paazh' is the Tamil word used by Sri Bhagavan; and, translated into English by Paul Brunton as: 'Bottomless abyss of darkness, bottomless abyss of ignorance'.

Yet, Sri Bhagavan's repeated emphasis is on the individual relentlessly doing 'spiritual sadhana' (effort) as absolutely essential for "Spiritual Emancipation" !

With all dedication, devotion and humility, I would like to put the total necessity of both "Grace" (of the Guru or God) and the "sadhana" (to be done by the individual)! They are not 'two', but single, same Truth only — similar to the two sides of the same coin! Thus, the "Spiritual Ladder" is formed of the following steps — in this order :

- (1) "Darshana" (Sacred Meeting with the Guru or simply come to know of His Greatness);**
- (2) "Sravana" (absorbing, adopting and adhering to His Teaching);**
- (3) "Saranagati" — surrendering oneself completely to the Higher Power, the Guru: "Not 'I' Oh, Lord! But 'THOU' alone"; and**
- (4) "Mukti" or "Moksha" = To experience that one is always and already 'Realised' ("There is no one who is unrealised. All are already Realised" — Sri Bhagavan).**

In Talks No.333, Sri Bhagavan clarifies this — that is, "You are already and always Self-Realised, but, have forgotten it. All forms of *sadhanas* are meant (and thus, very essential) to 'remind' you that you are ever Self-Realised. By doing *sadhanas*, one does not Realise the SELF afresh, but the defect of obscuration of the SELF is totally removed".

"Sri Bhagavan: 'Pratyabhijna' = 'Prati' + 'abhijna'.

'Abhijna' is direct perception. 'Prati' is to be reminded of what was already known.

'This is an elephant' is = 'Direct Perception'. 'This is that elephant' is 'Pratyabhijna'.

In technical works, 'Pratyabhijna' is used for realising the ever-present "Reality", the "Self" and recognising IT."

Kindly read the following glorious words of Wisdom from Sri Bhagavan with one-pointed attention. HE says: "Change the angle of vision"! Yes! It is the clue! But also remember HIS oft quoted statement in other places: "Descending from the 'head' to the 'Heart' is the beginning of Spiritual *sadhana*"! Let us accept it and surrender our weak and ever-doubting 'mind' at the Sacred Feet of our *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana and abide by His commandment! With such surrendered change in our angle of vision , viz., " We are ever the *Atma* and have never been the 'Jiva'", let us abide, get absorbed and merged in the Commandment of Lord SIVA : "By My Command, those who live here (and, die) get *Mukti*" ! "*Smaranad Arunachala*"! All the time, let us meditate on *Arunachala* by holding Him in our Heart and thus get merged in Him!

Sri Bhagavan affirms it in "*Arunachala Pancha Ratnam*", v.5 :

**"Oh Arunachala! The best of devotees who,
taking You as the sole Refuge and having surrendered
his/her all unto You, beholds with a pure Heart all the
perceived World as Your own Form and mingles in You
getting immersed in Your Form of Bliss, gets Mukti
(Liberation) and thus, triumphs! "**

* * *

"The 'ONE' Exists Without Any Limitations"

Someone remarked: It is said that they get *Mukti* unasked who live or die within a radius of 30 miles round Arunachala. It is also admitted that only by *Jana* is Liberation obtained. The *Purana* also remarks that *Vedanta Vijnana* is difficult to get. So, *Mukti* is difficult. But, life or death round about the Hill bestows *Mukti* so easily. How can it be?

Sri Bhagavan.: Lord Siva says, "*By My Command.*" Those who live here need no initiation, *diksha*, etc, but get *Mukti*. Such is the Command of Lord Siva.

D.: The *Purana* also says that those who are born here, are Lord Siva's group of followers, such as ghosts, spirits, disembodied beings, etc.

Sri Bhagavan.: So it is said of other *kshetras* as well, e.g., Tiruvarur, Chidambaram.

D.: How does mere life or death here confer *mukti*? It is difficult to understand.

Sri Bhagavan.: *Darsanad Abhrasadas Jananat Kamalalaye, Kasyantu Maranam Mukti Smaranad Arunachale.*

"To see Chidambaram, to be born in Tiruvarur, to die in Benares, or merely to think of Arunachala, is to be assured of Liberation."

Jananat Kamalalaye means "by being born in *Kamalalaya*". What is it? It is the "Heart" (*Kamalalaya*). Similarly, *Abhrasadas* — Seat of "Consciousness". Again, *Kasi* is the "Light" of Realisation. Remembering Arunachala completes the verse. It must also be understood in the same sense or spirit.

D.: So *bhakti* is necessary.

Sri Bhagavan.: Everything depends on the outlook. One sees that all born in Tiruvarur, or visiting Chidambaram, or dying in Banares, or contemplating Arunachala, are *Muktas*.

D.: I think of Arunachala, but still I am not a *Mukta*.

Sri Bhagavan.: Change of outlook is all that is necessary. See what such a change did for Arjuna. He had the Vision, of the "Cosmic Self". Sri Krishna says: "Gods and Saints are eager to see my "Cosmic Form". I have not fulfilled their desire. Yet, I endow "Divine Sight" to you by which you can see that Form." Well, having said so, does He show what He is? No. He asks Arjuna to see in Him all that he desires to see. If that were His real Form it must be changeless and known for what it is worth. Instead, Arjuna is commanded to see whatever he desires. So, where is the "Cosmic Form"? It must be in Arjuna.

Furthermore, Arjuna finds Gods and Saints in that "Form" and they are praising the Lord. If the "Form" be withheld from the Gods and Saints as said by Sri Krishna, who are they of Arjuna's vision?

D.: They must be in his imagination.

Sri Bhagavan.: They are there because of Arjuna's outlook.

D.: Then, the outlook must be changed by God's Grace.

Sri Bhagavan.: Yes. That happens to *bhaktas*.

D.: A man dreams of a tiger, takes fright and wakes up. The dream-tiger appears to the dream-ego who is also frightened. When he wakes up how is it that that 'ego' disappears, and the man wakes up as the waking ego?

Sri Bhagavan.: That establishes that the 'ego' is the same. Dream, wakefulness and sleep are passing phases for the same 'ego'.

D.: It is so difficult to spot the 'mind'. The same difficulty is shared by all.

Sri Bhagavan.: You can never find the 'mind' through mind. Pass beyond it in order to find it non-existent.

D.: Then, one must directly go to seek the 'ego'. Is it so?

Sri Bhagavan.: That's it.

'Mind', 'ego', 'intellect' are all different names for one single inner organ (*antahkarana*). The 'mind' is only the aggregate of 'thoughts'. 'Thoughts' cannot exist but for the 'ego'. So, all thoughts are pervaded by 'ego' (*aham*). Seek wherefrom the 'I' rises and the other thoughts will disappear.

D.: What remains over cannot be 'I', but Pure Consciousness.

Sri Bhagavan.: Quite so. You start seeking happiness. On analysis, you find that misery is caused by 'thoughts'. They are called the 'mind'. While trying to control the 'mind' you seek the 'I' and get fixed in Being-Knowledge-Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*).

Another devotee: What then is the 'mind'?

Sri Bhagavan.: 'Mind' is Consciousness which has put on limitations. You are originally unlimited and perfect. Later, you take on limitations and become the 'mind'.

D.: It is *avarana* (veiling) then. How does this happen?

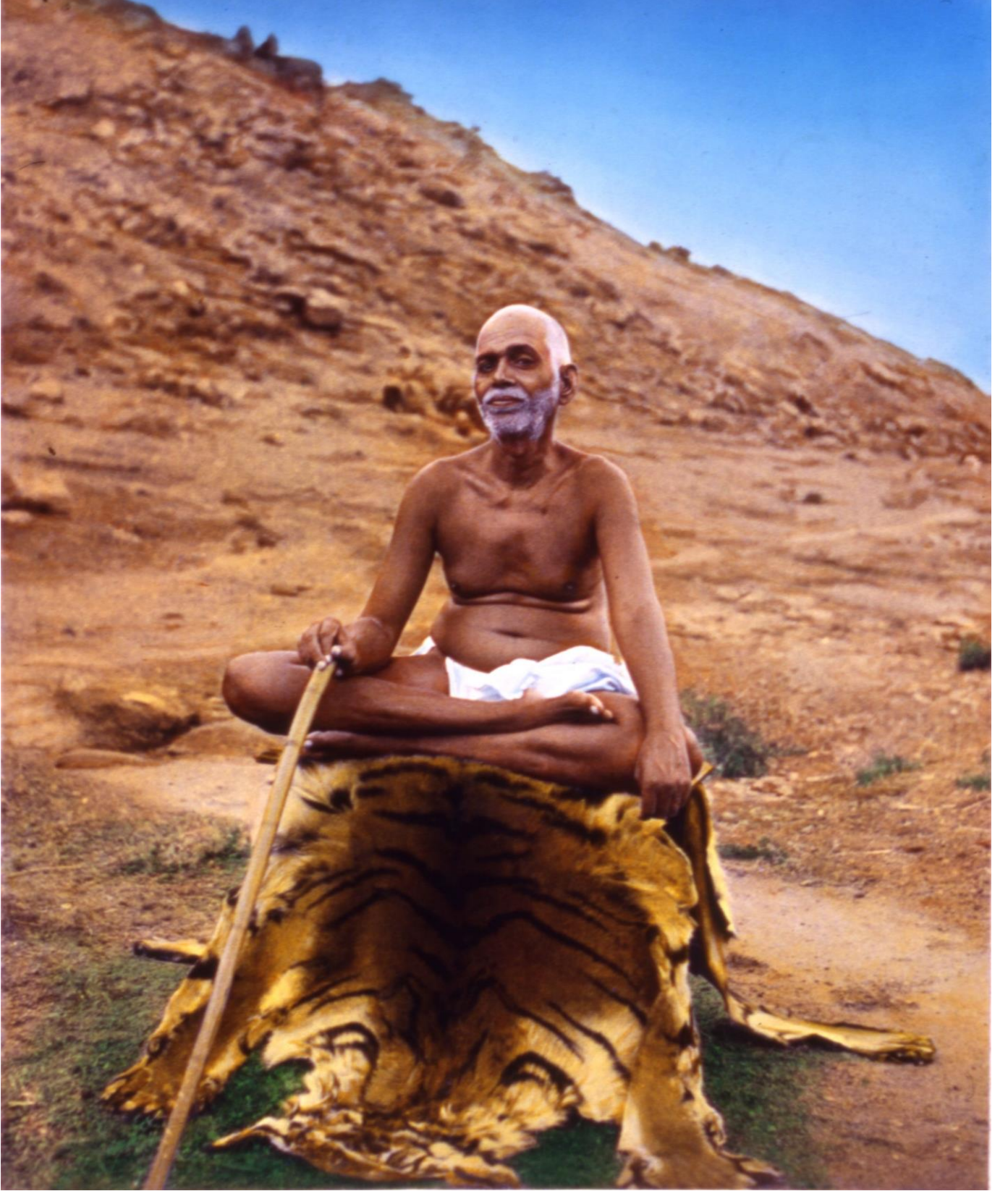
Sri Bhagavan.: To whom is the *avarana*? It is the same as '*avidya*' (ignorance), 'ego' or the 'mind'.

D.: *Avarana* means obscuration. Who is obscured? How does it arise?

Sri Bhagavan.: The limitation is itself obscuration. No questions will arise if limitations are transcended.

— from "*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*", No . 473

* * *



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.12

"PLUNGE WITHIN AND BE THE 'SELF'"

Our most compassionate Master Bhagavan Sri Ramana warns the true spiritual aspirants against the powerful "enemy" = 'thoughts', 'strong impediments' on the way of our treading the "Inner Journey"; 'too much Knowledge' and 'seeking after gaining miracles'! As true adherents of His Direct Teaching, it is absolutely essential that we studiously follow His Guidance which He offers us, unconditionally!

* * *

(1) "If one wants to abide in the thought-free State, a struggle is inevitable. One must fight one's way through before regaining one's original Primal State. If one succeeds in the fight and reaches the Goal, the enemy, namely the 'thoughts', will all subside in the Self and disappear entirely. The 'thoughts' are the 'enemy'. They amount to the creation of the Universe. In their absence, there is neither the World nor God the Creator. The Bliss of the Self is the single Being only." (*Talks* No. 326)

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(2) "The author of "*Vritti Prabhakara*" claims to have studied 3,50,000 books before writing his book. What is the use? Can they bring in Realisation of the Self? "*Vichara Sagara*" is full of logic and technical terms. Can these ponderous volumes serve any real purpose? However, some people read them; and then, seek Sages only to see if they can meet their questions. To read them, to discover new doubts and to solve them, is a source of pleasure to them. Knowing it to be a sheer waste, the Sages do not encourage such people. Encourage them once and there will be no end.

"Those familiar with logic, "*Vritti Prabhakara*", "*Vichara Sagara*" or "*Sutra Bhashya*", or similar large works, cannot relish small works like "*Truth Revealed*" dealing only with "Self" and that pointedly too, because they have accumulated '*vasanas*'. Only those whose 'minds' are less muddy, or pure, can relish small and purposeful works.

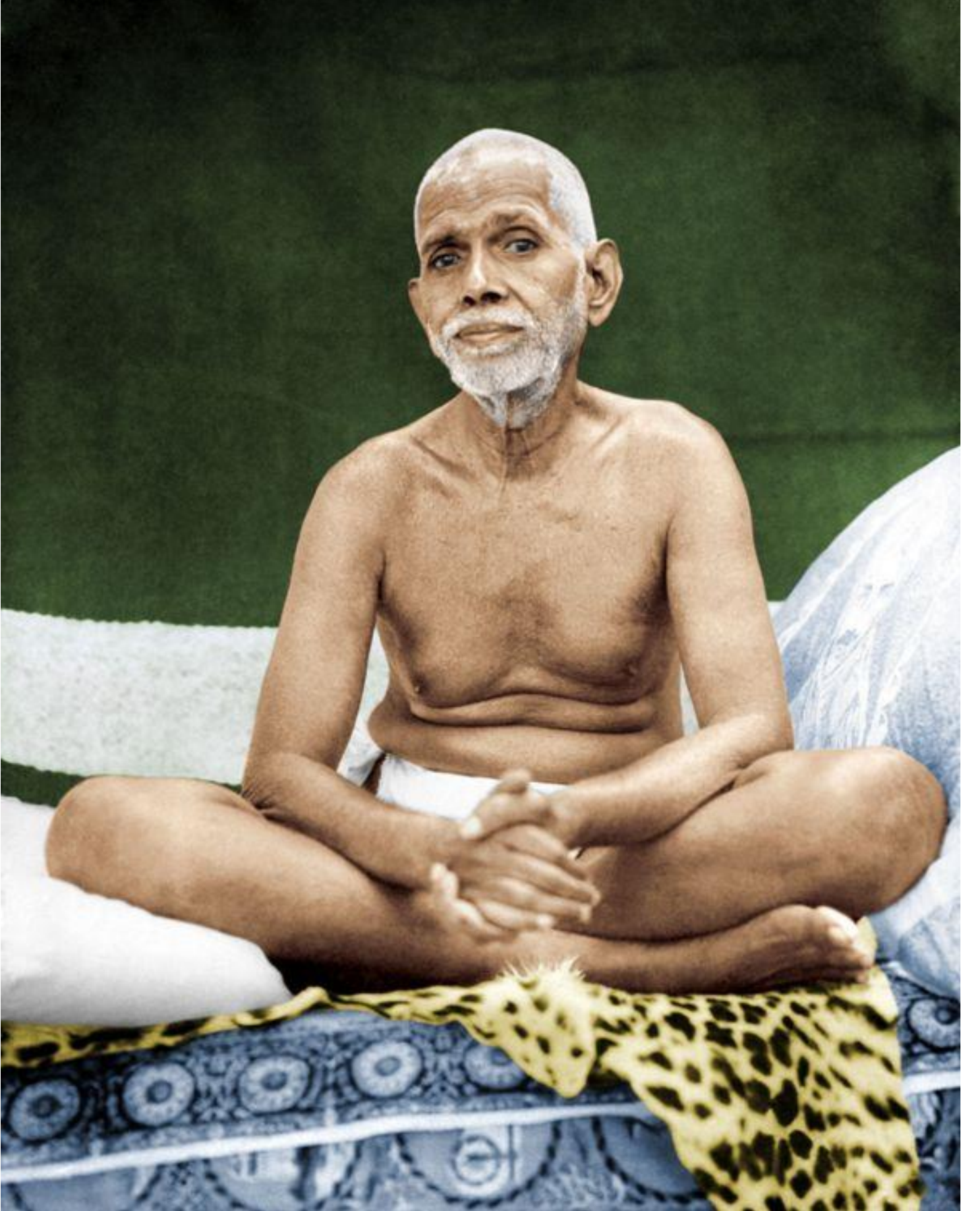
"Only the enquiry into the Self, can be of use." (*Talks* No.332)

* * *

(3) "Sri Bhagavan: Miracles, clairvoyance, clairaudience — what are these? They are 'sidetracks'. The Realized person is above them. The greatest miracle is to Realise the Self! Some people describe hundreds of former lives seen by clairvoyance, but what use is it? Does it help them or others to know the Self? What are those 'lives' but body-births? The "True Birth" is in the "Self". Even if you could be in England now (astrally), would it make you any better off? You would not be a bit nearer "Realization".

"What good will *siddhis* (occult powers) do? Suppose you exercise all these wonderful powers! You experience one 'desire' and try to fulfill it, and when a fresh 'desire' breaks out, you expend your energy and attention on that. Isn't the net result merely worry caused by the turbulent 'mind'? If Happiness is your real Goal and aim, you must ultimately come back from your diversion with *siddhis*, and try to find yourself by inquiring who it is that wants the "Happiness". "

— from "*CONSCIOUS IMMORTALITY*" by Paul Brunton



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.13

"GOD, GURU and SELF are ONE!"

"Nothing under the Sun is ever new!" said Sri Bhagavan. "One's mind", HE added: "wants novelty!" Hence, it goes out and gets entrapped in 'objects' seen, which makes it forget the 'Seer' = Itself, the "Truth"! Though the ancient Scriptures repeatedly pointed this out, equally repeatedly, man's 'mind' ignored it! Hence, the absolute necessity for God to take the form of a *Guru* and redeem the afflicted!

What does the *Guru* teach? "Turn your attention within and realise that you are ever the Self only"! Thus, our Beloved Master Bhagavan Sri Ramana declared: "*God, Guru and Self* are identical!"

"*Tat Tvam Asi*" = "You Are 'That'!"

* * *

"Devotee: Beginningless predisposition makes one do wrong. Without *Jnana* this predisposition cannot vanish. But, *Jnana* looks almost impossible. Expiation alone cannot undo all the *Karmas*; for, how much expiation will be needed? Everything looks difficult, even impossible. Association with the "Wise" seems to be the only cure of all ills.

Sri Bhagavan: What is to be done? Reality is One only. How can it be realised? 'Realisation' is thus an 'illusion'. Practise seems to be necessary. Who is to practise? Looking for the doer, the act and the accessories disappear.

Moreover, if 'Realisation' is not present '*here*' and '*now*', how can IT, newly be got, be of any use? What is permanent must be eternally '*Present*'. Can it be newly got and permanent also?

Realise what is '*Present*' '*Here*' and '*Now*'. The Sages did so before and still do that only. Hence they say that IT looks as if newly got. Once veiled by ignorance and later revealed, 'Reality' looks as if newly realised. But IT is not new."

* * *

"Another visitor asked: Please tell me which is the most efficacious of all the methods, e.g., Prayer to God, *Guru 'anugraha'*, i.e., Master's Grace, concentration of 'mind', etc.

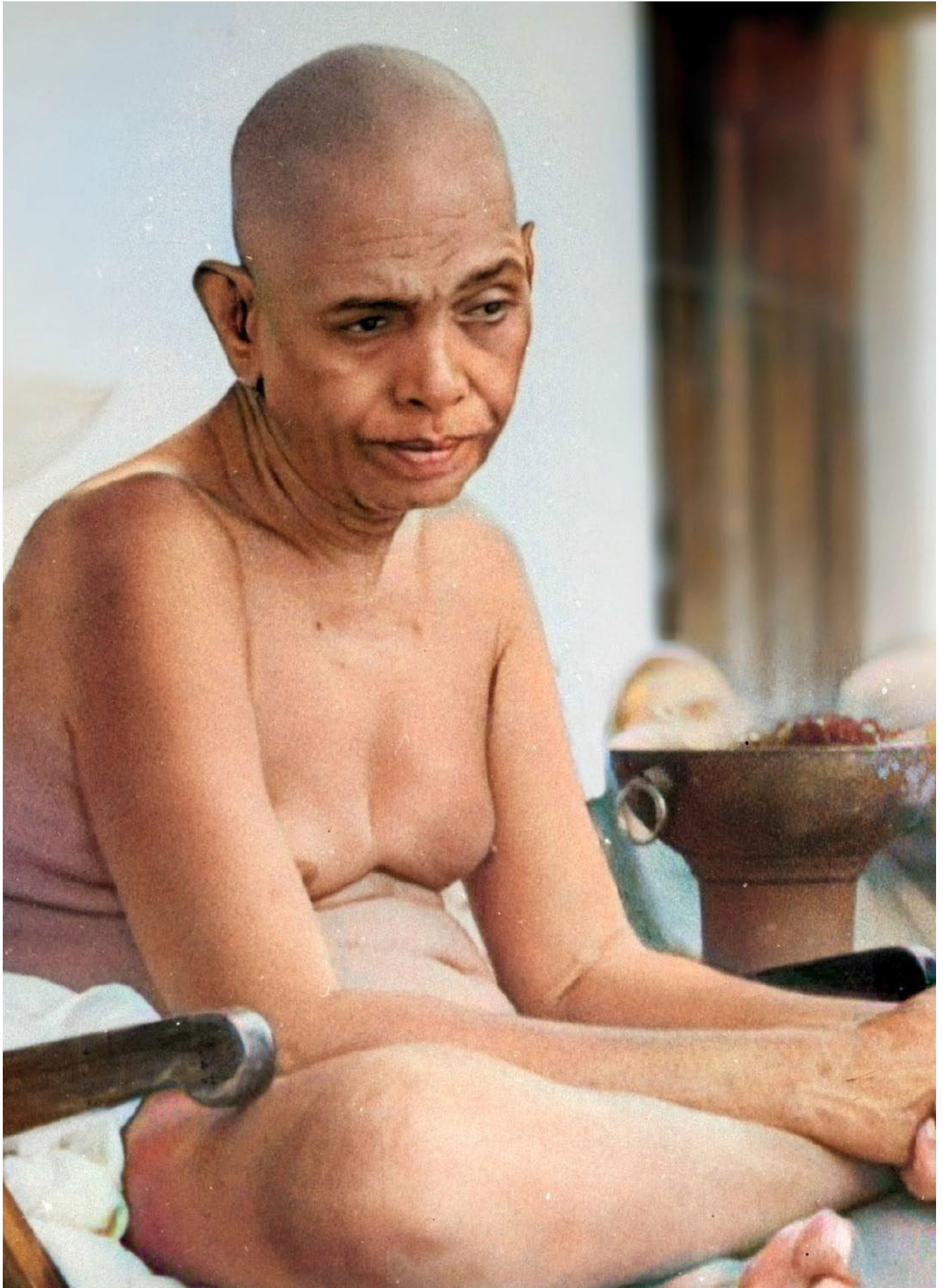
Sri Bhagavan: The one is the consequence of the other. Each of them leads to the next stage. They form a continuous "Whole". God, *Guru* and the Self are not different. They are one and the same. Therefore, the methods offer no choice. "

* * *

"Devotee: Cannot Grace hasten the competence in a spiritual aspirant?

Sri Bhagavan: Leave it to Him. Surrender unreservedly. One of the two things must be done. Either surrender because you admit your inability and also require a Higher Power to help you ; or, investigate into the cause of the 'misery', go into the "Source" and merge into the Self. Either way, you will be free from misery. God never forsakes one who has surrendered. In "*Srimad Bhagavad Gita*" Lord Krishna has declared: '*Mamekam Saranam Vraja*' = 'Surrender completely to ME'"

— from "*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*", Nos . 439, 440 & 336



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.14

This 'human birth' is very rare to be got! And, it is Pure Grace of God — on whom one should have done immense penance in previous innumerable births to obtain this jewel of gift of human birth! Be intensely conscious — of what Blessings you have already derived from Him —to make further progress in your Inner Spiritual Journey! Recognising one's own true worth is a "must" step in this inimitable inner spiritual journey! Look! What happened to my (school) Teacher and my "*upaguru*" — *Pundit* T.K. Sundaresa Iyer — who made me realise who Sri Bhagavan in Reality IS and how to hold on to Him with steadfast one-pointed devotion and with unshakeable surrender.

It was my remarkable teacher TKS who often reminded me of how importantly Sri Bhagavan repeatedly told him the great significance of Holy Arunachala and how tremendously important for a spiritual aspirant to stay in the vicinity of this Sacred Mountain by quoting the *Puranic* statement: 'One gets "*Mukti*" ("Liberation") unasked who live or die within a radius of 30 miles around Arunachala'. "To see Chidambaram, to be born in Tiruvarur, to die in Varanasi, or, merely think of (meditate on) Sri Arunachala, is to be assured of Liberation." He used to stress that for one to be born or to see or to die at particular places is NOT within one's capacity or capability, but surely anyone can 'think' or 'meditate within one's Heart' on Sri Arunachala at any time or at any place, under any circumstances!

He impressed me so deeply within my Heart that I should drop my body ONLY at Holy Arunachala!

It was this compassionate Teacher of mine who made clear to me two more important essence and significance of True Spirituality!

- (1) It is not you who is going after the *Guru*, but it is the *Guru* who is all the time coming towards you; and,
- (2) The *Guru* is so vastly greater than one can ever imagine of how magnanimous he always has been, is and ever will be! HE gives equal treatment to every one of us!

Those were the last days of my revered teacher. He was very seriously ill and bed-ridden in a house opposite to the Ashram. I was visiting him every day. The last day of his physical existence, he gave me a pat on my head and said: "This is my blessing to you! See! I am giving you my all! I want you to carry my body, chanting '*Arunachala Siva*' all the way to the cremation ground!" Can anything else in the World equal the beauty and splendour of that 'Single Touch of Wisdom' by my beloved Teacher?

Spiritual Life is very rich in its content! Live it with full consciousness that you are ever blessed by *Sat-Guru Sri Ramana*! Look at His picture, chant His Sacred Name and surrender fully to Sri Bhagavan!

* * *

"TKS came to Sri Bhagavan in 1903, when Sri Bhagavan was in Virupaksha Cave. He was then just twelve years old. One of his relatives told him: "Lord Arunachala Himself is seated in human form at Virupaksha Cave!" In those days, Sri Bhagavan was mostly in Silence. Rarely would He utter a word or two. When TKS came, Sri Bhagavan who had His eyes closed, opened them and blessed him with a Glance of Grace.

"Later TKS told me: "It was not a human body that I saw. It was a 'living statue' of burnished Gold. Sri Bhagavan looked at me. There were about ten people around Him singing Tamil songs when Sri Bhagavan looked at me and asked: 'Won't you sing a song for me?' it was a surprise for everyone else, because Sri Bhagavan was mostly in Silence; and, rarely asked for anything! A thrilled TKS sang a song (he had a melodious voice) by one of the Four Great Saints (of Tamil Nadu) *Saint Sundarar* when the Saint visited Holy Arunachala — one of the Sixty-three Saints about whom SRI BHAGAVAN had read in the ancient text "*Periya Puranam*" during His boyhood. The translation of the song is:

"No other support do I have except Your Holy Feet, Oh Lord! By holding onto Them I shall win Your Grace! Ancient Sages have sung Your praises. Oh, Lord! Grant me the boon that my tongue should constantly repeat Your Sacred Name even if my 'mind' strays away."

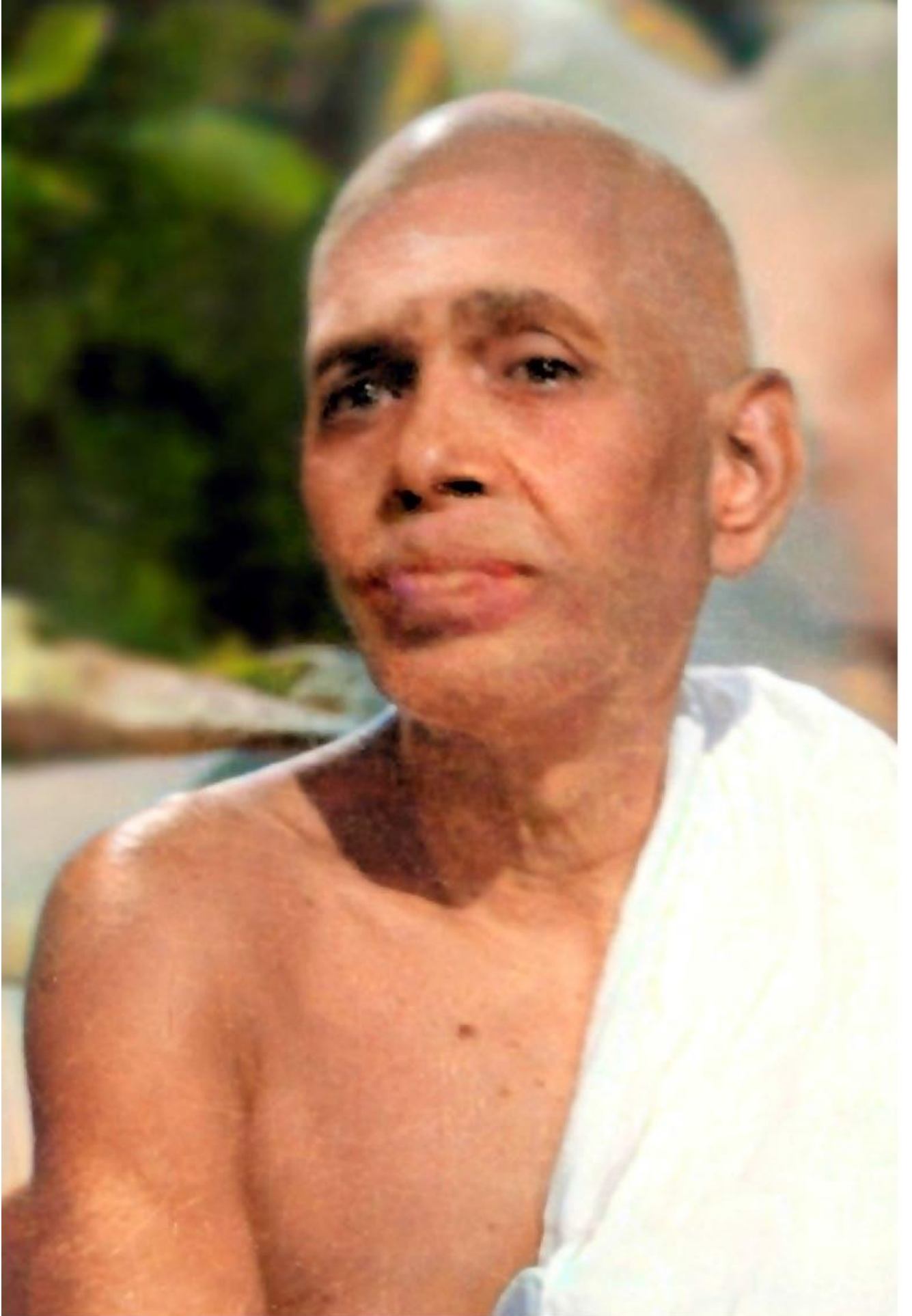
Every day, this boy would go to Virupaksha Cave and spend time with Sri Bhagavan. In the course of time, he became a school teacher. He, however, began to have doubts about his spiritual development. One day, he felt, 'Why should I go and be with this Saint? I am not improving at all. There is no perceptible change in me.' For three months he did not go to Sri Bhagavan. One night, he woke up and saw his pillow wet with his tears! He then instantly felt, "Oh, I miss my *Guru*!" Very early next morning, he ran up the Hill. Sri Bhagavan, who was now staying in Skandashram, stepped out just then and waited for TKS. When TKS saw Sri Bhagavan in the distance, he could not control his emotions. He ran crying, fell at His feet and drenched them with his tears said, "Bhagavan! Please forgive me!"

Sri Bhagavan lifted him up and said: "This is the hundredth day!" The Great *Guru* had been counting the days! "it is hundred days since you came. What happened to you?" TKS replied: "Bhagavan! I am sorry I did not come. I have done a foolish thing. But, Bhagavan, I did not see any improvement within me and I did not feel any benefit by coming and sitting with you." Sri Bhagavan looked at him with compassion and said: "Well! That is all right! You did not see any benefit, but did you not feel the loss?"

Recollecting this, TKS told me, "We go to Sri Bhagavan not to have any benefit from Him. Without Him, we have no '*Life*' whatsoever. We should not miss the opportunity of having this Bliss of His Presence within our Heart — otherwise we will miss the Bliss and Presence within of Him!"

Because of his meagre income as a school teacher, TKS could afford to take only a small quantity of sugar candy or puffed rice as an offering to Sri Bhagavan. One day, he did not have even that little cash! Sad, he went empty handed and fell at the Sacred Feet of *Sat-Guru Sri Ramana*: "Bhagavan! I am so unhappy. I do not have any money, so I could not bring you any offering." Sri Bhagavan smiled and said: "Why, you have brought the most important thing! Everything else is unimportant!" TKS was puzzled! "You brought yourself!" declared Sri Bhagavan.

The case in point here is that one should *never* exclude 'oneself' from the spiritual journey! It is very easy to extol the *Guru* and His Teachings. In the process, one should never exclude 'oneself'! *Vedas* declare : "*You Are 'That'!*" "*Tat Tvam Asi*"!



SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.15

Sri Bhagavan's Teaching of Self-Enquiry is the most rational-cum-intuitive Revelation on / of our ancient "*Sanathana Dharma*".

When our former Prime Minister INDIRA GANDHI visited our Ashram (in 1979 or so) after her election tour in Chickmagalur, I took personal care of her in achieving her three avowed personal objectives: to meditate in the "Old Hall" of Sri Bhagavan, to eat lunch as '*Prasad*' in the Dining Hall wherein Sri Bhagavan Himself had sit and ate and to do *Giripradakshina* of the Holy Hill Arunachala. While she was eating her lunch at Sri Bhagavan's Dining Hall, I was alone with her (though her Secretary Smt. Deshpande was seated away from her)!

She then said: "Ganesan! Many do not know the inner spiritual side of my Father Jawaharlal Nehru! When he was in jail he wrote to me often letters addressing me with intense fondness: "My very dear *Priyadarshini*". In one of such communications, my father had sent me a copy of "*Self Realisation*": the biography of Sri Ramana Maharshi by B.V. Narasimha Swami and wrote: "Read this book! The Maharshi is the most rational Saint of our times! His Teaching is the most practical one, amidst the jargon of other theoretical expositions!"

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Talk 95.

Devotee: What are the obstacles to remaining steady in unbroken Bliss? How can they be overcome?

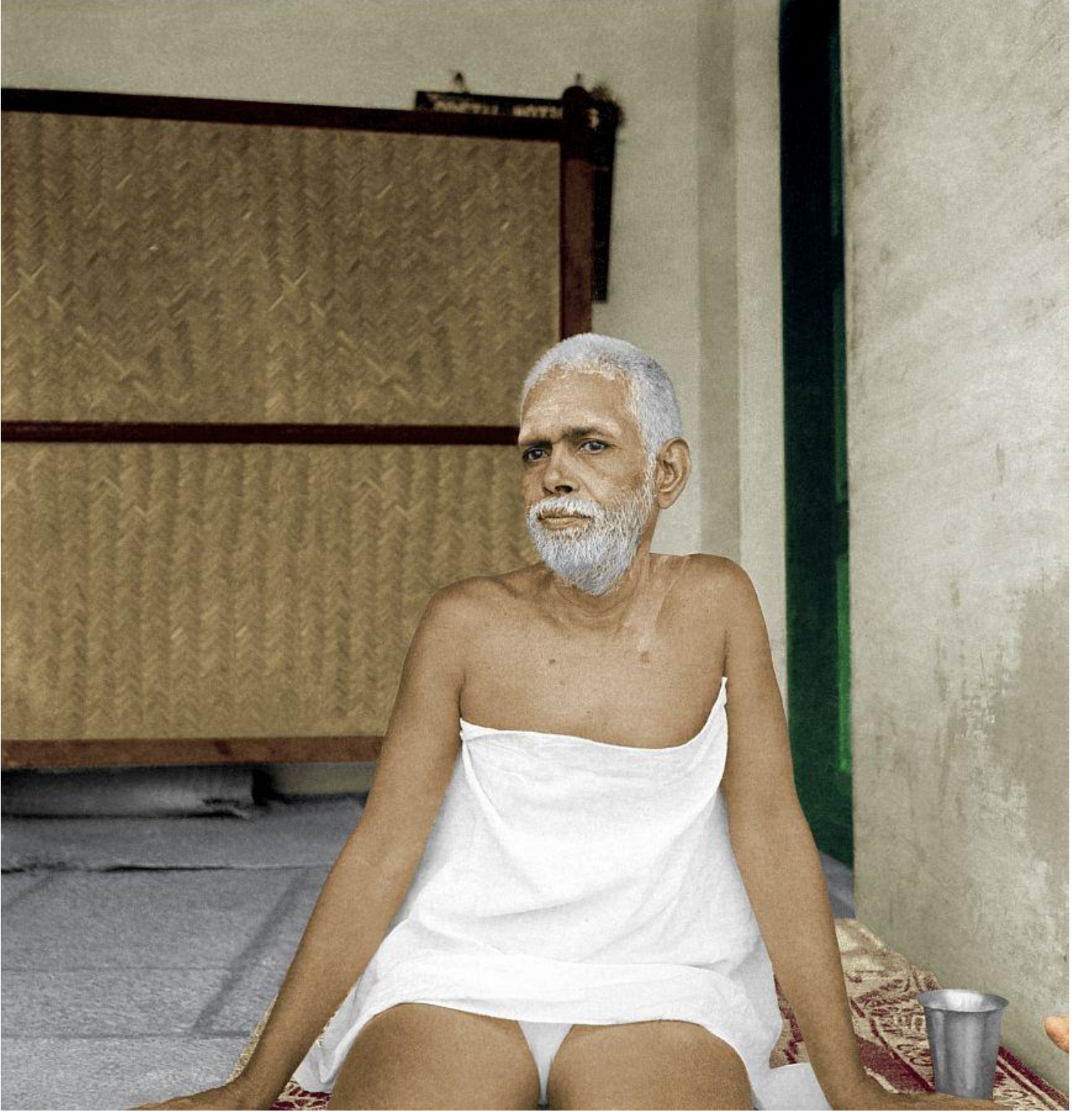
Sri Bhagavan.: The obstacles are:

- (1) Ignorance (*ajnana*) which is forgetfulness of one's "Pure Being".**
- (2) Doubt (*sandheha*) which consists in wondering if even the experience was of the "Real" or of the unreal.**
- (3) Error (*viparita jnana*) which consists in the "*I-am-the-body*" idea, and thinking that the World is real. These are overcome by hearing the Truth, reflection on It and concentration (inward-turned attention).**

The Master continued: Experience is said to be temporary or permanent. The first experience is temporary and by concentration it can become permanent. In the former, the bondage is not completely destroyed; it remains subtle and reasserts itself in due course. But in the latter, it is destroyed root and branch, never to appear again.

— from "*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*", No.95

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SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.16

The grossest expression of *Brahman* — the Reality — is the visible 'Five Elements': Earth, Fire, Water, Air and Ether! One 'Element' is subtler than the other = Earth is the grossest, less subtler than it, is Fire! Likewise, next is Water, next is Air and the subtle-most element is Ether (*Akash*)! The unbelievable beauty of Truth is that "one's Mind" is subtler than 'Akash'! That subtlest 'MIND' stems from or is born out of 'one's Self'! "No one can either 'see' or 'know' the 'Self'; but, everyone can at any time, under all circumstances, "BE" the "Self", for, one "IS" always the "SELF" only", says Sri Bhagavan!

The whole process, essence and practicality of Self-Enquiry is "not at all, not only NOT to 'know' nor to 'see' but to 'BE' the SELF, all the time"!

NOW !

Recognise and realise the need for and compulsion on us — '*Sadhaks*' ('Spiritual Aspirants') to make tremendous, immense and continuous effort to Realise the Subtler-Than-The-Subtlest = "Self" = Sri Bhagavan calls It "That Supreme Void" ("*Mahaa Soonya*") !

In "*Devikalottara*" verse No.42, Sri Bhagavan declares:

"Know that whoever meditates on that 'Supreme Void' without weariness, by virtue of the strength of such a constant practice, becomes one with that very "*Void*" and will definitely attain that highly hallowed Supreme Abode, beyond birth and death."

How to 'gain' and attain that Supreme State? In the previous verse of this invaluable treatise (No.41) it is given:

"On renouncing completely all objects of 'attachment' other than oneself, leaving no trace behind and anchoring the 'mind' firmly in the "Heart", Pure "Awareness" shines forth with clarity and effulgence. Practise persistently, so that the "*Awareness*" may ever gain strength in full!"

Please read the whole passage of this most important spiritual sharing with your Heart, without allowing your 'mind' to intrude and raise any form of 'doubts'!

Sri Bhagavan is with you, holding your hands and leading you! Recognise and realise that you are ever the "Self" only = all the time and henceforth also, ever will be!

* * *

Talk No . 317

Devotee: Since I have not realised the Self, I say that I do not understand my permanent state of '*Trance*'.

Sri Bhagavan.: '*Trance*' is not something apart to be got anew. Your Natural State is that of *Trance*.

Devotee: But, I do not feel it.

Sri Bhagavan.: The fact of your contrary belief is the obstruction.

Devotee: Since I have not realised the Self I say that I do not understand my permanent state of '*Trance*'.

Sri Bhagavan.: This is only a repetition. That is the obstruction. This arises because you think that the non-*Self* is 'you'. That is the mistake. Do not take the non-*Self* to be the *Self*. Then, the *Self* will be evident to you.

Devotee: I understand it theoretically.

Sri Bhagavan.: There are no two selves — for the self to speak of the non-realisation of the *Self*.

Devotee: it is still theoretical to me. How shall I get the *trance*?

Sri Bhagavan.: '*Trance*' is only temporary in its effects. There is happiness as long as it lasts. After rising from it, the old '*vasanas*' return. Unless the '*vasanas*' are destroyed in '*Sahaja Samadhi*' (effortless *Samadhi*), there is no good of '*trance*'.

Devotee: The '*trance*' must precede *Sahaja Samadhi*?

Sri Bhagavan.: '*Trance*' is the Natural State. Although there are activities and phenomena, yet they do not affect the '*trance*'. If they are realised to be not apart from the Self, the Self is realised. Where is the use of '*trance*', unless it brings about enduring peace of mind? Know that even now you are in '*trance*' whatever happens. That is all."

* * *

Talk 131.

Devotee: What is *Moksha* (Liberation)?

Sri Bhagavan.: *Moksha* is to know that you were not born. "*Be still and know that I AM God.*" To be still is not to think. 'Know', and not 'think', is the word.

Devotee: There are said to be six organs of different colours in the chest, of which the Heart is said to be two finger-breadths to the right of the middle line. But the Heart is also formless. Should we then imagine it to have a shape and meditate on it?

Sri Bhagavan.: No. Only the quest "*Who am I?*" is necessary. What remains all through deep sleep and waking is the same. But in waking, there is unhappiness and the effort to remove it. Asked who wakes up from sleep you say 'I'. Now, you are told to hold fast to this 'I'. If it is done, the Eternal Being will reveal Itself. Investigation of 'I' is the point and not meditation on the Heart-centre. There is nothing like within or without. Both mean either the same thing or nothing.

Of course, there is also the practice of meditation on the Heart-centre. It is only a practice and not investigation. Only the 'one' who meditates on the "Heart" can remain aware when the 'mind' ceases to be active and remains still; whereas those who meditate on other centres cannot be so aware but infer that the 'mind' was still only after it becomes again active.

— from "*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*", Nos . 317 & 131

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SPIRITUAL SHARING" — No.17

"GOD, GURU, SELF = I AM"

Arunachaleswara — "God" — Is Truth! Bhagavan Sri Ramana — "*Guru*" — Is Truth! You — "Atma" ("Self") — Is Truth! Hence, "God", "*Guru*" and "Self" are identical and the same, single "Truth"! There is one more "Truth"! That unsaid and yet inassailable "Truth" is: "*Everything else is untrue!*"

Sri Bhagavan establishes the above "Truth" by quoting "*Devikalottara*" = the *Agama* text, wherein Lord Siva gives this highest teaching to His Beloved Consort Parvathi Devi. The purpose of Sri Bhagavan quoting this almost forgotten ancient scriptural text, is to urge us all — serious spiritual aspirants — make strenuous efforts to hold on to and own the *Truth* (the True Nature of everyone of us); and totally give up and deny the un-Truth that one is the body, that one is the 'mind' and that the World is real!



Sri Lakshman Joo offering his obeisance to Sri Bhagavan, seated up on the Hill; Eleanor Pauline Noye is also



Lord Arunachaleswara (Lord Shiva) giving Upadesa to Mother Apeethakuchambal (Mother Parvati)

"Gods and Goddesses, merits, demerits and their fruits, which are likewise '*anya*' (other than oneself), 'objects' of attachment and the 'knowledge' of those objects — all these will lead one to bondage in mighty *samsara*.

"All 'objects' of attachments are said to be 'pairs of opposites' ('happiness and misery', 'good and bad', 'truth and lie', 'right and wrong', and so on). When one rises above those pairs of opposites, one realises the "Supreme". Such a *Yogi* is a *Jivanmukta*, Liberated from bondage. On discarding the 'body', he becomes a *Videhamukta*.

"A wise man should not give up the 'body' out of aversion to it. Know that when once the '*prarabdha karma*' (result of accumulated actions) which was responsible for the creation of the 'body' ceases, the bodily burden will automatically fall off.

"The Consciousness which shines as 'I' in the Heart-lotus is Pure (flawless) and perfectly Steady (without a trace of movement). By destroying the 'ego', which rises (from that Consciousness), that Consciousness itself bestows the Supreme Joy of Liberation. Be sure about it.

"With great devotion meditating constantly that 'I am that Siva the Form of the One Consciousness that is always unsullied by any adjuncts'; dispel all your attachments.

"Giving up all notions about 'country', 'caste', 'blemishless community', '*asrama*' (status as a bachelor, family man, ascetic or one who has renounced the World) and associated matters, hold on to and practise always meditation upon the Self, your own Natural State.

"I alone AM. No one belongs to Me; nor do I belong to anyone else. I can see no one who can call Me his; neither can I see anyone who is Mine. I AM all Alone.

"Know that the person who experiences the firm conviction, 'I am the Supreme *Brahman*, I am the Master and Lord of the Universe' is the real *Mukta* (one who has attained Liberation), and that the one following conflicting paths is in bondage.

"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".

"He who is described in the Scriptures as the 'unborn' and Lord, I am He, the *Atman* (Self), who is forever without form or qualities. There is absolutely no doubt about it.

"I am Pure Awareness, immaculate, perfectly Liberated; and forever Present everywhere. I am Indeterminable. No one can grasp me or leave me. I am free from sorrow. I am always *Brahmamayam* (of the Nature of *Brahman*).

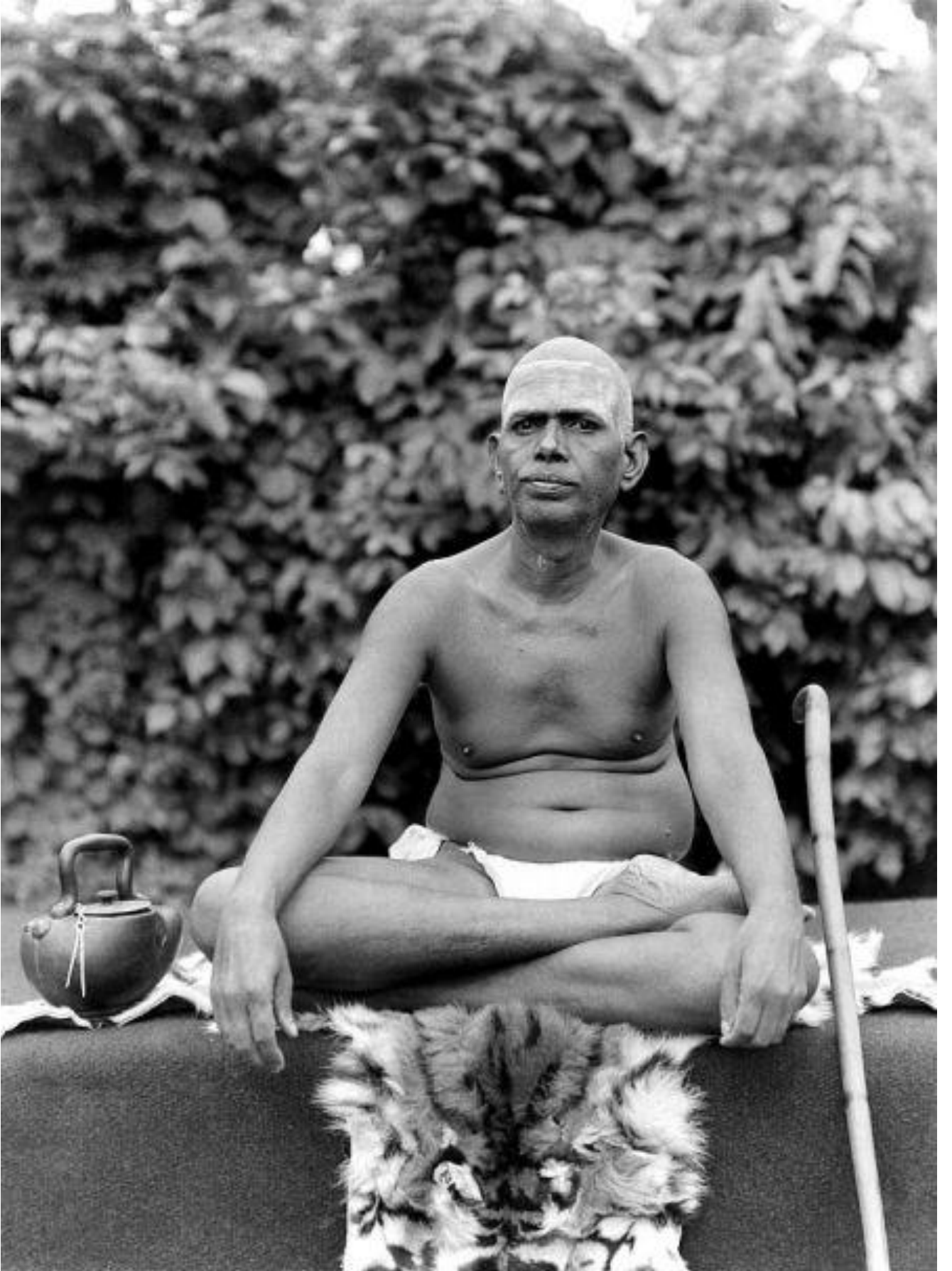
"I am the Self which is Consciousness, absolute Completeness, Deathless and Self-established, and which is other than this insentient body, limited between the top of the head and the sole of the foot, and which, beginning with the *antahkaranas* (the inner instruments such as 'mind' and 'intellect') is bounded by the covering of the skin.

— from "*Devikalottara*" vv 43 to 54

Knowledge of the identity of the self with *Brahman* is clearly revealed as soon as the 'ego' is completely destroyed without residue, together with the 'illusion' of multiplicity caused by the 'veiling' of *tamas*. Therefore, by investigation into the nature of the unattached Self, discover the Truth of your own Self, complete, perfect, self-effulgent and ever-blissful. He who is freed from the 'ego' shines eternally as the Self, like the Full Moon, radiant when delivered from the dragon's head (of eclipse). In the field of the Heart the terrible cobra of the 'ego' is coiled round the Bliss of the Self to which it denies access with the threefold hood of the *gunas*. These three fearful heads of the serpent of 'ego' are to be severed, in accordance with the scriptures, only by great courage with the mighty sword of actual experience of the Self. He who has thus destroyed the three-hooded serpent can obtain and enjoy the vast treasure of the Bliss of *Brahman*. Therefore you, too, give up the 'I-sense' in the 'ego', which appears like being and assumes that it is the 'doer', whereas it is only the reflected light of the Self. Turn inwards all the 'thought-forms' that adhere to the ego. He is an enemy of yours, so kill him with the Sword of Knowledge. He has been harming you like a thorn in your throat while eating. Give up all 'desires' in order to realize your state as the Supreme Self. Enjoy the Kingdom of the Self, be perfect, be still in the stillness of the Immutable State of *Brahman*.

"The 'ego' may in this way be killed, but if 'thought' is given to it even for a moment it revives and engages in 'activity', driving a man before it as the wind drives winter clouds. Remember that he who associates the 'I-sense' with the 'body' and its faculties is 'bound' while he who does not is "Liberated".

"'Thoughts' of sense 'objects' create a sense of differentiation and thereby cause the 'bondage' of birth and death. Therefore no quarter should be given to the 'ego', who is the enemy who has such 'thoughts'. Just as a withered lime tree puts out new leaves if watered, so the 'ego' revives through 'thoughts' of sense 'objects'. The increase of effects makes their seed or cause flourish, while the decay of effects destroys their cause also; therefore you should first destroy the effects. If 'thoughts', which are the effect, flourish, the 'ego' with its tendencies, which is the cause, also flourishes. From 'thoughts', outer 'activities' arise, and from these two together the 'tendencies' develop and create the 'bondage' to which souls are subject. In order to escape from this, 'thoughts', 'activity', and tendencies must all three be abolished. The best way of doing this is to hold firmly to the view that 'All this that appears as separate 'names' and 'forms' is *Brahman* itself.' This view must be held to at all times and places and in all states. Firm holding to this attitude reduces 'activity', and this results in a decline of 'thoughts', which in turn destroys the 'latent tendencies'. Destruction of the 'latent tendencies' is indeed "Deliverance". Therefore, develop this helpful tendency to regard everything as *Brahman*. The result will be that the frail tendencies of the 'ego' will disappear like darkness before the Sun. Just as darkness with all its dismal effects disappears before the rising Sun, so 'bondage' with all its sorrows will pass away without a trace when the Sun of *Advaitic* Experience rises. Therefore, regard all objective manifestation as *Brahman* and hold firm in a State of Peace (*Samadhi*) and Inner and Outer Beatitude (*nischala bhava*) as long as the 'bondage' due to your past destiny (karma) lasts. While doing so, always remember: 'That immovable Bliss of *Brahman* itself am I.'



At the request of the Medical College student T.N. Krishnaswami: (Dr.) on his second visit, Sri Bhagavan sat in Padmasana in front of the Mango Tree.

Vasana Kshaya and Guru's Anugraha

"VASANA KSHAYA" And Guru's "ANUGRAHA"

Introduction

'Vasanas' are an individual's store of past actions — both good and bad — and their results. Spiritual life is usually a long and sustained effort to exhaust or empty the results of past actions.

As Sri Bhagavan puts it cryptically in Tamil: "புஜித்தே தீர வேண்டும்" "*Bhujiththey Theera Vendum*," meaning: "The whole stock of such stored up actions and their results will have to be completely wiped out. And it has to be done by the same individual who accrued them in his previous births."

In *his Pappad Song*, Sri Bhagavan mentions about *nal vaasanai* or 'good actions' and their stored up good *karma*. It clearly indicates the existence of its opposite — *dhur vasanai* or bad actions and the stored up bad *karma*. Living in the proximity of a Saint means one has to exhaust not only one's *nal vasanai* but also '*dhur vasanai*'. The *Guru's "Anugraha"* or "Blessings" makes it sprout and start operating — sometimes with hurdles and obstacles. But, the same *Guru's "Anugraha"* removes them all and thus, completely frees the afflicted spiritual aspirant from all the stored up '*vasanas*'.

To help the aspiring *sadhaka* experientially understand the nuances of the whole process of how the *Guru's "Anugraha"* wipes out the *sadhaka's* stored up past actions resulting in '*vasana kshaya*', I would like to share some events from Annamalai Swami's life.

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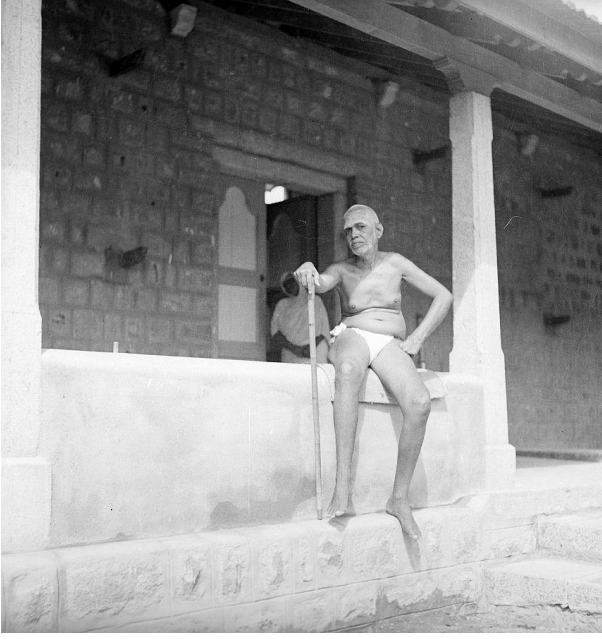




The Ashram Dining Hall and Kitchen — together — were built under the supervision of Annamalai Swami



Sri Bhagavan visits the working site, encouraging Annamalai Swami



Sri Bhagavan admiring the about-to-be completed Kitchen



Dining Hall and Kitchen completed. Sri Bhagavan blessed it by making a board "Paaka Salai" on top of the building!



"Goshala" (cow shed) construction completed by Annamalai Swami

1. "Go Inwards, holding on to the Self"

One day, in the latter half of the 1920s, Annamalai Swami asked, "Bhagavan! Give me some *upadesa*." Sri Bhagavan answered, "Go, go inwards and always hold onto the Self. Identifying with the body and the mind causes misery. Dive deep into the Heart — the Source of Being and Peace. Be established thus always in your Being."

This first *upadesa* of Sri Bhagavan to Annamalai Swami is very important. As Annamalai Swami himself later told me, "At that time, Ganesa! I did not know the significance of these words. The rest of my life is based on this very first *upadesa*. I did not know or grasp the main meaning of this Teaching. My '*vasanas*' came up and I started noticing others around Sri Bhagavan at a very early stage. They were all gossiping and I did not like that." See the power of '*vasanas*'! He felt, "Yes, Sri Bhagavan is Great. But, the people around Him are going to distract me. So, I will not stay here. Instead, I will go and do my spiritual practices elsewhere."

Without even telling Sri Bhagavan, he walked away. After nearly twenty miles, he felt very tired and hungry. He went around and begged for food in nearly two hundred houses, but nobody gave him even a morsel to eat. Finally, when he did not know whom or where to turn to, somebody asked him, "Hey, why are you suffering? Where are you coming from?" "I am coming from Tiruvannamalai." "From where in Tiruvannamalai?" came the next question. "From *Sri Ramanasramam*," Annamalai Swami replied. The person reprimanded him, "You have come here from *Sri Ramanasramam* and you are suffering? Fool! Go back! *Go back, you fool!*"

Taking this as a sign, Annamalai Swami decided to go back at once to Sri Bhagavan!

Immediately, everything started happening miraculously. A hotelier called him and gave him food. He then boarded a train to Tiruvannamalai, without a ticket. The Ticket Inspector checked all the others in the compartment, except him, for tickets. Many things like these happened on his return journey to Tiruvannamalai. Falling at Sri Bhagavan's Feet, he revealed everything and begged Him for forgiveness.

Sri Bhagavan graciously replied: "How can you escape? You have work to do here. If you try to leave without doing the jobs destined for you, where can you run away? Stay here!" Once again, Annamalai Swami fell at Sri Bhagavan's Feet. "Bhagavan, whatever you tell me, I will do. I will not leave your Presence."

The very next day, when Annamalai Swami was serving Sri Bhagavan, He turned to him, "Annamalai Swami, a wall is being built near the water tank. Go and see what work the mason is doing." He thought Sri Bhagavan wanted information. So, he went to the mason and questioned him. The mason replied, "I am building this wall." He came back and reported to Sri Bhagavan. "The mason says he is building a wall."

Sri Bhagavan sent him back five times to find out what the mason was doing. The mason got really annoyed: "Are you a fool, are you an idiot? How many times do I have to tell you that I am building this wall?" Then, Annamalai Swami woke up, "Why does Sri Bhagavan send me repeatedly? Perhaps, he wants me to supervise this work." First, he

had thought Sri Bhagavan wanted him to do some easy work. But, when he held on to Sri Bhagavan's earlier words, he understood that a cascade, an avalanche of work, was going to come. One after another, one after another, came work which was impossible for any one man to complete by his own effort. But, complete a stupendous amount of construction work Annamalai Swami certainly did! Today, people going to *Sri Ramanasramam* can still see what this one man managed to accomplish!

Work after work, physically painful work, came. He had to often stand under the hot, tropical Sun next to where lime mortar was being made. Though the intense heat the process produced was like standing in a cauldron, instead of appreciating his efforts, people around him added to his acute discomfort by constantly ridiculing, chiding and insulting him. The only relief he got was when Sri Bhagavan came to see how he was doing. Every time Sri Bhagavan came, He exhorted him, "Annamalai Swami, you are not the 'body', you are not the 'mind', you are "Pure Consciousness" — the all-pervasive "Self". Be aware of this all the time, even while you are working."

But, why did Sri Bhagavan assign all this almost impossible work to Annamalai Swami? Earlier, he had tried to run away because he did not approve of some of the people in the Ashram. But, he had to return because as Sri Bhagavan told him, "You have work to do." This was not just the 'external' construction work. It was also the 'internal' work of washing away his destiny (*prarabdha*).

Each of us creates our own destiny. And, our individual destinies can be wiped out only by each one of us. Nobody else can do it for us — however sympathetic he or she might be. Destroying our destiny is very important because our 'destiny' carries with it the '*vasanas*' which influence us. So, whenever Annamalai Swami got agitated by people criticizing him or not cooperating with him, Sri Bhagavan used to go there and forcefully remind him, "You are not the 'body', you are not the 'mind', you are "Pure Consciousness" — the all-pervasive "Self". Keep your attention on "That". Be aware of "IT" all the time, even while you are working."

Annamalai Swami later told me, "I held steadfastly on to this *upadesa* of Sri Bhagavan." Though he was affected by all the criticism, in the 'war' between his 'destiny' and Sri Bhagavan's "*Anugraha*", he held on to Sri Bhagavan's saving *upadesa*, "You are all-pervasive, you are the "Awareness". Hold on to "THAT" while you are working."



2. *Guru Anugraha* demonstrated

Sri Bhagavan has said: "*Guru's Anugraha* on the *sadhaka* and the exhaustion of his stored up past actions (*prarabdha karma*) are simultaneous and similar." ("*Vasana Kshaya* and *Guru Anugraha* are simultaneous and similar.")

When significant events that have happened in an aspirant's life are shared, it can be of immense help to newer spiritual aspirants in their spiritual *sadhana*. I venture to share certain important events in my life and spiritual *sadhana* with this only purpose in mind. Needless to say, all that which happened – and continues to happen – is by Sri Bhagavan's Grace!

There were three important stages of growth in my spiritual *sadhana*:

- i) Eleanor Pauline Noye's proximity, touch and blessings when I was very young.
- ii) Holy Varanasi, Lord Viswanatha, Mother Annapoorni, Mother Ganga and the *bhairagis*.
- iii) *Sri Ramanasramam*: Stay, Service and Surrender — the three very important ingredients to immerse within spiritually, for an aspiring spiritual *sadhaka*.

The beauty about these three milestones is that each of them was also a sluice gate through which a major load of *karma* was washed away.

1. *Eleanor Pauline Noye*

When I was two or three years old, I used to eagerly go and stand up in front of Sri Bhagavan's sofa, whether He was seated inside the Old Hall or outside. My sacred mother, Nagu, had trained me to focus my gaze on only Sri Bhagavan — without getting distracted by the presence of others. In response, Sri Bhagavan too would gaze steadily at me, the 'baby' Ganesan.

One day, Sri Bhagavan was seated in the Jubilee Hall, a big thatched shed outside the Old Hall. I went straight to Him, did *namaskar* and started gazing at Him! Noticing this, Sri Bhagavan told me, "அதோ பார்! நோயி அங்கே உக்காந்திருக்கா -- அவ மடியிலே போய் உக்காந்துக்கோ!" "Look! Noye is sitting there. Go and sit on her lap!" Hearing this, I toddled my way through the crowd of devotees and promptly plonked myself on her lap. After this, every time I went to the Jubilee Hall when Sri Bhagavan was seated there, the same drama would get re-enacted!

Though a seemingly negligible act, this was similar to the very tiny seed of a huge Banyan tree! The seed was my sitting on Noye's lap, the tree was me travelling seven times to the US for delivering talks on Sri Bhagavan and His Teachings!

When I was ten years old, Mrs. Noye had already gone back home to California. She was a poor lady, but filled with surrendered devotion to Sri Bhagavan. Twice every year, on Sri Bhagavan's *Jayanthi* and on *Maha Puja* — Mother Alagamma's death anniversary — she used to send five US dollars to Sri Bhagavan with a short letter to Him, and one dollar each with an accompanying letter to the attendant Krishnaswami and to me. All these were sent in one envelope addressed to Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan would call me and say, "Ganesa! Your Noye has sent you a gift of one dollar. Take it!" He would give it or send it to me through attendant Krishnaswami, depending on whether I was then seated in the Hall or not.

No doubt, my *prarabdha* of having to travel to the US was strengthened by my receiving money from the American lady Eleanor Pauline Noye! How *Guru* Ramana exhausted this *prarabdha* of mine is very interesting!

The famous composer and Music Director, Ilayaraja, used to visit the Ashram quite often in the 1980s and 1990s. I was fascinated by his devotion and dedication in taking time out for his spiritual aspirations in spite of being extremely busy as the topmost and most sought-after Music Director in South India. We somehow became close friends and spent a lot of time together — doing *Giri Pradhakshina*, going round the Holy Hill through the inner forest path, climbing up to the summit and meditating in Sri Bhagavan's Old Hall.

He was also keen in meeting Sages who were still physically present. Coming to know that I had got my spiritual guidance directly from Mother Krishna Bai of Kanhangad, he urged me to take him to Sages and Saints I had the fortune of meeting. Over the next few months, we went together to see Yogi Ramsuratkumar — then living in Tiruvannamalai's Sannathi Street, Mother Mayee Ma, Koti Swami and Papaji.

During one of our visits to Puravipalayam to be with Sri Koti Swami, the Saint looked pointedly at me and said, "*Koti* planes! *Koti* people! *Koti* happiness!" (*Koti* in Tamil means 'one crore', 'ten million'). None could understand what he meant. When we returned to Arunachala, we went and told Yogi Ramsuratkumar what Koti Thatha had said. He laughed aloud and replied, "Can't you see? He is saying that Ganesa has to travel abroad by plane many times to give talks on Sri Bhagavan's Teachings and that it would make the spiritual aspirants there very happy!"

Sometime back, Swami (I called Yogiji 'Swami') had urged: "Ganesa! Father says you have to go to America and give talks on Sri Bhagavan's Direct Teaching!" I silently dismissed the possibility. For in those days, I didn't even want to leave the Ashram compound. Swami continued, "This beggar was also urging you to go abroad. You are the Swami Vivekananda of our Sri Bhagavan, Ganesa! You have to go, says my Father!"

Strangely, the next day, I got a letter from Sri Bhagavan's German devotee, Charles Madigan, from Hamburg. "Ganesan! As I own and manage a Hotel here, I am unable to come there to have *sat-sangh*. Please come over here and spend a few weeks with me, sharing Sri Bhagavan's Teachings as you have heard directly from His Old Devotees. Say 'yes,' and I shall immediately send you a return Air Ticket. Please come!"

When I showed this letter to Swami, he read it, looked at me and said with all seriousness, "Please ask your German friend whether he can extend the Air Ticket from Germany to the US too!"

I did as I was guided by Swami. By the very next post, I got an affirmative reply from Charles: "Of course, I can and I will Ganesan! Please accept my invitation. I am grateful to your Swami ! Now, I am eager to have Swami's *darshan* too and I pray that this also takes place! And, why just the US! I will send you an 'Around-the-World-Ticket', which includes Germany, France, England, USA and Asian countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and Sri Lanka." Yogiji was very happy over the generosity of dear Charles!

The next challenge — that of arranging my multi-city tour in the US — was just as easily overcome. My very close friends, Joan and Mathew Greenblatt, with whom I had worked for one year at Arunachala to bring out the remarkable book, *Ramana Pictorial Biography*, were more than ready to help. There could not have been a better arrangement, for this devout couple not only hosted me and arranged for my talks in various centres, but also accompanied me throughout my tour! The couple's presence was proof that Sri Bhagavan was arranging for everything through Yogi Ramsuratkumar!

After this first trip, every year, Swami would tell me, "Ganesa! This year also, you will have to go to America and give talks!" Some American devotee would voluntarily buy me my Air Ticket — every year a different American devotee! Seven years passed thus! My *vasana* to travel to America was exhausted very smoothly and without strain for anyone, including me!

And just as easily this portion of my *prarabdha* was washed away, so too were the load of the other two — in the Powerful Flood of the *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana's *Anugraha*!

* * *

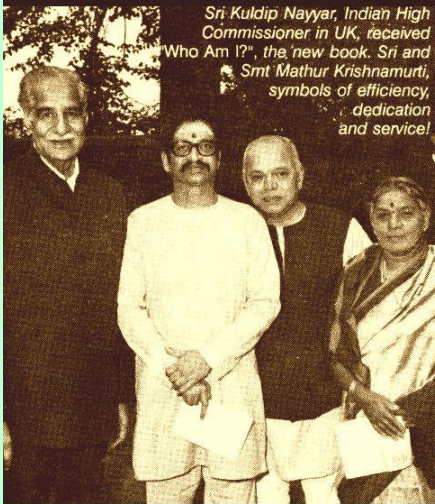
2. Holy Varanasi

In 1960, when I was employed in Bombay as a sub-editor in a newspaper, I was traumatised by the death of a near and dear one in Tiruvannamalai. Falling into a state of altered consciousness, I went about my work mechanically like a robot, not fully aware of what I was doing. One day, I got out from my room and felt I was going by tram to my office... when, after some hours, I realised I was on a train going to Varanasi! I was pleasantly shocked!

There was a compassionate and elderly man seated next to me. He was very kind to me. He seemed to have clearly understood my altered state of consciousness. He gave me food, tucked me into my berth at night, and generally made sure I was comfortable and safe, until the train reached Varanasi.

"Travels in Overseas Countries" -- with Grace and Blessings from Saints

1990 -- London, U.S.A



Sri Kuldip Nayyar, Indian High Commissioner in UK, received 'Who Am I?', the new book. Sri and Smt Mathur Krishnamurti, symbols of efficiency, dedication and service!



Alan Jacobs and Annie Elkins.

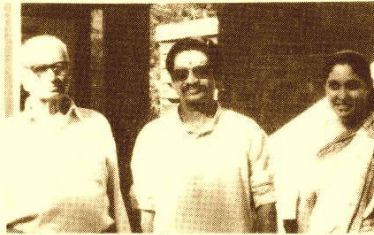


RAMANA KENDRA, LONDON: On inauguration day, Ganesan meets with Ramana devotees from France

LONDON



At Durham, where Riaz and Behroz Padamsee arranged for three talks.



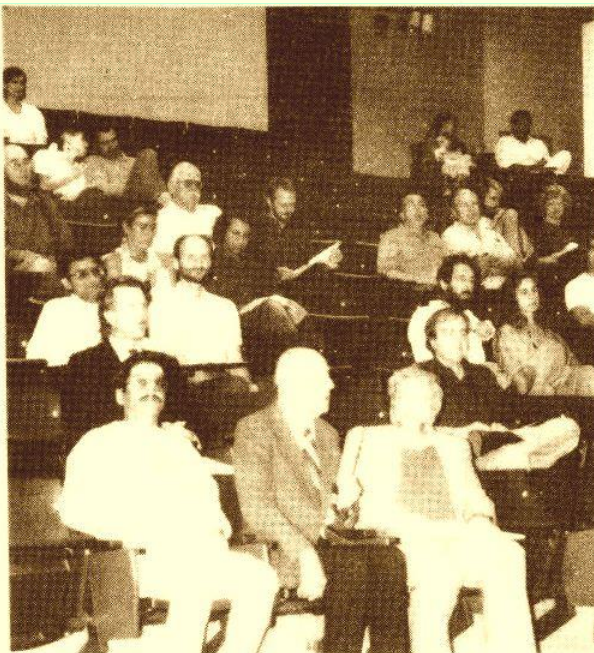
At Durham, North Carolina, ninety-year old Jehanghir Chubb who has had six meetings with Sri Bhagavan enthuses young devotees: VG and Mrs. Behroz Padamsee.

Durham, USA

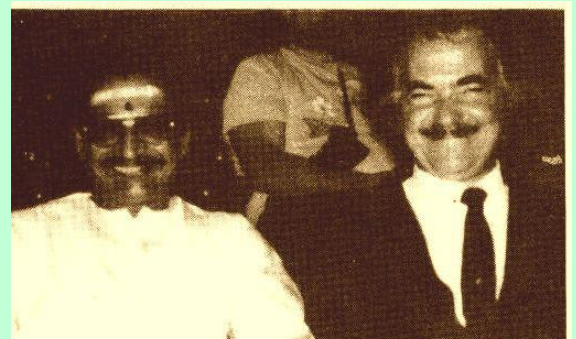
"All the travelling that I had done to share with spiritual aspirants Sri Bhagavan's 'Direct Teaching' -- in Europe, USA, Canada and elsewhere -- was done on Yogi Ramsuratkumar's commandment only."



Matthew Greenblatt, the moderator, with daughter Ramani.



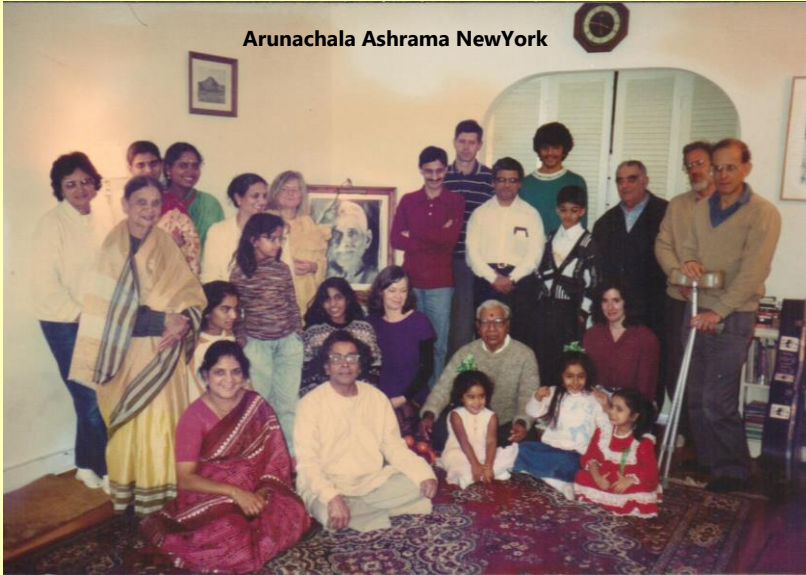
A section of the audience at the University of California program. Over 65 people, many from various parts of the country, attended.



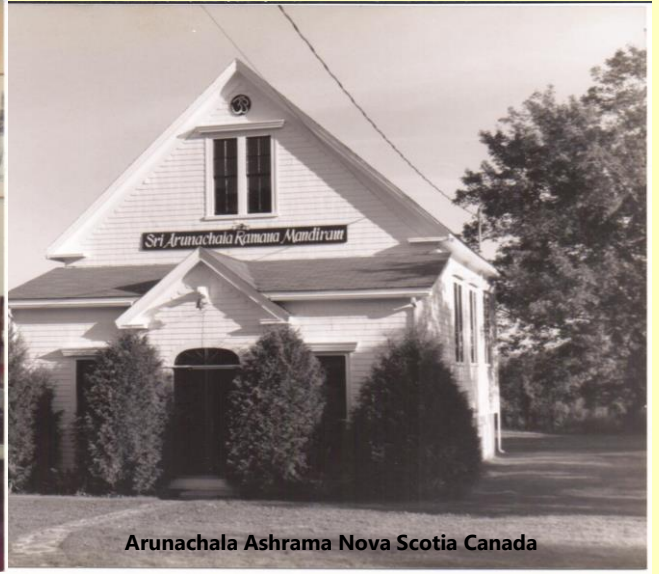
Childhood friends - Ganesan and Adam Osborne - a moment of joy!

CALIFORNIA

"Travels in Overseas Countries" -- with Grace and Blessings from Saints 1991 -- U.S.A



Arunachala Ashrama NewYork



Arunachala Ashrama Nova Scotia Canada

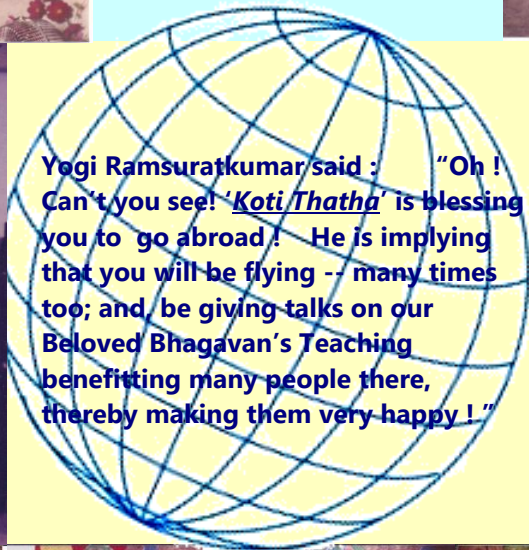


Ganesan addressing his first talk in AHAM Center, Asheboro, NC, USA

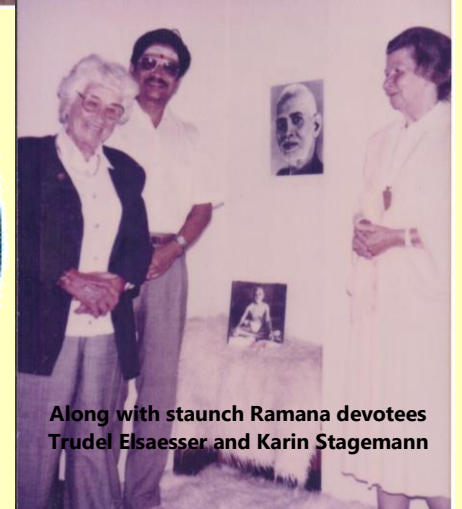
Devotees raptly listening to the talk :
'No Fire, No Food'



Lands at Hamburg Airport and stands under the protection of 'RAMA' !



Yogi Ramsuratkumar said : "Oh ! Can't you see! 'Koti/Thatha' is blessing you to go abroad ! He is implying that you will be flying -- many times too; and, be giving talks on our Beloved Bhagavan's Teaching benefitting many people there, thereby making them very happy !"



Along with staunch Ramana devotees Trudel Elsaesser and Karin Stagemann



at Boston



in Florida

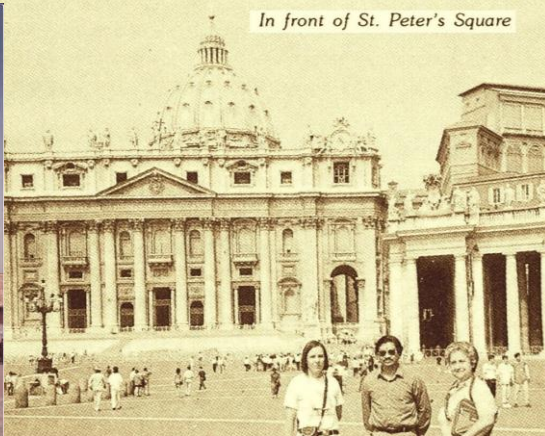


with David Lawrence and Barbara Rose

"Travels in Overseas Countries" -- with Grace and Blessings from Saints **1990-1992 -- Italy and U.S.A**



In front of the famous Dome of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome



Enthralling the visit along with hosts

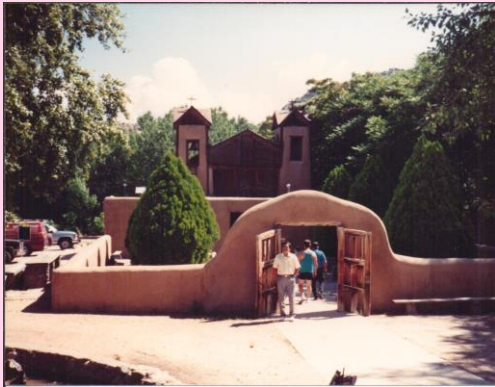


The famous Statue of the "chained St. Peter"



Feeling being blessed by the Holy Water from the 'Miracle Well' inside the underground cellar wherein St. Peter was chained and imprisoned

ITALY



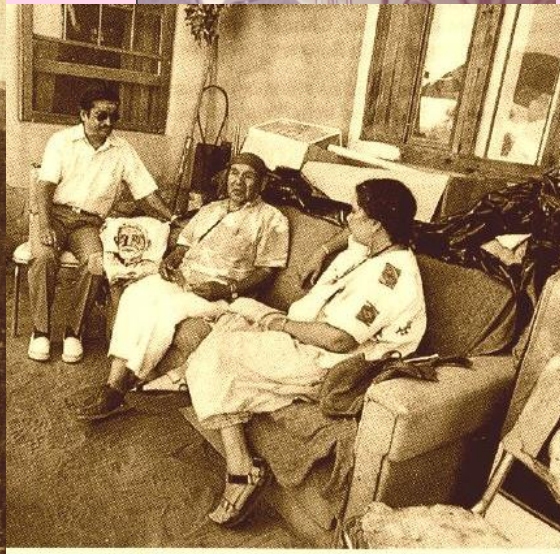
Santa Fe : the Oldest and first Church in U.S.A
Inside the Church



"Suddenly, 'Koti Swami' gave out a big laughter and said: 'Oh! I see 'Koti' (ten million) planes, 'Koti' airplanes ! ' Koti' people ! 'Koti' happiness to all ! ."



A view of the mountain near J. Krishnamurti's cottage, reminiscent of Arunachala



'HOPI' elder, Mr. Thomas Banyacya listens to Ganesan on Sri Bhagavan. Mrs. Carmen seated to his left



SAN DIEGO: with Dr. Alan Anderson and Dr. Robert Powell

"Travels in Overseas Countries" -- with Grace and Blessings from Saints 1992-1994 -- Japan, Hong Kong



NARA, Japan : The biggest bronze statue of BUDDHA



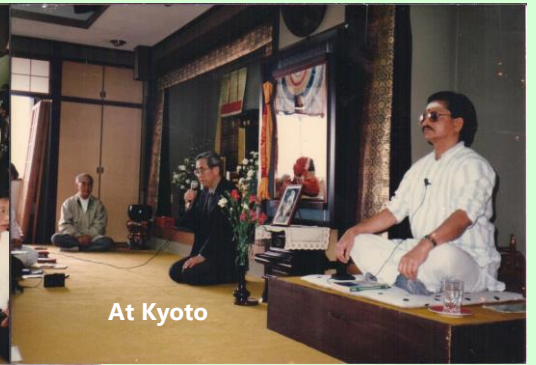
Zen Monastries



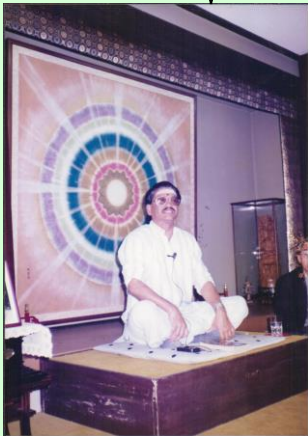
Ganesan, Anuradha along with Prof. Tadashi Yanagida (second from left - standing)



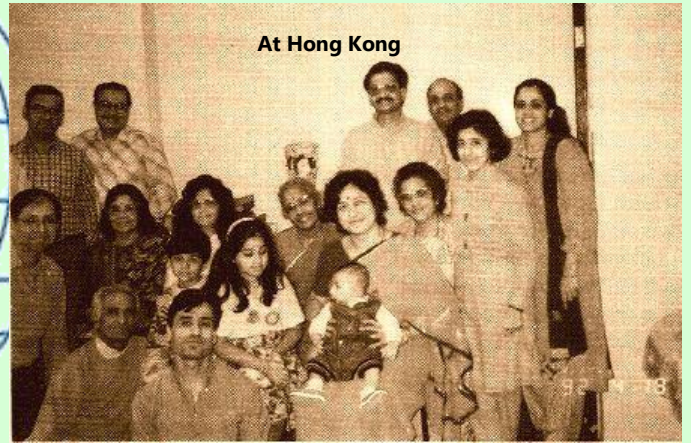
At Kyoto



At Kyoto



"Only a few years later,
Yogi Ramsuratkumar gave
me a firm direction that I
should go abroad and give
talks on Sri Bhagavan's
'Direct Teaching' of
WHO AM I?"



At Hong Kong



At Shibuya City Hall, Tokyo

Noticing that I was not carrying any baggage, at Varanasi he took me and got me a small, bare room in a *choultry*. After making sure that I was safely ensconced in it, he told me, "I have paid one day's room rent. It includes morning tea. Get up early in the morning at around five, go to *Dasaswamedha Ghat*, take a bath in the Holy Ganga, and after that go straight to Sri Viswanatha Temple and offer *puja* to Him. Lord Viswanatha will bless you and take care of you! I am going away to Gaya at two in the morning. I pray that you are well taken care of!" Saying this, he left even before I could thank him properly!

Next morning, following my elderly friend's advice, I went to the temple with a small flower basket after my bath. There was already a crowd of *bhaktas* in a queue to enter the *sanctum sanctorum*. When my turn came, an old and venerable looking priest guided me to the deity, "Bow, bow down, and putting the garland around Lord Viswanatha, embrace Him!" I did exactly as he advised.

After seven days, I came to my normal consciousness and became aware that I was lying beside a deep gutter — a small distance away from the Temple. An old policeman who happened to come that way, took me to the Government Hospital and admitted me.

While lying on the Hospital bed, I completely lost my consciousness. Before losing it, I heard the old policeman speaking to me in Hindi and enquiring repeatedly: "Child! What is your name? Where are you coming from?" I heard him and replied, "My name is Ganesan and I am coming from Arunachala." But my voice being inaudible, the policeman did not hear it and went home.

That day the Hospital staff found my condition had deteriorated so much because of purging and vomiting, that they had to call the Doctor. I was told later that he examined me and declared that I would be dead in an hour or two. Consequently, I was put in the mortuary to free my bed for another incoming patient. The next day when the policeman came, he was shocked that I was put in the mortuary because I was dying. But, perhaps, hoping that I would somehow survive, he came to where I was lying in the mortuary.

There, amidst the filthy and gloomy surroundings, he pleaded softly in my ears, "*Beta!*, Don't die. You have to live, you are young, do not give up." Then, on checking me for some sign of life, and feeling the faint ticking of my heart, he ran to the Doctor. But the Doctor was adamant. The policeman then begged some medical students who were assisting the Doctor to come and examine me. One of them, finding my Heart still beating faintly, took me back into the ward and put me on a mat on the ground. The policeman went on begging me not to die but to come back to life. After two days, I regained consciousness to the extent of being able to whisper audibly and coherently to the old policeman, the name of a devotee of Sri Bhagavan who lived in Varanasi: "Dr. S. Nath, Eye Specialist, Kashi". Relieved and happy, the policeman contacted Dr. Nath who came and took me to his house.

At Dr. Nath's house, he found out that my back had a bad wound that was septic. This was the result of some *bhairagis* branding my back to revive me when I was lying beside the gutter, before the old policeman found me and admitted me to the Hospital. After



Lord Viswanatha



Mother Annapoorni

Ganga Mata



applying some medicines on the wound, Dr. Nath sent a telegram to my father. My father immediately rushed from Arunachala to Kashi.

Both my father and Dr. Nath decided I should be taken to Chennai, then called Madras, and be given treatment there. I was still bed-ridden and in an altered state of consciousness. When they were ready to take me to the Railway Station, I refused to go without them finding and rewarding the old policeman who had saved me. Dr. Nath searched high and low for him. He enquired in every police station in Varanasi. But there was no trace of the old policeman! Who else could it be but *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana Himself!

At Madras, Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami, another staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan, examined my back and felt strongly that I should be admitted immediately for an emergency surgery, failing which I could be paralysed for life.

However, I refused, "I will be treated only by Dr. M. R. Krishnamurthy Iyer in Tiruvannamalai." I do not know what urged me to say this. My father said, "We are not on talking terms with Krishnamurthy Iyer. We haven't been in touch with him for over a decade now. How can I go and ask him to attend on you?" I replied, "I don't know." My father took me home and my mother said, "Go to Krishnamurthy Iyer." My father was reluctant. He said, "How can I possibly face him?" However, my father went, and Krishnamurthy said, "Yes, I will come, but under two conditions. When I am treating him, no one should enter the room. And you should not give me a time limit. You should also not question me on the treatment and the nature of the medicines I am going to give him."

Krishnamurthy Iyer treated me for two months. While I was lying all the time on my stomach, he applied medicines on the deep sores on my back. More importantly, during those moments, he shared with me his mystical relationship with Sri Bhagavan and Arunachala. It was very elevating and healing. I felt that more than the potency and efficacy of his medicines, it was the spiritual sharing that effected speedy healing of my wound and cured me fully. He once shared with me, "Arunachala and Sri Ramana are the same. Sri Bhagavan has left the key of Self-Enquiry in Arunachala. The *Bible* says, '*Ask, and it shall be given; knock, and it shall be opened.*' That is true literally. If you ask Arunachala, He will give you the 'key' to Self-Enquiry, which is to dive within.

Later, Krishnamurthy Iyer started going around the Hill daily. He could also be seen walking around *Sri Arunachaleswara Temple* and sometimes wandering in the streets in an ecstatic state. People in the town openly said that he had gone 'mad'. He would visit the Ashram while doing the *giripradakshina*, stand ecstatically in front of Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi* Shrine and sing songs on Sri Bhagavan and on Arunachala at the top of his voice. I would prostrate to him and he would give me a smile of recognition, but also point to Sri Bhagavan's shrine, indicating that Sri Bhagavan alone deserved the prostrations. I could feel that he was being inundated by wave after wave of mystical experiences, all the time.

During his last days, he had an extraordinary experience. He said that Lord Arunachaleshwara had informed him that the wheels of the big chariot on which the deity

is taken during festival days would break and that he should ask the temple's committee to repair it. The committee members did not pay attention to the doctor's words because they thought he was insane. However, when the chariot came near his house, it did break down. For three days, Krishnamurthy Iyer was on the terrace of his house looking at the chariot intently, unmindful of the scorching heat of the Sun. He locked the terrace door and did not come down. On the third day, for some strange reason, I had the inclination of visiting him when I was going round the Hill. His wife said, "What can we do? We have not seen him for three days. He is upstairs and we dare not even knock on the door." As his wife was talking to me, Krishnamurthy Iyer entered and queried, "Has Ganesan come?" He asked his wife to leave us alone. I prostrated before him. Despite his skin being tanned dark by the summer Sun, he was glowing with an 'inner Light'. He told me, "Ganesan! Arunachala has called me. I am leaving. I bless you. Do not swerve from this path. Arunachala will save you. Stay here." He passed away after a few days. Arunachala had absorbed him in His Light!

In my altered consciousness, I should have prayed to Lord Viswanatha, Mother Annapoorni, Ganga Mata that if I survived and rose up alive, I would pay my respects to them. Twenty years later, the compassionate *Siddhapurusha*, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, intuited my promise to Lord Viswanatha and ordered me, "Ganesa, it is your *prarabdha* to go stay in holy Kashi for a full year — not one day less, not one day more. Go!"

I reached Kashi on a Wednesday. I was welcomed in Krishnamurti Foundation India and given a cottage to stay in and Badri, a Nepali boy, to look after the cottage and me. The very next day, on blessed *Guruvaar*, dear Badri told me in a commanding voice: "Sadhu Swami! Tomorrow, I will give you tea early in the morning. After that, you must go to Lord Viswanatha's Temple. Sit there, have His *darshan* and offer your prayers from 7 to 1. Then, from 1 to 3.30 p.m. go and sit in Mother Annapoorni's Temple and pray there. After that, go to the banks of Ganga Mata, meditate there till 7 p.m. and return here before 9 p.m. I will have your dinner ready and serve it to you. Let this be your routine every day of the week. One thing more, Sadhu Swami, on Fridays you should not eat anything through the day."

Recognising that a young servant boy would never on his own order his new master, thus, I accepted his command reverentially as my *Guru's Anugraha*. All the 365 days of my stay at KFI, I meticulously attended to my *Puja* routine as dictated by Badri. My servant was my Master !

3. Sri Ramanasramam

After being treated by Dr. Krishnamurthy Iyer as an in-patient in my own house for two months, I regained my health under the tender care of my mother. The day she saw I was fully fine, she bade me to enter the Ashram with the express instruction: "Never go out of the Ashram. Stay there assisting your father in his role as its President and serve all the Old Devotees of Sri Bhagavan who reside there."

Stepping in through the Ashram's gate, the first person I saw from under the benign shade of the gnarled and ancient *illupai* tree was my beloved Arthur Osborne. He was standing on the steps, almost as if to welcome me! "Come Ganesan! We all knew you would come! Welcome! Go straight to Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi*. And pray to Sri Bhagavan only for His *Anugraha*, His Grace. Don't ask for anything else. Being the most Powerful and Compassionate, He can and will readily grant your prayers for wealth, power, position, a loving wife, children...anything! He will give them all to you but will send you away! So, be careful! Pray only for His Grace and He will shower you with It and also keep you here at His Feet in Arunachala." I was wonderstruck and overwhelmed with gratitude with how Sri Bhagavan was guiding me through Arthur Osborne to take to Spiritual Life *in toto*!

When after praying to Sri Bhagavan as advised by Osborne I reported to my father, he asked me to work under the manager of the Book Depot, Sri Sivarama Reddiar. By working under Sivarama Reddiar, I learnt, not just intellectually but by experience, that to work under a *Jnani* is the best way for a *sadhaka* to live in the World without getting lost in it. Without a doubt, Sri Bhagavan had made this arrangement, through my father the Ashram President, to ripen me spiritually.

During the day, I would work in the Book Depot and in the evening go up the Holy Hill. Returning to the Ashram before dark, I would help serve dinner and then eat along with the cooks. After that, it was time to spread my straw mat for the night, not in the Men's Guest House, but right in front of Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi* Shrine — only a thatched shed at that time. As for my pillow, it was a block of wood. That was all that the Ashram could afford to give anyone who slept in its premises — a straw mat and a block of wood. Yet, I would dare say, the sleep I had then was more refreshing than any sleep on a soft mattress or pillow, since then!

Months rolled by with me following the same routine. One day, I asked Sivarama Reddiar, "When I look at you, you seem to be an ordinary person like anyone else, Yet, you are always so calm and so poised in Silence — I feel like sitting next to you all the time. What happened to you? Tell me." He replied, "There is nothing. I am just like everyone else." I did not leave him. Day after day I pestered him, "There is something special about you. Please tell me what it is." Since he did not relent, I altered the pattern of my questioning: "Have you never had any doubt in spiritual matters?" That worked ! He disclosed, "Till 1931, I was studiously following the *taraka mantra* for twenty years and the *Shanmuki Upasana* for ten years. As a result, I experienced a 'light' all around me and also a sense of 'exhilaration'. Yet, deep within, I had a doubt about the reality of that state. In 1934, I reverentially placed this doubt of mine before Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan was gracious enough to reply, "Yes, that is the state of '*nididhyasana*'. You heard the *guru* instruct you, which is '*sravana*'. You assimilated his teaching, which is '*manana*' and now, you experience it, which is '*nididhyasana*'. But, this is still on the level of '*triputi*', the threefold illusion of seer, seen and seeing. You have to go beyond that and find out who is the 'I' that experiences the 'light' and 'exhilaration'. 'Light' and 'exhilaration' exist to someone. Find out who that is." Sivarama Reddiar continued, "Even before Sri Bhagavan explained this to me, I knew about '*triputi*' and the need to transcend it — but only intellectually.



Front Entrance of Sri Ramanasramam

Only in the presence of the *Sat-Guru* did I grasp it as a practical Reality, as a True, Living Experience. Like a downpour of cooling Grace, the experience of 'I' transcending the '*triputi*' descended on me and that powerful and supreme state of Silence enveloped me. That was my final initiation. That state of Bliss continues without a gap." For thirty years from 1934, he worked in the Book Depot as a manager with the limited work of packing and selling which he used to do himself. No ordinary candle, he lived in that inner state of 'light' all the time. I assisted him for four happy years. For me, it was a deep and profound experience to work closely with a person who was living the Ultimate Reality, consciously, all the time. In that presence, I felt an even greater sense of reverence towards Sivarama Reddiar who was so profusely blessed by Sri Bhagavan.

When I came to the Ashram in 1960, I had taken three vows of my own accord. I thought they were essential for leading a spiritual life: "I will not touch money; I will not sign my name; I will not look at women." Though visitors used to come very rarely, if a woman or a family came to buy books, I would get up and go away. To close the accounts in the evening, I would assist Reddiar in writing the accounts, but he had to count the cash as I wouldn't touch it. Moreover, when it came to signing invoices or receipts, I would fill in the details but give them to him to sign. What I didn't know was that he was noticing all this. Realized people do not jump to conclusions and do not judge others — he observed me quietly for three or four months. He used to sleep under a thatched shed in front of the old Book Depot. One night, he called me around nine, "Ganesu, come here." He used to have terrible asthma attacks. Whenever he had one, he would call me and I would rush to him to help him in any small way I could — giving him hot-water-bag fomentation, fanning him, etc. I thought he was having another such attack and hurried to his side. "Sit down next to me," he told me. "I have been observing you all these months. You do not touch money, you do not sign in any invoice and whenever a woman of any age comes in to the Book Depot, you run away. What is the matter with you?"

I told him about the three vows I had taken to help me stay on the spiritual path. "Oh, that is good," he replied, "But you have practiced it enough. Now, ponder over your actions. What is wrong with money? Touching money is not a sin, attachment to money is." He didn't say it as an argument or as an instruction. He was sharing from the Heart and it naturally went straight into mine. He continued, "What is wrong in signing a name? Were you born with the name? Your parents gave you the name. You should not be attached to the 'body'. By giving up the 'name' you have not given up your attachment to the 'body'. Give up the idea 'I-am-the-body'. For you Ganesu, Sri Bhagavan Himself gave you the 'name'. See, how holy that 'name' is." From that moment onwards, I stuck to my name. Regarding my third vow, Reddiar said, "Are you aware that when you ignore 'women', you are insulting the Creator? It is the Higher Power that has created 'male' and 'female' forms — in humans, animals, birds, other creatures, trees, plants and why, even rocks. By not giving the importance due to the 'female' aspect, you are denying one entire half of the Principle of Creation. Is this right? Is this necessary? To transcend this obstacle, love all 'women' unconditionally as 'Mothers'. The more deeply you love them, the greater will be the devotion that wells up in you for the Creator. Ignoring one half of the 'work' of the Creator will by itself become a very great impediment in your spiritual practice and progress." Since then, I started truly loving all 'women' as my own 'Mothers', as my own 'sisters'.

When I was staying within the premises of the Ashram, from nine to half past eleven at night I used to walk alone around the Holy Hill. I would then get up around half past three, sweep around the *Samadhi* with a broom, then the Old Hall after which I would go to the kitchen. The gracious and old Raja Iyer would be already there, preparing to make *idlis*. He used to give me a couple of them to eat along with a cup of milk to drink. Then, after my morning exercises, I would take my bath and pluck flowers from the flower garden behind the Old Hall to offer at Sri Bhagavan's and the Mother's Shrines. Now it would be time for the milk-offering *puja* at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine. As soon as that was over, ring the bell for breakfast at seven, serve ghee or oil to the rows of people sitting to eat in the Old Dining Hall. Eight o' clock would find me seated in front of the typewriter inside the office — clearing the pending correspondence work or typing old manuscripts for printing a book. Nine to eleven, I would keep myself busy attending to the letters that had arrived that day and sending the appropriate response. My teacher, *Pundit* T. K. Sundaresa Iyer, used to guide me in drafting replies to seekers who wrote seeking spiritual clarifications. Then, at half past eleven, it was time to ring the bell for lunch and go inside to pour a generous spoon of ghee on the banana leaf plates of those who were sitting for their lunch.

There were only eight residents then, including a servant named 'Bheeman', and two maid-servants who came from town. No visitors! Only one cook, assisted by two lady-cooks — Sankaramma and Subbulakshmi Amma. (Until they were joined later by Sampoorana Amma). After serving them, I would eat along with the cooks. No siesta for me in those days! Though one of the old devotees, Sama Thatha, who ignored my protestations — probably because he was stone deaf – and forcefully make me lie down and close my eyes!

Evening, by five, the letters I had typed earlier that day, had to be posted. With that, my office duty was over for the day and I was free to climb the Holy Hill and meditate, seated on my favourite rock. Half past seven, the bell for dinner, help serve dinner and the curtains would come down on another day at *Sri Ramanasramam*. The above was my austere daily routine!

Once in a regular while, at the end of the day, the Ashram cashier would — for fun — shake the cash box and put it upside down to indicate it was empty and not even a penny in donation had come.

On one such day, I remembered what my friend in Bombay had told me when I was working there for a newspaper: A simple and legal way to get donations was to bring out a Souvenir and collect advertisements for it from businesses and companies. That way, no individual would be straining his finances by giving donations to a good cause. It was for me, a *Eureka* moment!

The Mountain Path

In 1956-58, after taking my B.A. degree, I was in the Ashram for two years. Though my father wanted me to pursue higher studies, I stoutly refused as we could ill afford the expense. All my brothers and sisters were in the colleges and schools and my father was

struggling to make both ends meet. I decided to seek some employment and thus support my family rather than be another burden on it. The two years I spent in the Ashram were memorable, indeed!

Though I was not spiritually inclined then and had no thought of settling down to a seeker's life, both Major Chadwick and Mr. Arthur Osborne, independently and at different times, told me that as indicated in my horoscope, I would be living in the Ashram as a serious seeker, dedicated to matters spiritual. During this period, I saw how the Ashram was suffering from paucity of funds.

However, thanks to Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan, I joined for M.A. Philosophy, since during his visit to the Ashram, he pleaded with me to join the course as from that year — for the first time in an University — Sri Bhagavan's philosophy had been admitted as an academic course in the Post Graduate course in Philosophy. "If you join, I would feel honoured that Sri Bhagavan had approved of my tireless efforts!". A new vista opened in my life by the study of eastern and western philosophies. Post-graduation completed, I was thrust into a Bank job, where I completely confined. Then, through Professor K. Swaminathan I got a post as sub-editor in a daily newspaper in Bombay. I liked the work. On a visit to my colleague's apartment in Colaba, he explained to me how a magazine could fetch money through advertisements. At that time, I heard him and promptly forgot about it.

I soon found that life in Bombay was far from soul-satisfying. I was unhappy. Due to various causes and circumstances, I returned for good to the Ashram, with the full consent of my parents, to serve Sri Bhagavan's devotees, particularly the older ones. In course of time, not surprisingly, my relatives were upset that, while my sisters and brothers were getting married, I was not. My father, on the other hand, was happy with my work at the Ashram as I plunged myself whole-heartedly into Sri Bhagavan's *seva* (service).

In addition, I enjoyed the blissful and serene company of Muruganar, Major Chadwick, A. Devaraja Mudaliar, Arthur Osborne, S.S. Cohen, Munagala Venkataramaiah, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, Sadhu Om, Viswanatha Swami, Kunju Swami, N. Balarama Reddiar and others.

In 1963, there was a crisis in the Ashram's finances. It struck me one day that I probably could do something tangible to help save the Ashram from this dire situation. The long-forgotten conversation I had had with my friend in Colaba at Bombay came to mind. Yes! That was it! I could help the Ashram by bringing out a yearly magazine! At that time, I was also helping with replying to the letters and queries of devotees from far and near. Many of them were keen on knowing about whether the Ashram was being run as of old and if so, what its activities were. T. K. Sundaresa Iyer and L. P. Koppikar were in charge of the correspondence section, and I was being trained by them. I used to see the draft of Arthur Osborne's replies to letters demanding spiritual clarifications. I used to be spellbound by his brief and aptly worded replies. Yes! Here was the solution! I resolved to prepare a yearly bulletin that would report the happenings at the Ashram, print excerpts from letters of devotees and the Ashram's replies, have the material polished by Arthur

Osborne, and carry in it as many advertisements as possible, thus helping both the Ashram and devotees across India and the rest of the World.

Rushing excitedly to Osborne's house, I explained to him this idea of a yearly bulletin and how it could financially help the Ashram while simultaneously keep devotees informed about the present working of the Ashram. I sought his blessings and active cooperation. He listened with keen attention. When I finished, he held my hands and shed tears of joy! I had never seen him so deeply moved.

"Ganesan! You do not know what a blessing you have brought me today. A few weeks back, I had a dream in which Sri Bhagavan appeared. I knelt before Him. He had a few copies of a magazine which He handed over to me, saying, 'Take it'. I understood the message to mean that He wanted me to be an Editor! I had to obey my Master's wish. But, where would I fit in, in India? My elder brother is the reputed Editor of the U.K. magazine, *The Economist*. Was I to seek employment under him, I wondered. I was pained at the thought for I would even leave Arunachala if that was Sri Bhagavan's command. Now, I know what Sri Bhagavan meant. What a joy!"

He continued with great vigour, "You know, Ganesan! During the lifetime of Sri Bhagavan and even afterwards, I was asked by many times by many devotees to start and run a journal for the Ashram. I refused. Sri Bhagavan's Teaching is meant only for practice, I felt. What is there to write about, that too in a journal that would be published regularly? I knew I disappointed my close friends like Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami and D. S. Sastri. But I stood firm. Now, Sri Bhagavan has commanded me to spread His Teaching of *Atma Vichara*, through the medium of this journal which we are going to start!"

I was thrilled by his enthusiasm and exchanged views on the plans for the journal. It was agreed then that it would be published as a yearly and would have: (i) an Editorial, (ii) important articles based only on the practical side of *sadhana*, (iii) Book Reviews, (iv) Letters to the Editor and (v) an Ashram Bulletin, covering the happenings at the Ashram. He agreed to be its sole Editor. He advised me to consult Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami. When I met him at Madras, Dr. T. N. K. was overjoyed, but pleaded that it should not be a yearly but a monthly journal. Mr. Osborne felt that a monthly would involve too much work and there might not be enough material of high quality. He added that it would interfere with our regular *sadhana*. I went back to Madras again, and with Dr. T. N. K.'s consent it was decided that the journal should be a quarterly. He also gave a cheque for Rs.100, to start it off. This was our first Life Subscription! It was the beginning of September 1963.

Then, I sought the counsel of D. S. Sastri, who happened to come to the Ashram at that time. Mr. Sastri was firm that I should be the Publisher and Owner of the journal, but I was equally firm that it should be an Ashram Journal and that its President, Sri. T. N. Venkataraman, should be the journal's Publisher. After prolonged persuasion by Mr. Sastri, I however, agreed to be its Managing Editor.

Mr. Arthur Osborne was not only a steady, strenuous worker, but very quick and precise. He collected the articles in a remarkably short time. There was another big question mark. How should we name the journal? Again, it was Mr. Osborne, who came out with the

brilliant title *The Mountain Path* — the *Mountain* standing for Arunachala and *Path* for the right-royal path of Sri Bhagavan's *Vichara Marga*!

The next item to be decided was the subscription fee. But, as luck, or rather, Grace would have it, the very next day, a money order of Rs. 5/- arrived from one Mr. H. R. Chadha of Calcutta, whom we hardly knew. In the money order coupon it was written: "The annual subscription for the Ashram journal. More details follow in my letter". Yes! Sri Bhagavan again had decided what the annual subscription should be. We were happy. The letter arrived and it read: "I had lost touch with the Ashram. Sri Bhagavan, whom I met in the later thirties, is my *Guru*. He still is my all! The other day, He appeared to me in the dream, showed me a Journal and I saw clearly Rs. 5/- written on the cover. I take it that there is an Ashram Journal. Please enrol me as a subscriber". The first annual subscriber for yet to be printed journal was Mr. Chadha!

I did not know how to collect advertisements. Before printing the rate-cards, I had sent letters of request for a few. Sri M. A. Chidambaram, the reputed industrialist and philanthropist, was the first to respond with Rs. 250!

I started my hunt for advertisements in Madras. I used to meet many businessmen — big and small — and beg them for advertisements. For days I would walk the streets of Madras. Some received me with happiness, but many hurt and humiliated me. But, I never gave up. Finally, I managed to collect twenty-three pages of advertisements for the first issue. I thought that that was the end of it! But, no! At Jupiter Press, where the journal was being printed, I was told that one more advertisement was needed for completing the last forme ('forme' is the technical term for printing eight pages). Just then, Sri Framji Dorabji, the Proprietor of Wellington Talkies and an Old Devotee, who had already given an advertisement for his Talkies, came to the press with the block for an advertisement from AVM Studio, just in time to complete that forme!

The Cover Page was designed by Sri Gopi, who had served in the 1940s at the Ashram during Sri Bhagavan's *Jayanthi*. He was working at *Sunday Times* under the leadership of M.S. Kamath. The very first design drawn by him, and approved by Mr. Osborne, featured Arunachala Hill and the temple. It was liked by all.

The printing of the journal at the Press was itself a great excitement for me. The press workers were surprised to see me standing next to them from seven in the morning till seven in the evening for nearly a fortnight. When the first batch of copies of the first issue — dated January 1964 — were printed, I rushed to the Ashram with a few copies. Arthur Osborne refused to even look at them before they were placed at the *Samadhi* of the Master! At a simple function, Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan released the first copy. When I wanted Arthur Osborne to preside, he said, "There is no need for anyone to preside, since Sri Bhagavan is ever here as the Presiding Presence!"

The wide circulation of *The Mountain Path* under the Editorship of Arthur Osborne, started bringing in a lot of devotees from all over the World to the Ashram. The journal was now accepted as one of the best spiritual journals in the World. Many young spiritual aspirants from the West flocked to the Ashram in the 1970s. I had the privilege of

attending to them, taking care of their stay, guiding them around and up the Holy Hill, and in general, helping them experience the depth, beauty and Truth behind Sri Bhagavan's Direct Teaching of *Atma Vichara*.

One couple from America — Charles Reeder and Anne Reeder — took to Sri Bhagavan's Teaching very deeply. Hence, I was interested in them, as well. Mrs. Reeder, being a good singer, wanted me to teach her the song *Ramana Sat-Guru* from '*Ramana Stuti Panchakam*'. Only too happy to teach her how to sing it, I used to sit with her in the Hall in front of Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi* Shrine, every day after lunch.

Sadly, people around started criticizing me for moving so closely with "a married, American woman". This criticism was not as innocuous as it looks now. But then, in the 1970s, it was a big scandal. Hearing of this, my father, the Ashram President, called me and reprimanded roundly.

Being young and immature, both in matters spiritual and Worldly, I got very upset. By then, I had studied and was practising Sri Bhagavan's Teaching single-mindedly. Resolving to follow it on my own as a wandering mendicant, I threw away my clothes and wearing only a towel around my waist, I started walking towards Vellore without even going and prostrating at Sri Bhagavan's Sacred Shrine.

When I had walked about fifteen miles, somewhere near Polur, a deep depression took over me. Feeling betrayed by Arunachala, I looked up with a heavy Heart. Wonder of wonders! The silhouette of the Holy Hill suddenly appeared before me! I cried with tears in my eyes: "Oh, Lord! Is this Your Grace?" The soothing Grace of Arunachala then descended on me!

Almost immediately, a taxi came from behind and stopped right in front of me, obstructing me from going forward. Its doors opened and out stepped Hugo Maier, Rajagopala Iyer and Santhanam Iyengar! Rajagopala Iyer and Santhanam Iyengar were then the Ashram cashiers and loved me deeply! Holding my hand they said, "Is it fair that you desert us old people and go away from the Ashram?" Hugo Maier held the other hand and asked me, "Did you take permission from Sri Bhagavan before leaving?" I felt remorse and sorrow for not having gone to Sri Bhagavan's *Samadhi* Shrine and taking His consent for my act! Santhanam Iyengar embraced me and said, "Come with us! Report to Sri Bhagavan! If he permits, we will bring you back to this very spot and leave you!"

I was deeply moved! The three of them then pushed me into the taxi and took me straight to Sri Bhagavan's shrine. While they stood behind me, I prostrated and appealed, "Bhagavan! I have been repeatedly insulted, ridiculed and slighted by people here for no fault of mine! How can I then do *sadhana* here? Oh, Bhagavan! Give me permission to go away!"

I turned to the three who were waiting behind me, embraced them and exclaimed, "No! Sri Bhagavan not only refused to give me permission, but also said, 'You have work to do here; how can you and where can you run away? Did you not give an assurance that you would render service all your life, here, at my Abode in Arunachala, if you were saved from the drainage ditch in Varanasi? Stay here!'"

And so, here I still am, at the Holy Feet of Arunachala. Eighty-seven years old and still rendering service to *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana!

In 1994, I felt the load of work was too heavy and resigned from all activities — editing the journal, bringing out books, attending on the visitors, etc. I felt it more like a positive step forward than a negation of responsibility. And so, after thirty years of service to the Ashram and being very closely associated with *The Mountain Path*, that *prarabdha* too was wiped out by Sri Bhagavan's *Anugraha*. A small announcement in the journal I had helped start and nurture was the only sign of it:

"After many decades of dedicated service to the Ashram - especially in the Publications Section - V. Ganesan retires in 1994 from all the official positions that he has been holding hitherto at Sri Ramanasramam. He will, however, continue to be available between 8 and 11 in the morning for seekers to meet him and have spiritual discussions with him. He will also continue to give talks on Sri Maharshi and His Teachings whenever invited by devotees."

I was now available to devotees at the upstairs room over the Ashram office for *Sat-Sangh*. I also dedicated myself to bringing Old Devotees who were living away from Arunachala to live inside the Ashram, attended on them, took care of their health and other needs till their last moments, and then, carried their bodies to the cremation ground after they had been "Absorbed in Arunachala".

The years from 1960 to 1994, my staying in the Ashram, in dedicated service of this hallowed institution and surrender to my Master, *Sat-Guru* Ramana, I recognise now as the *Anugraha* needed for the exhaustion of my stored up *Prarabdha Karma*! I am very blessed and grateful to have been associated with the growth of the Institution through the collection of funds, the construction of its various buildings, the bringing out of *The Mountain Path* and many manuscripts as books. The latter of these have helped spread Sri Bhagavan's Teaching and consequently brought to the Ashram many devotees from all parts of the World.

Still, what I consider the most singular act of Sri Bhagavan's Grace, is making me instrumental — through Mother Krishna Bai's 'command' — in bringing back nearly forty to fifty Old Devotees from different parts of India to stay in the Ashram. Not being able to bear the absence of their Master's physical Presence after He dropped His Body, they had left the Ashram and were scattered across the country. That I could take care of each of them, as a devotee of Sri Bhagavan's devotee, by giving them a room, an attendant, medical attention whenever needed, and finally, carry them on their final journey when they had dropped their bodies, is for me more than any other blessing I can envisage.

G. Ramaswamy Pillai, who had just then completed 101 years, was the last of the Old Devotees staying in the Ashram to pass away. After interring his body in a tomb in the Ashram premises, I took bath and returned to my upstairs room. It was January 1995. As soon as I unlocked my room to enter, I heard Sri Bhagavan whisper in my ear, not once but three times, in English, "*Hand over the key. And, walk out!*".

When Sri Bhagavan released me from the Ashram, He also instructed me through the *Siddhapurusha* Yogi Ramsuratkumar to go away from the Ashram and live in my residence, '*Ananda Ramana*'. Yogi Ramsuratkumar categorically commanded me: "Ganesa! You have done enough service, spoken all over the World on Sri Bhagavan and His Teachings and served His devotees. Now, go to '*Ananda Ramana*' and practise His Teaching of *Atma Vichara* by diving within all the time and abiding in Inner Silence. I bless you!"

I did as was commanded. The Ashram President took very good care of me — even though I was not serving the Institution — by providing me food and employing a servant to take care of me at '*Ananda Ramana*'. A truly magnanimous gesture on his part! Sri Bhagavan's *Anugraha* continued/continues to rain on me even after I left the Ashram!

It was the year 2001! The fateful year when Sri Yogiji chose to drop the body. That night, Sri Yogiji's health was in a very critical condition. Apart from the Doctors who occasionally visited and helped him, it was only Devaki Ma who was permitted to go into his room. Though deeply upset seeing my beloved Swamiji with so many tubes all over his body, I requested Devaki Ma to get permission from Swami for me to sit there and meditate. Even in that critical stage of being unable to even open his eyes, Yogiji gave specific instructions for me through Devaki Ma: "Let Ganesha go to '*Ananda Ramana*' and meditate there. Let him not go anywhere else. He has to put Sri Bhagavan's Direct Teaching of *Atma Vichara* into practice, all the time! This Beggar blesses him and assures him that this Beggar will always be with him! Ask him now to go to '*Ananda Ramana*'." This happened at half past 12 at night. So, I left for '*Ananda Ramana*' with a heavy Heart. At 3.30 a.m. I got the news of Sri Yogi Ramsuratkumar having attained *Maha Samadhi*.

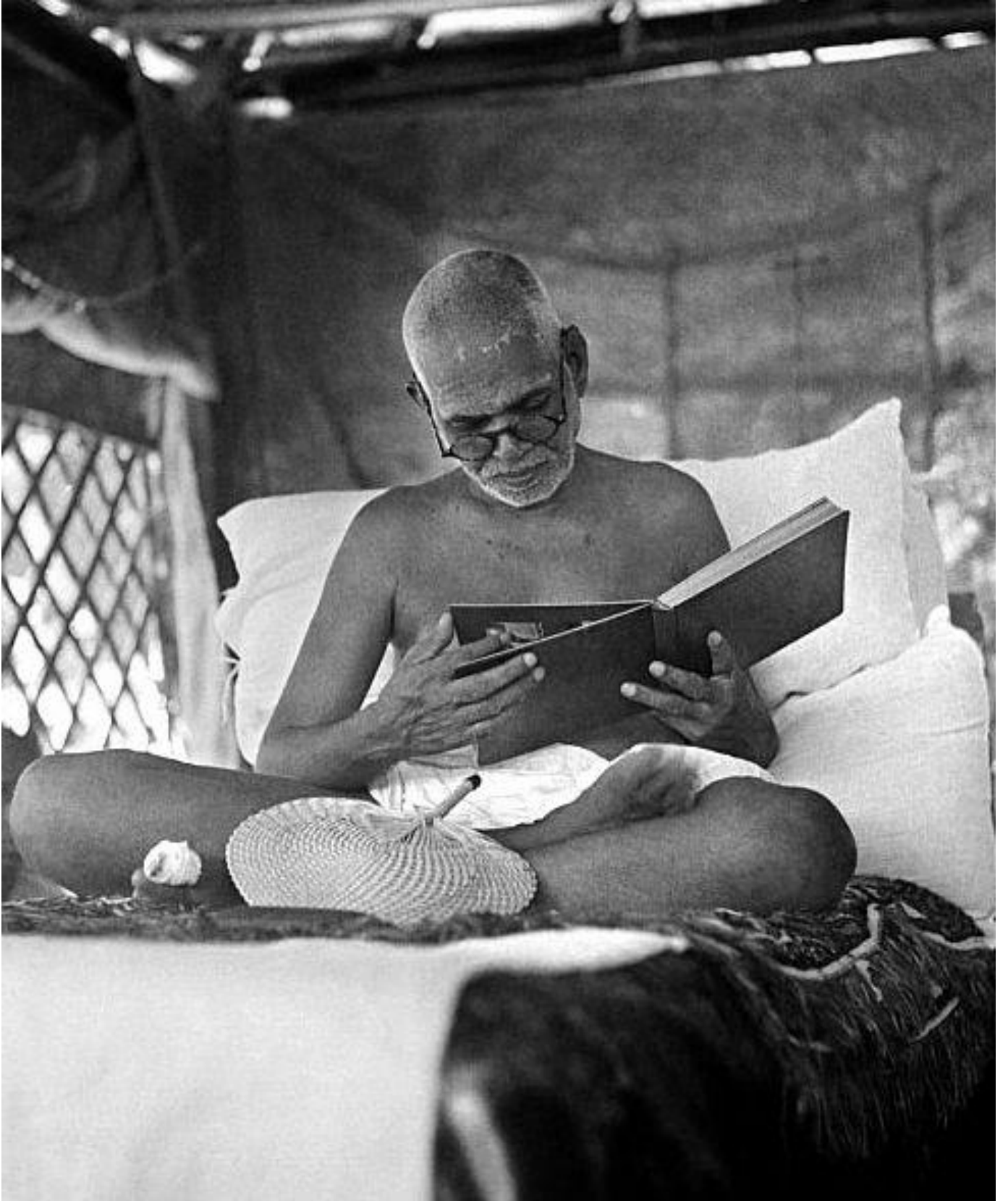
In 2020, my elder brother Sundaram, the Ashram President, passed away. My younger brother Mani and I were joyous to seat Dr. Anand, Sundaram's eldest son, as the next President in accordance with the specific instructions of Sri Bhagavan's "WILL". Some devotees urged me to help the new President in the management. I went to Sri Bhagavan's Sacred *Samadhi* Shrine and reported it to Sri Bhagavan. He blessed me with specific indications, to mean: "*Do not interfere in Ashram affairs, any further!*"

In 2021, I had two bad falls due to my sodium level going down drastically. The fracture I suffered, needed a major hip surgery to set it right. Though bedridden for a long time, I have started walking slowly now. Staunch *Ramana bhaktas* like Anu Ma, Nochur Ramana, Dr. Anand, Venkatesan, Sudha, Paramaguru, Sadashiv, Ananda Rao, Ravi Gupta, Prasanna, Sunil Valluri and Mouli, continue to take very good care of me.

The 'mind' dives within and there is Perennial Peace! Staying at home, within the premises of '*Ananda Ramana*,' I now abide in *Ramanananda*, the Bliss of Sri Ramana! It is all *Guru Anugraha*!

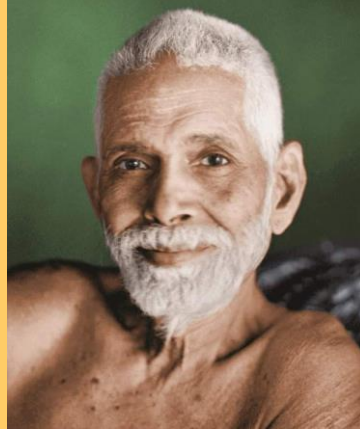
Guru is Anugraha!

Anugraha is the Greatest Spiritual Power!



Every time Dr.T.N.Krishnaswami brought his Lyco Camera, he would complete taking more than 10 rolls of photos (each roll will take 8 photos). On his return to Madras, he himself would develop them, and bring them arranged in a Photo Album . "Sri Bhagavan would keenly look at each photo in the Album, very absorbedly," said Dr.T.N.Krishnaswami.

***MANGALAM, SADHA SARVAM MANGALAM -
AUSPICIOUSNESS, ALWAYS AND IN ALL WAYS, AUSPICIOUSNESS!***



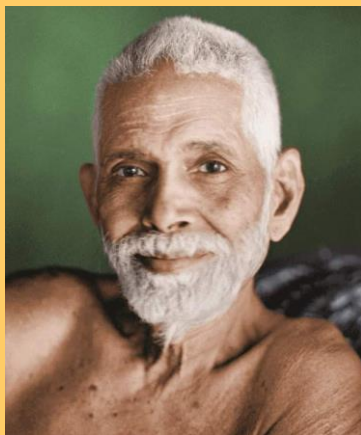
The 80th birthday celebrations of V. Ganesan took place in the Ashram with a simple religious ceremony on 14th October 2015, in the presence of his elder brother, the then Ashram President V. Sundara Ramanan and his wife Sushila Ramanan. It took place in the Ashram *Veda Patasala* - under the able management of Smt. Anuradha.

Ganesan's younger brother, V. Subramanian, his wife, Ramani, and other close relatives also actively participated.

Was this not Sri Bhagavan's subtle way of appreciation of V. Ganesan's fifty six years of dedicated service to Sri Ramanasramam since 1960? From the age of twenty four? Perhaps. But one thing is certain: none of it could have happened without Sri Bhagavan's Grace.



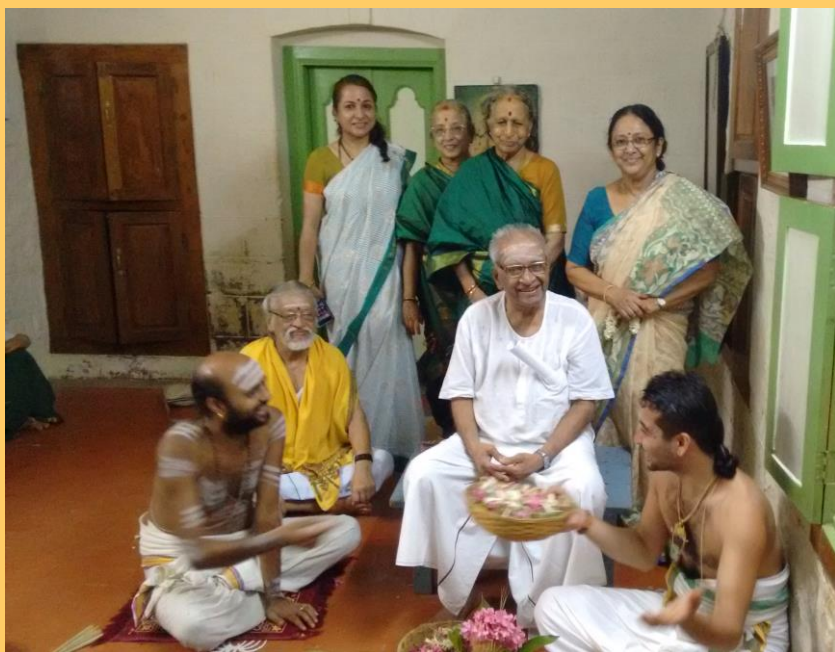
MANGALAM, SADHA SARVAM MANGALAM - AUSPICIOUSNESS, ALWAYS AND IN ALL WAYS, AUSPICIOUSNESS!



V. Ganesan's 80th Birthday : Celebrating 56 years of GURU SEVA



The Ashram's Chief Priest, Senthilnatha Ghanapatigal - pouring the sanctified water on Ganesan as abishekam.

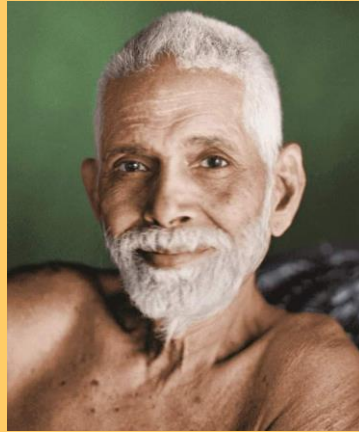


V. Subramanian, V. Sundara Ramanan and all close relatives participating in the ceremony with affectionate jubilation.



Smt. Anuradha, the then Manager of the Veda Patasala

***MANGALAM, SADHA SARVAM MANGALAM -
AUSPICIOUSNESS, ALWAYS AND IN ALL WAYS, AUSPICIOUSNESS!***



***Dr. Anand
The Fourth Generation Ashram President***



***V. Ganesan and V. Subramanian honouring Dr. Anand on his
succession as President of Sri Ramanasramam, with a garland.***

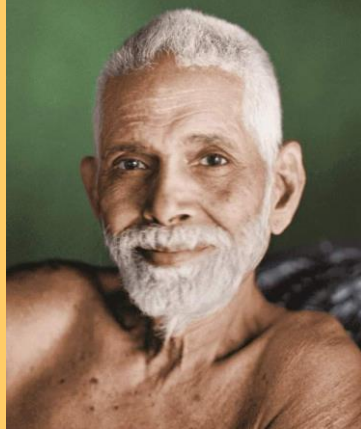


***The official document conferring the Presidentship on
Dr. Anand being accepted by him, in Sri Bhagavan's
Sacred Shrine with V. Ganesan joyously looking on.***



***Dr. Anand being escorted to Ashram Office before being
seated on the Chair of the Ashram President.***

MANGALAM, SADHA SARVAM MANGALAM - AUSPICIOUSNESS, ALWAYS AND IN ALL WAYS, AUSPICIOUSNESS!



Sri Bhagavan's legal "WILL" - referred to on page *iii* - specified that the management of 'Sri Ramanasramam' should be vested only with the family members, especially, with the eldest male member of every generation.

During Sri Bhagavan's lifetime, His younger brother, Niranjanananda Swami was the sole *Sarvadhikari* of the Ashram. After him, his son T. N. Venkataraman became the President of the Ashram. He was followed by his eldest son V. Sundara Ramanan, as the next President.

After his demise in 2020 his eldest son, Dr. Anand, took over as the President on 17th June 2020. A momentous event, it took place in the presence of Sri Bhagavan's devotees, including Sundara Ramanan's two younger brothers, V. Ganesan and V. Subramanian, who joyously ushered Dr. Anand to this hallowed but demanding position.

Thus, the commandment of our Beloved Master, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is being diligently and religiously carried out, in accordance to His "WILL" and by His Grace, from generation to generation.



Appendices

Ribhu Gita (Chapter 26)

One of Sri Bhagavan's favourite traditional spiritual works was the Ribhu Gita. The Ribhu Gita forms the sixth section of the Sanskrit work known as *Siva Rahasya*. It is the teachings of Lord Siva in Mount Kailas to His devotee Ribhu, from whom the Gita derives its name.

Sri Bhagavan often referred to the Ribhu Gita in his talks with devotees and seekers, and he is reported to have said that if one repeatedly read Chapter 26 of the Ribhu Gita one could pass spontaneously into *Samadhi*, or the natural state of Self-realisation.

Sri Bhagavan's first attendant, Palaniswami had brought a copy of Ribhu Gita to Sri Bhagavan's attention. Later in life Sri Bhagavan related how surprised he was at the time to hear an exact description of his own state recited in the Ribhu Gita and that it had been experienced by others and was the Bliss of the Self sought after by all true seekers.

* * *

Although Ribhu taught his disciple the Supreme Truth of the One Brahman without a second, Nidagha, in spite of his erudition and understanding, did not get sufficient conviction to adopt and follow the path of *jnana*, but settled down in his native town to lead a life devoted to the observance of ceremonial religion.

But the Sage loved his disciple as deeply as the latter venerated his Master. In spite of his age, Ribhu would himself go to his disciple in the town, just to see how far the latter had outgrown his ritualism. At times the sage went in disguise, so that he might observe how Nidagha would act when he did not know that he was being observed by his Master.

On one such occasion Ribhu, who had put on the disguise of a village rustic, found Nidagha intently watching a royal procession. Unrecognized by the town dweller Nidagha, the village rustic enquired what the bustle was all about, and was told that the king was going in procession.

"Oh ! it is the king. He goes in procession ! But where is he ?" asked the rustic.

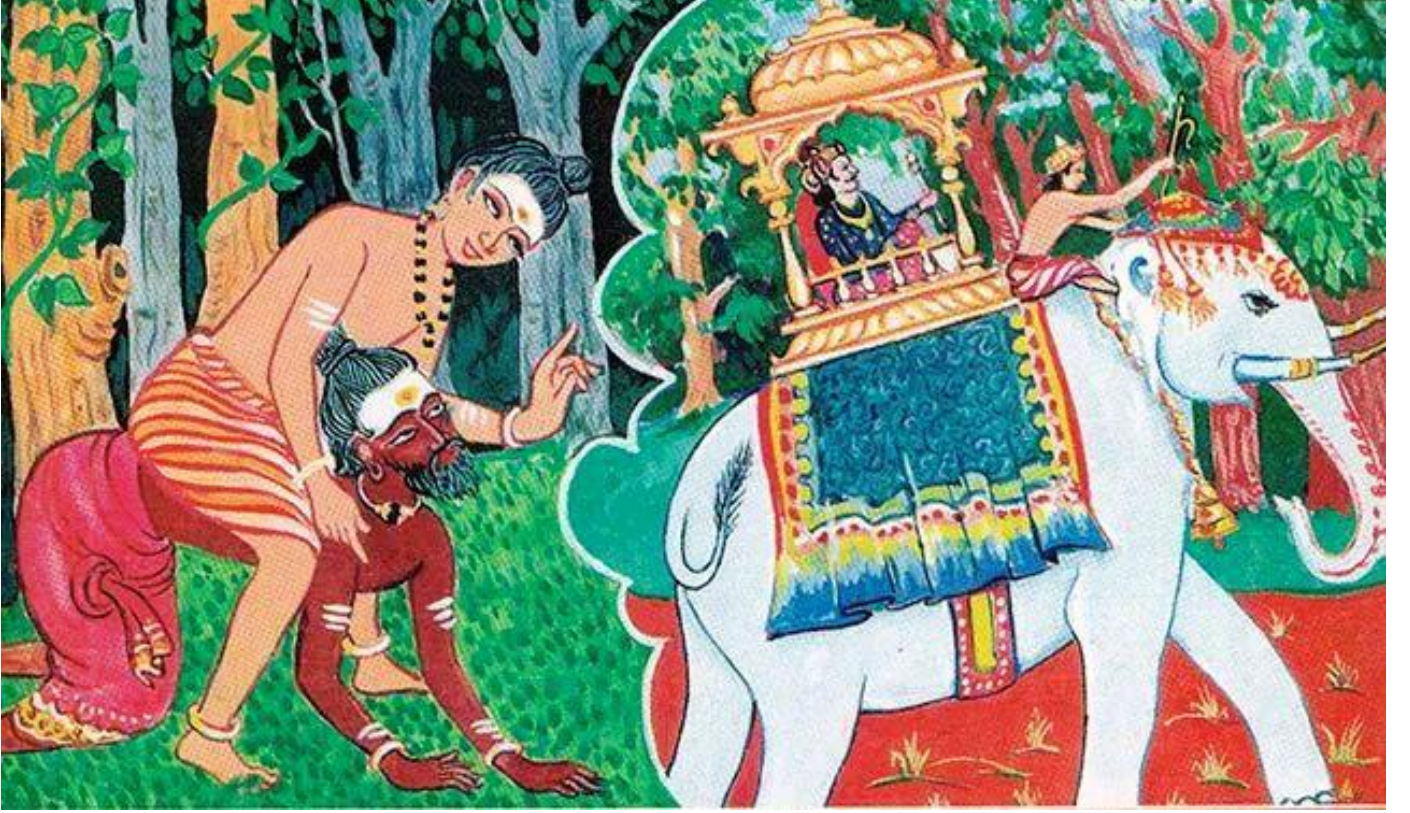
"There, on the elephant" said Nidagha.

"You say the king is on the elephant. Yes, I see the two" said the rustic, "but which is the king and which is the elephant?"

"What!" exclaimed Nidagha, "you see the two, but do not know that the man above is the king and the animal below is the elephant? Where is the use of talking to a man like you?"

"Pray, be not impatient with an ignorant man like me" begged the rustic. "But you said 'above' and 'below', what do they mean?"

Nidagha could stand it no more. "You see the king and the elephant, the one *above* and the other *below*. Yet you want to know what is meant by 'above' and 'below'?" burst out Nidagha. "If things seen and words spoken can convey so little to you, action alone can teach you. Bend forward, and you will know it all too well."



The rustic did as he was told. Nidagha got on his shoulders and said "Know it now. I am *above* as the king, you are *below* as the elephant. Is that clear enough ?"

"No, not yet", was the rustic's quiet reply.

"You say you are above like the king, and I am below like the elephant. The 'king', the 'elephant', 'above' and 'below', so far it is clear. But pray, tell me what you mean by 'I' and 'you' ?" When Nidagha was thus confronted all of a sudden with the mighty problem of defining the 'you' apart from the 'I' light dawned on his mind.

At once he jumped down and fell at his Master's feet saying :

"Who else but my venerable Master, Ribhu, could have thus drawn my mind from the superficialities of physical existence to the true Being of the Self ? Oh ! Benign Master, I crave thy blessings."

* * *

Ribhu Gita (Chapter 26) Inhering in the Undifferentiated and Non-dual Reality

1. I shall now expound to you the method of inhering in the All-inclusive and undifferentiated Reality. This teaching is secret and difficult to understand without the help of the *Vedas* and other scriptures. Even *divas* and *yogis* who hold it dear acquire it only with great difficulty. Follow what I say and, inhering in Reality, be happy.
2. My son! Realised Sages say that absolute inherence in Reality means becoming one with the immutable, tranquil and non-dual *Brahman* which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and the Self of all, and making the wandering mind one with it like the proverbial milk and water, absolutely free from all concepts.
3. When one scrutinises this variety of manifestation one realizes that it does not really exist and that everything is the undifferentiated Supreme *Brahman* which is not different from the *Atman* and oneself. Let this knowledge become firm with you by constant practice. Then, discarding everything, become one with the Supreme *Brahman* and, remaining as that, be happy.
4. Abide as That which does not, when scrutinized, show any duality in the form of these various objects or the least trace of cause and effect ; that in which, when the mind is absorbed in it, there is no fear of duality at all — and be always happy, unshakable and free from the fear arising from duality.
5. Abide as That in which there are neither thoughts nor fancies, neither peace nor self-control, neither the mind nor the intellect, neither confusion nor certainty, neither being nor non-being and no perception of duality — and be always happy, unshakable and absolutely free from the fear arising from duality.
6. Abide as That in which there is neither any defect nor good quality, neither pleasure nor pain, neither thought nor silence, neither misery nor austerities,¹ no 'I am the body' idea, no objects of perception whatsoever — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.
7. Abide as That in which there is no work, physical, mental, verbal or of any other kind, neither sin nor virtue, neither attachment nor its consequences — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.
8. Abide as That in which there are neither thoughts nor a thinker, neither the arising nor the preservation nor the dissolution of the world, nothing whatsoever at any time — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

¹ which are practised for getting rid of misery.

9. Abide as That in which there is neither *maya* nor its effects, neither knowledge, nor ignorance, neither *jiva* nor *Isvara*, neither being nor non-being, neither world nor God — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

10. Abide as That in which there are no gods and their worship, none of the three gods² or meditation on them, no Supreme Siva nor meditation on Him — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

11. Abide as That in which there is neither maturing *karma* nor *bhakti* nor *jnana*, no fruit of action to be enjoyed, no supreme state separate from it, no means of attainment or object to be attained — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

12. Abide as That in which there is neither body nor senses nor vital forces, neither mind nor intellect nor fancy, neither ego nor ignorance, nor anyone who identifies himself with them, neither the macrocosm nor the microcosm — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

13. Abide as That in which there is neither desire nor anger, neither greed nor delusion, neither ill-will nor pride, no impurities of mind and no false notions of bondage and liberation — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

14. Abide as That in which there is no beginning or end, no top or bottom or middle, no holy place or god, no gifts or pious acts, no time or space, no objects of perception — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

15. Abide as That in which there are none of the four spiritual qualifications,³ no competent guru or disciple, no steady knowledge, no realized stage, no liberation of either kind,⁴ nothing whatsoever at any time — and be always happy, free from all traces of thought.

16. Abide as That in which there are no *Vedas* or other scriptures, no one who thinks, no objection or answer to it, no theory to be established, no theory to be rejected, nothing other than one Self — and be always happy, free from (without) the least trace of thought.

17. Abide as That in which there is no debate, no success or failure, no word or its meaning, no speech, no difference between the *jiva* and the Supreme Being, none of the manifold adjuncts — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

18. Abide as That in which there is no need for hearing, etc.,⁵ no *samadhi* to be practised, no differences of the same kind (*sajatiya*) or of a different kind (*vijatiya*) or within itself

² *Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver and Siva the Destroyer.*

³ (a) *Discrimination between the real and the unreal, (b) Absence of desire for the joys of this world as well as the next, (c) Possession of the six virtues like sense-control, mind-control etc., (d) Yearning for liberation.*

⁴ *Liberation while still alive and liberation after death.*

⁵ *Hearing (sravana), reflecting (manana) and practising (nididhyasana).*

(*pragata*) no words or their meanings — and be always happy, free from the least trace of thought.

19. Abide as That in which there is no fear of hell (*naraka*), no joys of heaven (*svarga*), no worlds of Brahma or the other Gods, nor any object to be gained from them, no other world, no universe of any kind — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

20. Abide as That in which there is nothing of the elements nor even an iota of their derivatives, no sense of 'I' or 'mine' no fantasies of the mind, no blemish of attachment, no concept whatsoever — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

21. Abide as That in which there are none of the three kinds of bodies,⁶ none of the three kinds of states,⁷ none of the three kinds of *jivas*,⁸ none of the three kinds of afflictions,⁹ none of the five kinds of sheaths,¹⁰ no one to identify himself with them — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

22. Abide as That in which there is no sentient object, no power to hide Reality,¹¹ no difference of any kind, no power of projecting unreal objects,¹² no power of any other kind, no false notion about the world — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

23. Abide as That in which there are no sense organs or anyone to use them, that in which transcendent bliss is experienced, that which is absolutely immediate, that by realizing and attaining which one becomes immortal, that by becoming which one does not return to this cycle of births and deaths — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

24. Abide as That, on realizing which and experiencing the bliss of which, all joys appear to be the joys of That, that, on clearly knowing which to be oneself, there is nothing apart from oneself, and all kinds of *jivas* become liberated — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

25. Abide as That, on realizing which to be oneself, there is nothing else to be known, everything becomes already known and every purpose accomplished — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

26. Abide as That which is attained easily when one is convinced that one is *Brahman*, that which results, when that conviction becomes firm, in the experience of the supreme bliss of *Brahman*, that which produces a sense of incomparable and complete satisfaction

⁶ The physical, the mental and the causal.

⁷ Waking, dreaming and sleeping.

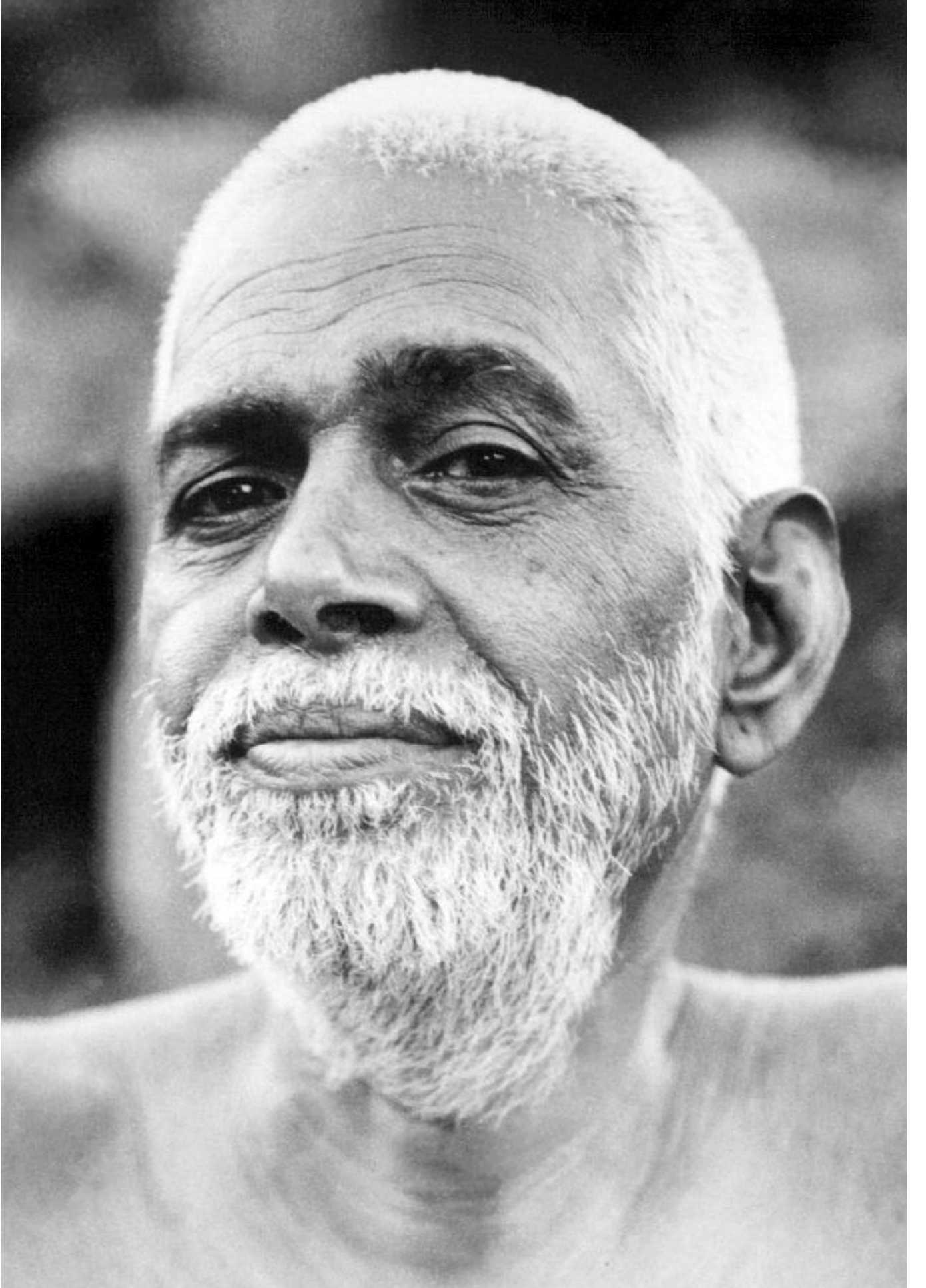
⁸ Those who are fully eligible to advance spiritually, those who are not so eligible and those who are not at all eligible.

⁹ Afflictions of the body, afflictions caused by the gods and afflictions caused by the elements.

¹⁰ The physical, the vital, the mental, the intellectual and the blissful.

¹¹ Avarana Sakti.

¹² Vikshepa Sakti.



when the mind is absorbed in it — and be always happy without the least trace of thought.

27. Abide as That which leads to the complete cessation of misery when the mind is absorbed in it, and the extinction of all ideas of 'I', 'you' and 'he' and the disappearance of all differences — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

28. Abide as That in which, when the mind is absorbed in It, one remains without a second, nothing other than oneself is seen to exist and incomparable bliss is experienced — and be always happy, without the least trace of thought.

29. Abide as That which is undifferentiated Existence, undifferentiated Consciousness, undifferentiated Bliss, absolutely non-dual, the undifferentiated *Brahman* and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

30. Abide as That which is 'I' as well as 'you' as well as everyone else, is the basis of all, is one without anything else whatsoever, is extremely pure, the undifferentiated Whole and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

31. Abide as That in which there are no concepts or anything else whatsoever, the ego ceases to exist, all desires disappear, the mind becomes extinct and all confusions come to an end and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

32. Abide as That in which there is no awareness of the body etc. and no perception of objects, that in which the mind is dead, the *jīva* become one with the Reality, thoughts dissolved and even one's convictions no longer hold and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

33. Abide as That in which there is no longer any *dhyana* or *yoga* or ignorance or knowledge or activities of any kind, that which is the Supreme Reality and with the firm conviction that you are That, be always happy.

34. Abide as That in which, when one is completely merged with it, one experiences pure bliss, never experiences misery, sees nothing, does not take birth again, never thinks oneself to be a separate individual, becomes the Supreme Being and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

35. Abide as That which is truly the Supreme *Brahman*, the Supreme Siva, the absolutely pure Being, the Supreme State, absolute consciousness, the Supreme Truth and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

36. Abide as That which is the absolutely pure Supreme Being, absolute bliss, the supremely subtle Being, the Self-Effulgent, non-dual and undifferentiated one and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

37. Abide as That which is absolute truth, supreme tranquility, eternal being, absolutely attributeless, the Self, the absolutely undifferentiated supreme being and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

38. Abide as That which is everything from the empirical point of view and nothing from the absolute point of view, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, always tranquil, with nothing separate from it, the self-existent being and with the conviction that you are That, be always happy.

39. I have thus, O Nidagha, clearly explained to you the state of being one with the Supreme Being. By constantly thinking that you are the undifferentiated Supreme Being you can attain that state and enjoy constant bliss. Thereafter, having become *Brahman*, you will never experience the misery of *samsara*.

40. "Everything is the Supreme Being which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and I am That." By constantly cultivating this pure thought, get rid of impure thoughts. Then, my son, discarding even that thought and always inhering in the State of Fullness, you will become the non-dual and undifferentiated Supreme Being and attain liberation.

41. Pure and impure thoughts are a feature of the mind. There are no wandering thoughts in the Supreme Being. Therefore abide as That and, free from the pure and impure thoughts of the mind, remain still like a stone or a log of wood. You will then be always happy.

42. By constantly thinking of the undifferentiated Supreme Being and forgetting thereby all thoughts including the thought of the Supreme Being, you will become the all-comprehensive Supreme *Brahman*. Even a great sinner who hears and understands this teaching will get rid of all his sins and become the undifferentiated Supreme Being.

43. The endless *Vedas* have already prescribed meditation for attaining purity of mind. In order that those who have become pure in mind may easily attain liberation and, realizing that they are absolute and boundless bliss, remain still like a stone in the undifferentiated and all-comprehensive Supreme Siva, the nature of this immaculate state has been expounded by me.

44. Therefore, attaining purity of mind by constantly thinking that everything that is known is Siva and that, that Siva is oneself, and thereafter abiding in the state of complete identity with *Brahman*, liberation can be attained here and now. I have spoken the truth. In this manner, Sage Ribhu expounded the state of being all to Nidagha.

45. When one is convinced that one is always that which is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss and abides as that in a state of complete identity, one casts off the unreal bondage of *samsara* and attains liberation. This is the significance of the highly blissful dance of our Supreme and undifferentiated Lord.

Prabhulinga Leelai



Allama Prabhu

"Prabhulinga Leelai" is a 15th century *Vira saiva* work, written in Kannada and comprising 1,111 verses. It was originally composed when a *Vira saiva* scholar, Camarasa, was challenged to produce a work that was greater than either the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*. Shortly afterwards Camarasa had a dream in which *Virabhadra*, the son of Lord Siva, asked him to write a long poem. Camarasa subsequently composed **"Prabhulinga Leelai"** in eleven days, after which he presented it at the Court of his King, where it was approved by both the Monarch and the scholars who had challenged him.

This Kannada work was translated into Tamil verse by Sivaprakasa Swamigal, an accomplished *Vira saiva* poet and scholar, in the seventeenth century. The Tamil version was read by Sri Bhagavan, who referred to it in His conversations with visitors on a number of occasions.

* * *

Then in the course of conversation he related that a ray of light has been found which, when projected, does not reveal the operator but enables him to witness the scene. So it is with *siddhas*. They are only pure light and can see others, whereas, they cannot be seen by others. For example Prabhulinga, while touring in the North, came across Goraknath. The latter displayed his yogic powers e.g., when his arm was cut by a sword, the sword was blunted without inflicting injury on him. This is making the body proof against injury (*kayasiddhi*). Prabhulinga offered himself to be cut. When the sword was thrust, it passed through and through his body as if it was air and there was no injury on the body. Gorak was astonished and offered himself as the disciple of Prabhulinga.

Again, there was a dialogue between Siva and Parvati in Kailas. Siva said that Allama was one who would not be affected by Her blandishments. Parvati wanted to try it and so sent Her *tamasic* quality to incarnate as a king's daughter on the Earth in order that she might entice Allama. She grew up as a highly accomplished girl. She used to sing in the temple. Allama used to go there and play on the drum. She lost herself in the play of the drum. She fell in love with him. They met in her bedroom. When she embraced him he became intangible. She grew lovesick. But a celestial damsel was sent to remind her of her purpose on the Earth. She resolved to overthrow Allama but did not succeed. Finally she went up to Kailas. Then Parvati sent Her *satvic* quality who was born as a Brahman sanyasini. When she surrendered to Allama she realised his true greatness.

— from *"Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi"* No.334

Akka Mahadevi – The Genuine Mystic

Born as the 'Satva' aspect commanded by Goddess Parvati, the baby named as Mahadevi, brought up by pious parents, grows up into an young maiden. Lord Siva also commands his *Bhoota-ganas* to appear in the World performing austerities and offering worship to Him at many places.

Keen spiritual longing shift the emphasis from the wonder of the outside universe to the significance of the self within. She instinctively felt that man can never be fully and wholly fulfilled through self-discipline and knowledge, though self-discipline is arduous and knowledge superior. A more human approach to God lies through pure and unselfish love which withdraws most of the obstacles that the ego interposes between the Divine and the devotee.

The Divinity already inherent in her began to manifest all its radiance while she was yet in her teens, i.e., at the age of eight she was initiated into the secrets of Linga. At the age of 16 this concept ripened into full resolve and she could state with firm conviction:

*"Listen Oh! mother, I love him
He is the one, the only one
He knows no birth and death
He is uncabined by caste or clime
He is boundless, changeless, formless
He is beautiful beyond comparison
All other fade away and die at last
I will have none of them
My Lord shall forever be
The One Channamallikarjuna."*

A turning point, however occurred in the life of Mahadevi when she, along with many others, had come to see the procession of the king, of that place. The king saw Mahadevi among the crowd and was smitten with love for her. With a desire to marry her, the King started negotiations with her parents. But Mahadevi refused to marry the King. She summarily rejected his pleadings, cravings and ravings. The King brought pressure to bear. For the sake of her parents, she enters into a conditional marriage. When the King breaks the condition, she quits the palace. All of a sudden a psychic conversion took place in her and she left her home and her parents. She left even the clothes she was wearing. Being guided by an inner urge she began to wend her way towards Kalyana, which was then a place of pilgrimage. Her parents and even some friends tried to dissuade her by picturing the difficulties she might have to encounter on the way. To them her answer was poignant, yet to the point:

**"I am no helpless woman
I utter no futile threats
I am nothing daunted
I shall dare hunger and pain
I shall steal out of withered leaves
A wholesome meal
And on pointed sword
Shall make my bed.
I am ready for your sake
To dare the worst
To die this instant
The readiness is all
Oh! my Channamallikarjuna".**

With unflinching faith in God she marched on passing through hills and dales, through shrubs and thickets, through woods and planes and reached Kalyana where she was accosted by Basaveshwara, the founder of Anubhava Mantap. But Allama Prabhu, the President of Anubhava Mantap, put her many questions which she answered in a singularly charming manner. She wanted to participate in the proceedings of the Anubhava Mantap.

Here is an interesting dialogue between Allama Prabhu and Akka Mahadevi:

Allama Prabhu: Where from didst thou come, Madam? Tell us who thy Lord is, otherwise our saints forbid thee.

Akka Mahadevi: God Channamallikarjuna is my Lord. I am not at all related to any mortal human of this world.

Allama Prabhu: Thy profuse hair have hidden the body as a garment. God Guheshwara regards this garment as improper.

Akka Mahadevi: Of what use is it if the body turns dull and dark, if it appears blithe and bright? When the heart is rendered pure by the grace of Channamallikarjuna, the complexion of body is of no consequence.

Allama Prabhu: If thy heart is pure, why dost thou hide thy body with the hair? That may be due to inward bashfulness which expresses itself outwardly. This our God Guheshwara does not like.

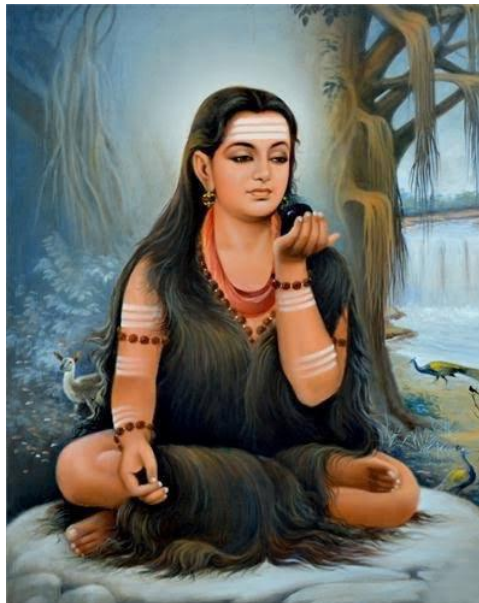
Akka Mahadevi: I hide it so that your saints may not be enticed.

When Mahadevi came to Kalyana she found herself in the midst of the saints who were near and dear to God. Communion with the saints brought a great change in her life. The subtle but irresistible influence of the saints enabled Mahadevi to scale the heights of spiritual life. She speaks in eloquent terms of the benefits she derived from the company of the saints.

"I sing, dance, hear, walk and speak in happy fellowship with thy saints, Oh! Lord.... Through conversation with the blessed ones, I have gained respite from my grief. Oh! Lord, I cannot bear parting from the blessed ones who know Thee. ... When a soul rubs another and divine experience is born, the traits of the body are all burnt. the infirmity of my body is no more; the tremor of my senses is now stilled; the mind perplexed is now calm and serene... all this I gained through the company of the saints. Basavanna's devotion, Channabasvanna's enlightenment, Madivala's firm faith, Prabhudeva's fearless and carefree state, Ajaganna's clarity of perception, Nijaguna's purity of conception, Siddharama's trance state; the mellowing grace all these saints showered upon me, Oh! Lord."

The communion with the saints brings wisdom to the simple, and sudden calm to those who are tormented by doubts. It floods the personality with new light and the passage from one spiritual state to another is achieved. At the moment of indecision it gives birth to authoritative commands which quell the sufferings of the self. By the communion with the saints even spiritual conversion is attained.

Akka Mahadevi proceeded to Shrishaila, the place of her last destination where she saw face to face God Channamallikarjuna and was absorbed by him in the plantain grove.



Akka Mahadevi

Life of Sri Siddharama

During one of his visits, Allama Prabhu arrived at the city where the workers of Siddharama were engaged in digging a huge pond. He went near the workers (Oddas) and asked them "in what belief does 'Odda' Raman engage you in this wasteful job?". On hearing this, the workers are angered and there is war of words between Allama Prabhu and the workers. He then says "Go, tell your 'learned fool' whatever I have said. This enrages the workers even more. They start hurling stones at Allama. But to their wonder none of the stones hurt Allama, but were heaped like a small hill. Seeing him unhurt and standing upon the heap of stones, the workers begin to wonder as to "who is this man., may be a magician". When they come near him planning to beat him to death, he appears at different places. Not knowing which person to kill and dazed at the happening, the workers rush to inform the news to their chief. When Siddharama arrives at the spot in a great rage thinking "who could be the person, daring to insult me? I would cut his tongue".

Allama devar uses explicit and implicit derogatory words at Siddharama. Siddharama is Swollen with pride, as the possessor of the third eye; besides, has he not established numerous Lingas? Siddharama threatens to open his third eye, Prabhu, not the least ruffled, asks him if he could be a yogi in his violence. At these words, Siddharama opens his fiery eye; but the flame issuing from it is meekly absorbed in the soles of Prabhu's feet. The fire then worships Allama devar's feet and begins to burn the city. Many objects are burnt; The citizens are sorry; Allama devar taking pity on the plight of the citizens stops the fire spreading; the city now dazzles more than before. Siddharama's pride is destroyed; Good sense prevail on him; At this, Siddharama, realises his folly, instantly falls at Prabhu's feet, and asks to pardon himself, for his mistake and set him on the right path.

Allama devar is very gracious on the surrendered Siddharama. Allama explains the Truth about the Self and effects of uncontrolled senses and transforms him from a yogi into a *SivaYogi*. Siddharama having realised that salvation cannot be attained through philanthropic acts and worship of Lingas at Temples, falls at the feet of Allama and exclaims, there is no one who could be so much blessed as himself.



Siddharama

Life of Sri Marula Shankaradeva

This deals with an event of an adept, who apparently a simpleton, is well-versed in the supreme knowledge and light. The adept's name is Marula Shankaradeva, precious little is known about his background.

He sat in the dust bin in front of Basava's home. Though Basava caught glimpses of him, but failed to notice and recognize him and his accomplishments. He did not even say hello to Shankaradeva. Since Basava failed to recognize the greatness and accomplishments of Shankaradeva, Prabhu reveals the identity of Shankaradeva to Siddharama, and says it is hard for others to recognize the greatness of the realised. They may tread the world hiding their real identity. Basava regrets his oversight and indifference towards Shankaradeva.

The throng of the Saints assembled at the house of Basava, consequent upon the arrival of Prabhu, offer their meed and homage to Shankaradeva, who in turn pays homage to them all and feels himself blessed at the sight of Prabhu. Shankaradeva had for a long time been longing to see Prabhu. He was waiting for Prabhu to show up at the residence of Basava, for his intuition has suggested that Prabhu would sooner or later be showing up at Basava's home. So Shankaradeva announces the end to his quest of meeting Prabhu and feels overjoyed at the sight of liberated one.

But the end of Shankaradeva is surcharged with electricity! It is unique and unprecedented. There are no parallel instances to compare. In the presence of Prabhu and other Saints, Shankaradeva vanishes into thin air without leaving a trace! At this turn of event all those who witnessed this transformation were somewhat shaken. They marvelled at his demonstration of the total identity of matter and radiation and the defiance of the physical laws of nature.



Marula Shankaradeva

Uppukootan

'Uppukootan' was born to 'Parayi' (untouchable) when the couple were in a place called 'Ponnaani' in Kerala.

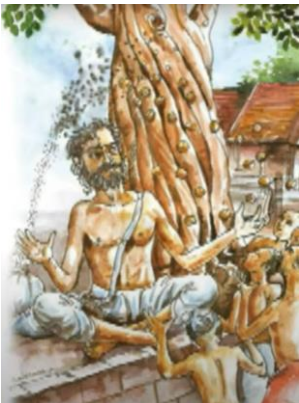
He never had a name for himself, and people in general called him both by the names 'Uppukootan' and 'Uppukotan'. 'Uppu' in Malayalam means salt. He made a living out of selling salt. He was also known for doing some tricks with salt. The name 'Uppukotan' is believed to have come because he used to extract salt from the sea in Ponnani. 'Kottu' means food. Since he made salt for his food (livelihood), people used to call him as 'Uppukotan'. However, a more commonly accepted name is 'Uppukootan'. 'Kootan' means one who is huge. People might have called him *Uppukootan* for his large and strong stature. Like how Vararuchi had told Parayi while asking her to put the baby there and come with him, the God who has given the baby a mouth will also provide for it! True to this, despite being an orphan, *Uppukootan* was very strong and well built.

Uppukootan is believed to have been brought up by a Christian / Muslim. He had a long and rough beard, and was always seen travelling through forests and mountains, across rivers and towns, clad in a dirty rag and carrying a cloth bag. There was something very obscure about his business. He would bring salt from Palghat to Ponnaani and sell there (where salt is abundantly available), and collect cotton balls from Ponnani and sell in Palghat, where it was already available in plenty.

Like the rest of the siblings, Uppukootan also was a divinely gifted being. He had special affection towards children. Though many used to ask him why he always carried salt, he never bothered to reply. Once he was walking by a river, and was contemplating on his own life. The river and his life had a lot of similarities, he thought. The river is full of whirlpools, and underwater currents unseen to the common eyes, so too was his life. Like the river that had to move away from its origin at a very young age, he too was separated from his mother. And like the river finding solace in finally merging into the Ocean that is salty by nature, he too, found solace with the salt bags!

Isn't there a Biblical saying, 'Ye are the salt of the Earth!'.

Uppukootan converts salt to rice cakes!



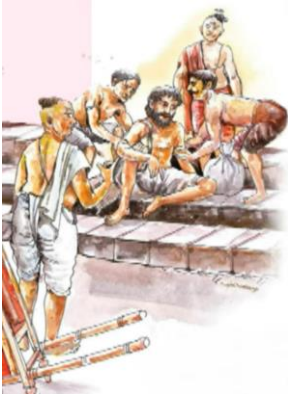
Once while returning from a long journey, he was eagerly surrounded by a bunch of little children. He sang, danced and played with them for a long time. The children now felt hungry and started searching his bag, and found nothing. Uppukootan put his hands inside a salt bag, threw up a handful of salt, and to the wonder of the children around, the salt particles came down as rice cakes (*Aappam*). Everyone was wonderstruck. When the children asked how he could do it, he replied, "This is control over the hand and the mind, if you practise, you can do it too!"

Uppukootan saves the children from local thugs

This story happened in the market place of Naathaapuram. The children there were eagerly awaiting him there. Uppukootan would come there carrying a huge sack of salt, which even a horse could not carry. The children would lovingly call him as 'Uppaappa' and search inside his bags for some goodies. Their Uppaappa arrived, and children heartily took the sweetmeats that Uppukootan had got while in his travel. Amidst the merry time, a set of local thugs came there. The children fearfully clung on to their Uppaappa, saying that the thugs will kidnap them and make them as slaves. Assuring them of their safety, he took a toy whistle from one of the boys and started blowing it. Many snakes sprang up from inside the whistle and landed on a tree top. The snakes then fell down one by one on the thugs. Fearing for their lives, they fled away.

Uppukootan meets Agnihotri

Once, while selling salt, Uppukootan ended up at the house of *Agnihotri* (*Brahmin Priest*). They were unaware of the fact that they were siblings. The tired Uppukootan called out asking if the house needed salt. When *Agnihotri* came out of the house, Uppukootan was captivated by the charisma of *Agnihotri*. Deep inside his heart, he felt a sense of great respect for this pious looking Brahmin. Sitting on the chair in the veranda, *Agnihotri* enquired, "What is your name?", to which Uppukootan replied, "People call me Uppukootan". "Oho, so it's the people who have given you that name. Don't you have a name of your own?" enquired *Agnihotri*. "What's there in a name Sir, isn't it just an indication?" *Agnihotri* said, "But I have a name of my own, and it is *Agnihotri*. So, do you mean that this also has no significance?". "Of course! Yes Sir. This name indicates the greatness of your personality and acts. It commands great respect indeed" replied Uppukootan, with an unblemished smile. *Agnihotri* looked carefully at Uppukootan, and said, "You seem to have the smile of *Naranathu* and the voice of *Paakkanaar*. Do you know them?" asked *Agnihotri*, to which Uppukootan replied. "Yes, I know them. I also noticed that you have the voice of *Naranathu* and the smile of *Paakkanaar*". What followed was a stretch of deep silence.



Breaking this spell of time came in *Agnihotri's* father-in-law, in an aristocratic palanquin. *Agnihotri* got up in reverence to receive him. Uppukootan was sitting in the veranda stairs, and did not bother to get up. When reprimanded by *Agnihotri's* father-in-law, Uppukootan replied so – "When there is ample space for five people to pass by, why should I get up?" *Agnihotri's* father-in-law instructed the men carrying his palanquin to move him away. Like Bheemasena who could not move the old monkey (Hanuman) while on his way to get *Paarijaata*, the men failed terribly in their task. Forget moving him, they could not even move his salt sack by an inch. Realizing that this

is not a common man, they withdrew from their action. Thus scorning at the Brahmin's false pride, Uppukootan then got up and walked away, carrying his sack of salt.

Uppukootan thus condemned the stigma associated with caste differences!

Dialogue between Saint Jnaneswar and His Father

I mentioned that I had been reading the books '*Avadhoota Gita*' and '*Ashtavakra Gita*' and I drew his attention to the very first verse in the *Avadhoota Gita*, which is as follows:

"It is only through the grace of God that, in men with knowledge, is born a desire to experience cosmic unity (Advaita), a desire which protects them from the great dangers of samsara."

I further drew his attention that most of the matter in these books was for the advanced *Siddha*, i.e., the adept. For new seekers, who were attempting to learn, there was not much of direct guidance. With infinite compassion in his eyes, the Maharshi looked at me and instructed one of his followers to bring a book. This was the *Maha Bhakta Vijayam* of Nabhaji. Bhagavan opened the book and began to read. (I noted with awe that the book opened exactly at the page where he intended to read.)

This is a discourse between Jnaneswar Maharaj and his father, in which the young son, who has achieved Realization, is discussing with his father, who is still afraid, still seeking, and still groping. The father had gone to the forest to practice asceticism.

Highly impressed with the brilliance of Jnaneswar and his siblings, the king desired to meet Vithoba, their father. He therefore sent his own messengers to bring Vithoba to the kingdom, but the latter refused to come. Then the children went to visit their father and Jnaneswar Maharaj, getting on the lap of his father, engaged him in conversation, at the end of which he persuaded his father to come back with him to the city.

The Maharshi seemed to relish reading the discourse. Those who were present thoroughly enjoyed the reading and I discovered that I was given exactly what I needed. I am forever grateful to the Sage for what he taught me. The best teacher is he who takes you from where you are to the next stage. It is not the totality of the teacher's knowledge that the pupil must consider, but the appropriateness of that which is imparted at the proper moment.

...To be in the Sage's presence is for most of us to have a kindly rebuke that progress on the spiritual path is regarded as an intermittent hobby to be undertaken when there is leisure from worldly pursuits. To put it mildly, it is a reproach to our moral being to take interest in spiritual matters only as a pose, and to indulge in it as if it were a supplement to our activities in life.

...Spiritual realisation is not less difficult than the accomplishment of any other task in life, and the general experience is that people content themselves with a superficial

performance of outside duties and ceremonials. If they go a little further, they are tired and they are in search for some excuse to stop. They often make an attempt in the wrong direction half-heartedly and without concentration, and then they get exhausted. They have a vague idea that there is something high and noble, but they modestly disclaim fitness for the great task. The final excuse, in which the slackness of many devotees expresses itself, is that they are now engaged in the service of others! It is fatal. The Maharshi, in his teachings, has made it quite plain that the pretence of doing good to others is a snare. The Maharshi has said "There are no *others*." There is only one Element. That Power, which is functioning here, is functioning everywhere. That, which animates one person, animates the whole universe. That Being is supreme. He is the repository of all accomplishments. He encompasses all ends. It is better to pursue the path of the Self than to seek other ends, because nothing happens except through the Will of the *Paramatman*.

— from an article by *Manu Subedar* in "Golden Jubilee Souvenir 1946"

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With respect and childlike affection Jnaneswar climbed onto the lap of his father and requested him to return to the capital and meet the king. The following dialogue ensued.



Saint Jnaneswar

Father: Does one taste again what has been vomited once, even if it is some delicious dish? Should not the righteous ever stick to their word? Having retired from the world, can I go back there, mix with the undiscerning crowd and love them or adore the king?

The forest shall ever be my abode and the world, yours. So go back and live happily in the world.

Jnaneswar: Why do you live in the forest?

Father: My son, what profit or pleasure is there hereafter for me to obtain by going back to the world? Going back there, far from being an aid, will only be a hindrance to salvation. This forest, free from the society of all people, is alone fit for *mouna nishta* (silent faith) and hence I live on these slopes.

Jnaneswar: The *Brahmanishta* (devotion to Self) that you are doing, while still full of such distinctions as city and forest, is like one trying to shut out a vision of the heavens by covering it with a canvas instead of closing one's eyes; like a small bird thinking to bear the impact of thunder with its tiny feet; like one trying to acquire virtue while engaging in acts of vice; like a hard-hearted man yearning for the sight of God, and like one achieving *jnana nishta* (firm faith with knowledge) without getting rid of the ego sense. In that *nishta*, which transcends all distinctions, can there be any idea of duality?

Father: So long as the notion "mine" persists, the ego sense and perception of duality as "this and that" will not disappear. It is *nirvikalpa nishta* (single devotion) that drives away all notions of duality. Such *nishta* can be obtained only by freedom from all *sankalpas* or desires and freedom from all society. So I am here because the forest solitude is the proper place for *mouna nishta*.

Jnaneswar: Knowing one's Self and being that Self alone is *Brahmanishta*, and not living in forests.

Father: Even though one may know the Self in the presence of one's Guru, is it not necessary to stay in solitude to remain fixed in that Self?

Jnaneswar: True *jnanis* realized that *ajnana* (error) will not be destroyed, nor the sense of 'I' and 'mine' be got rid of by living alone in a forest and doing penance, and therefore practiced *nirvikalpa samadhi*, with a firm mind, ignoring all such distinctions as city and forest, home life and asceticism. If that is so, why should you oppose home life and live in this forest?

Father: If those who have seen the *sakshi* (witness) and become one with the Self, who is the witness of all, remain in family life, it will hamper their practice of *samadhi*, and they will lose their experience of realization of the Self. Therefore, those who have attained the bliss of the *sahaja* (spontaneous) state will not entertain, even in a dream, the desire to engage in family life.

Jnaneswar: *Sahaja nishta* (spontaneous realization) consists in being free, both from desires and aversions. Can hating the town and loving the forest be such *nishta*?

Father: How can one carry on with the affairs of the world who has no desires either to do or not to do? And what is the use of living in the world if one is not fit to engage in the affairs of the world? One should not at all remain in a place where one would be a prey to many difficulties arising from the desire to cater to the comforts of this body. Such catering can be compared to celebrating the marriage of a corpse.

Jnaneswar: If one who has given up all desires to engage in any activity, engages in the practice of *samadhi*, is not that practice also an activity, and why should not he who has this occupation have also the activity of the family?

Father: Even if *samadhi* is an activity, it will remove all thoughts and anxieties. On the other hand, domestic business will create all kinds of thoughts and worries and cause grief always.

Jnaneswar: When one is *Sat Chit Ananda* (three-fold Self) himself, why should one engage in *nishta sadhana* (practice with faith)?

Father: Do not the wise say that *Brahmanishta* (devotion to Self) consists in realizing while awake, the sleep state? If we don't so realize, can irresistible bliss flow from *samadhi*?

Jnaneswar: While the *Vedas* say that proper bliss consists in watching like a spectator the diversions of the senses during the waking state, the activities of the mind during dream and the state of nothingness or blank during sleep, and that the state described as sleep during waking consists in being like a kite's shadow (which while touching anything is not attached to it), can you imagine that to be in a blank state as during sleep is real bliss, and that it is the state called sleep during waking?

Father: Waking and dream conditions will plunge one into the affairs of the world and render one a prey to the wild beasts of sense organs. Hence, only that *samadhi* where all affairs of the world cease and where there is total void as during sleep, is the proper *samadhi*.

Jnaneswar: The best *samadhi* is not to be a mere blank but, like meeting blow with blow, to engage in the affairs of the world and check the sense objects and be indifferent to them by opposing them with the sword of steady *jnana* (realization of unity), like Janaka.

Father: Only Suka, who got rid of all attachments, was able to conquer the monkeyish mind, which had accumulated within it many *vasanas* (deep set desires) during countless generations, and not Janaka, who, without being in the sleep-like state, had steady *jnana* that he was *Brahman*.

Jnaneswar: Only Janaka secured annihilation of mind and was able to do what he pleased with his mind, and not Suka who gave up all external attachments and betook himself entirely to life in forests.

Father: It is only by inhering in the Seer that one can get rid of the seen. How can one get rid of the seen by being in the seen? If to cure a man of poison, poison is administered to him, will not death be the result?

Jnaneswar: As we administer one poison as an antidote against another poison, he alone is wise, who establishes imperturbable *jnana* against the dangers of the sense organs, both external and internal, and not he who is always in *nishta* filled with fear lest at any time the wild beasts of sense objects should come and attack him. This latter will realize only his fear and never the supreme bliss of *Brahman*.

Father: What would not the sense objects do to one in family life, when they are capable of subjecting to grief even those who have become ascetics and are always absorbed in *nishta samadhi*? Can a dried leaf that has fallen into a turbulent flood keep still in one place?

Jnaneswar: The sense organs will bring down one who has not attained firm *jnana*, however long he may remain introverted, and cause him grief. Like a big rock that has fallen into a flood and remains there unmoved, one must remain unmoved, however numerous be the sense activities that come to one, and whatever be the unbearable grief they cause. It is only such a one that can experience the bliss of *Brahman*. The ignorance of one that is not steadily fixed in *jnana* will never disappear.

Father: However steady one may be fixed in *jnana*, he is sure to be engulfed in the darkness of *maya* (worldly illusion) unless he is always absorbed in meditation of *Brahman*, giving up all society.

Jnaneswar: It is only if there is such a thing as *maya* apart from *Brahman*, one would have to get rid of it by being always in *nishta*. Like saying "one's shadow will fight with one," you have pointed to a nonexistent *avidya* and an ego and declared that we must always be in *nishta*. As the only result of fighting with an unreal shadow will be exhaustion, you will have only endless trouble if you don't stay quiet in *mouna* (silence), realizing the unreality of *maya*, but go on eliminating, saying, 'Not this, not this'.

Father: How is one to attain *sahaja jnana* (spontaneous knowledge) without eliminating the unreal, becoming one-pointed in mind, and remaining a mere *sakshi* (witness), unmoved by all that takes place.

Jnaneswar: The more we eliminate the unreal things as "not this, not this," the more sense objects will go on appearing, like winged white ants that swarm out from an ant hill. The more we try to make the mind one-pointed, the more will the mind get disturbed like a

repressed ball rebounding. The more you remain a *sakshi*, the more will the delusion "I am the body," etc., assert itself like the curly tail of the dog resuming its bent shape, however much we try to keep it straight. So it is the majestic bliss of *Brahman* to realize by the *jnana* (realization) of enquiry, that one is himself *Brahman*, and *avidya*, alias ego, and *maya*, alias unreality, are entirely illusory like the appearance of silver in the mother of pearl.

Father: Is it possible to conquer the grief-causing sense objects and to become one with the all-pervading blissful Self by not doing any other *sadhana* but merely realizing as the result of *jnana vichara* that one is himself *Brahman*?

Jnaneswar: If even a live cow cannot kill a tiger, can a dead cow do so? Similarly, what can the sense objects do to the Self, which is eternal, free from all defects, which extends everywhere and is of the nature of bliss? As even a fat cow will be afraid to face a tiger, sense objects will not dare to come before a *jnani*, who by steady *jnana* has attained perfection. But even if they do, they will be extinguished, as the cow by the tiger.

Father: What if the *jnani* (he who knows), by mixing with *ajnanis* (the ignorant) should get entangled in sense objects, yield to disturbances of the mind and become entirely sorrow stricken, like a chaste woman becoming unchaste by mixing with prostitutes?

Jnaneswar: The steadfast chaste woman will maintain her chastity in spite of the company of any number of prostitutes. The unsteady one will find occasion for erring even without any evil company. Similarly, the firm *jnani* will never lose his perfect realization though surrounded by any number of *ajnanis* (erring ones). The unsteady one will lose his *jnana*, even when in solitude.

Father: How can one become a *sahaja jnani* (one who has spontaneously realized) if engaged in domestic affairs?

Jnaneswar: Though the *jnani* (sage) mixes with *ajnanis* and acts many parts with them, he will ever remain the experiencer of the supreme bliss, just as a *brahmin* though acting the part of a scavenger on the stage, and behaving accordingly, ever remains only a *brahmin* without becoming a scavenger.

Father: However firm the *jnana* or the spiritual insight of a man may be, unless he contemplates at least for some time every day that he is *Brahman*, it is very difficult for him to become a *Brahma jnani*.

Jnaneswar: Is it necessary for the *brahmin*, who is acting the part of a scavenger, to frequently think that he is a *brahmin*? Will he become a scavenger if he does not think so? Are sacred strings necessary to distinguish one, whom the entire world knows to be a *brahmin*? After the annihilation of the ego, "I", should one still retain the knot of the ego consciousness and go on meditating "I am *Brahman*"? As the world-known *brahmin* is

adored as a *brahmin* by everybody, even when he does not wear sacred strings, one who has renounced notions of "I" and "mine" will always be respected by all and will always be enjoying the supreme bliss of Self, even if he does not practice any meditation.

Father: Even if one is equal to *Jagadish* (the Almighty), if one does not daily practice the meditation "I am *Brahman*," he will undoubtedly become an *ajnani*. The ego sense, which identifies one with body, etc., will never vanish.

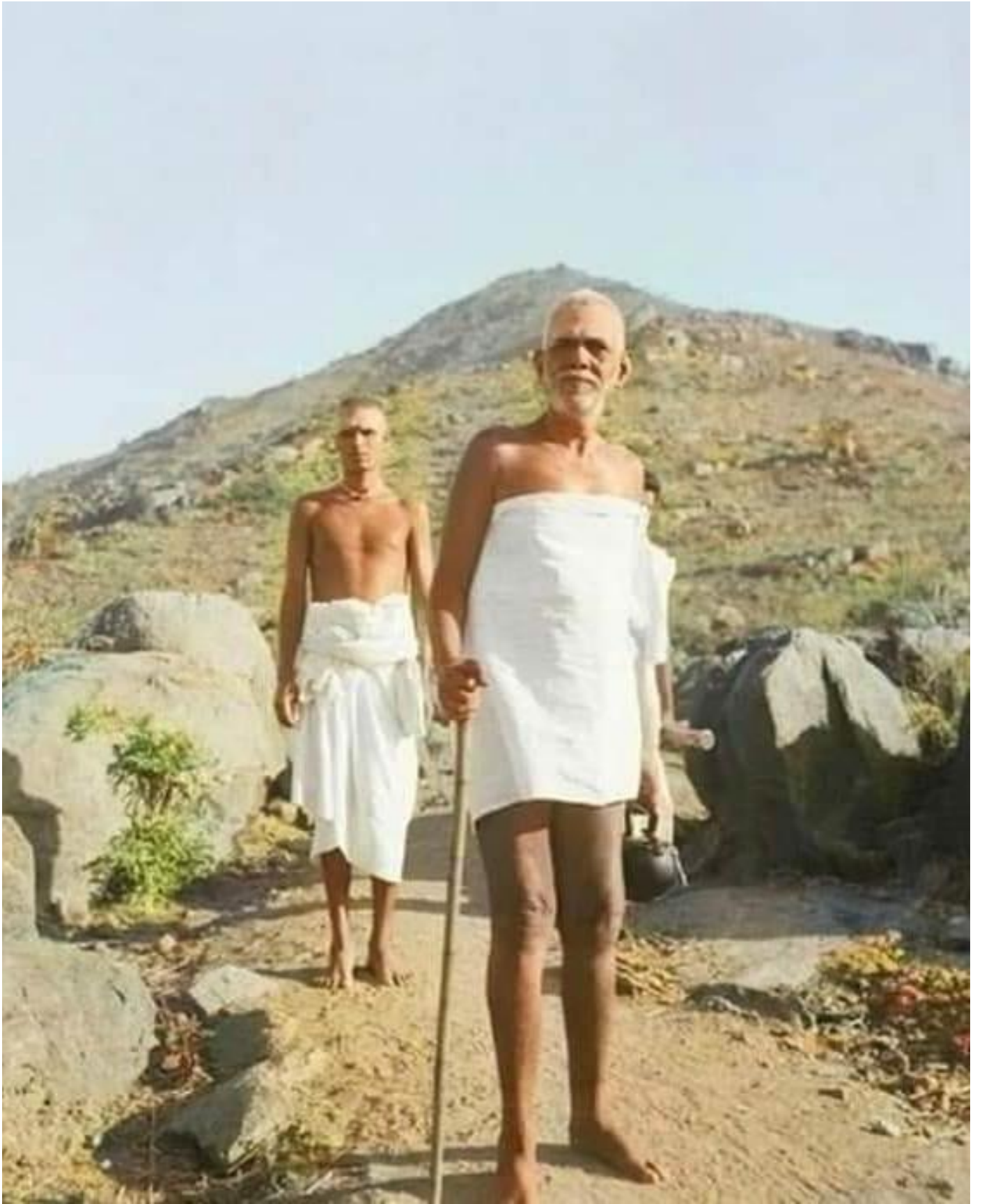
Jnaneswar: If one holds the light in his hands and asks darkness to remain, will it remain? Similarly, if, after vanquishing the ignorance that one is the body or its internal organs, after one has attained the knowledge that one is the Supreme itself, will *ajnana* remain even if it is bidden to remain? If one holds the cat in one's hand and asks the parrot to talk, will it talk? After realizing that self, *Iswara* and the world, etc. are all unreal, will *maya* come, even if it is invited? The eunuch will stand ashamed to declare himself a man before a woman who knows his impotence. Similarly, to one who has recognized beyond all doubt, in the presence of his Guru, that *Brahman* alone is real while *maya* is unreal, that *Brahman* is transcendent of all thoughts while *maya* consists of desires and aversions, and that one is *Brahman* and *Brahman* is one's Self, where is the desire or aversion, bondage or freedom, birth or death, country or forest, charity, penance, renunciation or family life? Can the power of *maya* avail even a bit against one who is in the world, like the eye of a dead sheep (which seems as if it can see while it does not)? Can it turn him again into *ajnana* (error)? Please consider deeply.

Thereupon Vithoba agreed to leave the forest and return home.

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The siblings Muktabai, Sopan, Jnaneswar and Nivruttinath seated on the moving wall, Changdev seated on a tiger.
In the centre, Changdev bows to Jnaneswar



Ozhivil Odukkam

One of the rare *Vedantic* works, is the Tamil text Ozhivil Odukkam composed by Sri Kannudaiya Vallalar who was born in Sirkazhi, Tamil Nadu in the latter half of 14th century.

Sri Kannudaiya Vallalar decided to distil his Self-experience into words, the result was one of the most admired Vedantic texts in Tamil, namely Ozhivil Odukkam.

Sri Bhagavan used to quote from '*Ozhivil Odukkam*' to Sri Muruganar.

Chapter 1

General teachings of the *Vedas and Agamas*

1. The raised hand¹ of Him who pours forth his blissful compassion through the destruction of my personal self, is the baton of truth, flourished to call a halt to the dance of the *Vedas and Agamas*; it is the crown upon the head of the Mountain of the [six] *chakras*; it is the Sun, rising to dispel the darkness which obscures my consciousness.
2. What course of study might [the mature disciple] adopt to achieve the loss of his personal self, if the sadguru does not cast his glance [of grace upon him]? He is like an elephant in must², who becomes quite still, without the slightest tremor, when in his dream the enduring great lion that is the sadguru appears before him on his path.
3. Do not associate with those gurus who are impostors, [trying to impress you with their] actions. They are like labourers who work for wages, or merchants who sell and barter goods. As for the true, supreme guru, he is unchanging like time, yet casting his gaze [upon his disciple] he establishes him [in the non-dual state beyond objective consciousness]. There are no words to praise him. He is beyond the reach of the mind.
4. The teachings of those who are steeped in the delirium of the three deadly impurities are like the incoherent ravings of a madman; they impart them to the foolish, passing them off as wisdom. We are reminded of the story of the shepherd who jumped into a river, clutching a bear with her litter of cubs³ who were being swept along by the flood, and was drowned along with them.
5. Will a blind sifter of gold be called 'Kubera'?⁴ Can a ram discern and demonstrate the sweetness of sugarcane? Similarly, can we see any likeness between the guru who is the embodiment of grace and one who is incapable of establishing the disciple in *mouna*, beyond the thirty-six *tattvas*?

¹ The raised hand of the child Jnanasambandar, to point to Siva in the Sky

² Elephant is the disciple, and his must is his intoxication with the world of mind and senses

³ Mistaking the bear and cubs to be his sheep

⁴ Kubera is the god of Wealth

6. Alas, will they (the false gurus) ever free themselves from the sin of prescribing to us how we may obtain the fruits of union [with *Sivam*]⁵, without the witness of their own consciousness? [Their disciples are like] strangers who do not know [where they are], wandering about, getting lost and suffering, after taking directions to a place from someone who has never been there himself.

7. Know that only he is the *jnana guru* who, with a glance, brings the disciple to absolute stillness, having perceived [in him] the state of maturity wherein he becomes harmonised [with the Self] as that which is false gradually disappears, so that he dissolves into the waves [of the ocean] of bliss of union [with the divine], in which he exists as Reality itself.

8. In divine silence, overflowing with the bliss of *Sivam*⁶, the guru speaks [without speaking], like a honey bee regurgitating the nectar it has consumed into the honeycomb. For those [disciples] who at that time wait in attendance without any thought in their minds, like the seasons which appear in due course, his words will constitute lofty *tapas*, or the import of the *Vedas*.

9. Like a lamp in the dark, like the shining of the moon and sun, the holy word of him whose form is supreme bliss, and who transcends even grace itself, resembles a rain of ambrosia, a voice from the heavens, or a good omen. Know that there is in it no trace of the ego.

10. The guru who, like the shadow person in the sky, materialises in the bliss [of the Self], is the enemy of *maya*⁷. His compassionate word in which the mind has died is like the utterance of a man possessed, a brave warrior, a king, a spurned lover riding the palmyra branch, or a suicidal maniac.

11. This work was created for our salvation through the grace of the one known as Sambandhar of Sirkazhi⁸, he who is learned in the *Vedas*, the pure One, the King of Tamil, who, cutting away the contamination of my personal self through [the initiation known as] *sadya-nirvana-diksha*⁹, and establishing me [in the state of *Sivam*], reveals [through me] the path of liberation.

12. The Self exists free of all association in the absolute fullness that is free of all divisions. Many are the means pursued by those who desire to be released from the suffering caused by the defilements that obscure it. As one might tip a bag upside down to fully reveal its contents¹⁰, we shall now speak of the state of your subsiding through the destruction [of your personal self], in which you[r true Self] do[es] not die.

⁵ Four states of bliss – salokam - dwelling in the realm of god; samipam - nearness to god; sarupam-bearing the likeness of god; sayujyam - Identity with god

⁶ Sivam is the transcendental consciousness on which the whole creation is projected

⁷ Maya is the limiting principle which brings into being the finite by limiting the infinite

⁸ A small city near the east coast of Tamilnadu 20 kms from Chidambaram

⁹ A kind of diksha (initiation) which enables the disciple to attain salvation instantaneously

¹⁰ When one holds a bag upside-down the contents will not fail to fall out and be revealed. In the same way the author undertakes to reveal the truth without withholding anything

13. Hear the title of this work, which speaks in a clearly comprehensible manner of the consciousness in which the word of the guru, the holy scriptures and one's personal experience are harmoniously combined, and of the limiting factors which veil it. It is 'Ozhivil Odukkam' ¹¹, the seed of all works which elaborate upon these matters.

14. The other paths, of which *cariyai* is the first, treat of the disciplines of *tantra and mantra*¹², and can only lead to further attachments. Know that this path is the teaching given only to those who, through merit previously earned, are extremely mature in the *tapas* of renunciation, in order to remove their [remaining] attachments.

15. This work is for those who would enter fire, or abandon themselves to a tiger or a snake, if the guru so commanded it. They are to him as life is to the body, as the eyelid is to the eye, or as thread is to the needle. It will be of no use to the spiritually immature, just as a banana tree will not be consumed even if burned in a hot fire, nor a clay pot transformed into gold by the alchemist's stone.

16. This work is intended for those who experience it as would a sensualist, immersed in the thrilling waves of an ocean of bliss as he listens to a song about the fivefold pleasures of the lover's embrace; like the lotus flower opening at dawn, its mouth like the tiny slit in a tinkling bell; or like those who succumb to delight on hearing a song from the lutes of celestial minstrels.

17. For a work that does not bow [to any god], there can be no obeisance [paid to any god]. What good would it do if, begging indulgence for its flaws, I solicited praise on its behalf? Whether I begged indulgence for it or not, it would not be pleasing to all. Yet there is no work that would be considered bad by all.

18. The sounds made by those who, forgetting themselves entirely, weep uncontrollably [at a funeral] will not chime with the rhythm of the drum, [the sounds of] the flute, and [the movements of] those who dance to them. Listen, for such is the nature of this work. If I am to explain it, [I would ask] who will be left to judge of the utility of a work which has no [objective] fruits? All one can do is dissolve away, so that one unites with it.

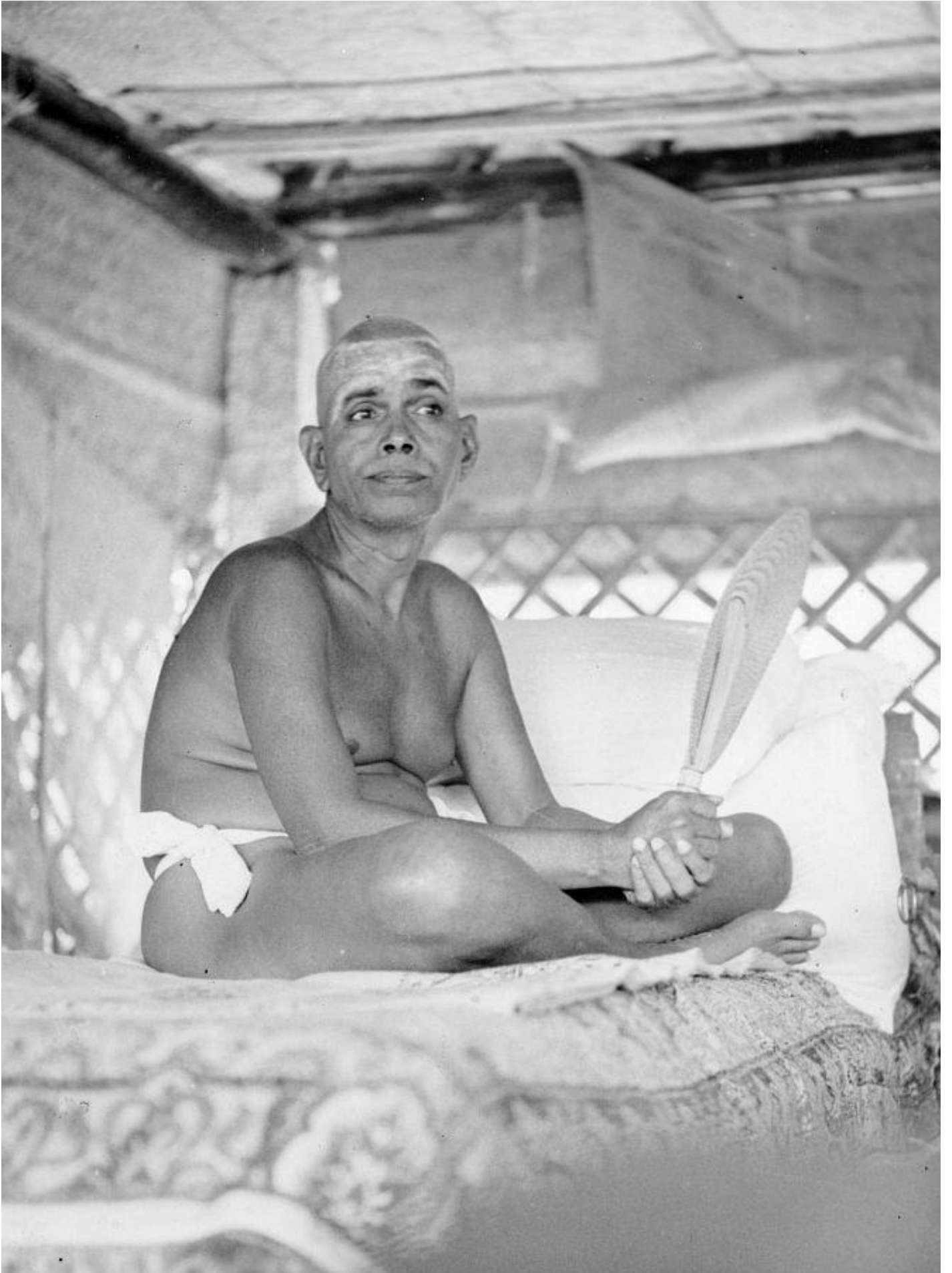
19. Words cannot grasp and express the loss of the ego consciousness. Will the people of the world be able to grasp it by going up to it on foot, by thinking about it, or by looking at it? Should you wish to understand it, it is like being shown the entire ocean reduced to an image in a peepshow, or like the subtle signs that women make to their lovers. This you should know.

20. Can divine silence, the undivided non-dual bliss, which is [onefold, yet twofold] like the trunk of an elephant¹³, be grasped by speech or mind? If you dwell upon it with the

¹¹ Subsiding [in the Self] through the elimination of [impediments]

¹² These are the disciplines of Siva Agama

¹³ Just as the Trunk of an elephant is both an organ of touch and smell, but is not defined by either



insight of *jnana*¹⁴, in the way one recognises a house by the crow perched upon it, or the moon by the finger pointing at it, you will become *Sivam*.

21. Those who engage in reasoning and argument are ignorant fools, like ticks on the teat of cow, [unable to drink the milk], like a great buffalo who drinks the water [only after muddying it], or like those who would grind up sandalwood without using water. If you heed their words – a collection of falsehoods which are like the many streams of water flowing through a sieve or strainer – behold, hell will be your destiny.

22. Know that the search for the sadguru is the sign of extreme spiritual maturity. It is like that of a blind man seeking water after suffering from the heat of a forest fire in the mountains; or that of a calf at the times when it yearns for its mother, or like that of someone who is totally obsessed with the thought of possessing a certain object.

23. Without a single, unifying nature, a multitude of different forms, male, female and neuter, are created, evolve and disappear. In order for this to take place, there must be one Creator who is the cause of these phenomena. Those works which reveal Him are the *Vedas and Agamas*.

24. That *Sivam* is not known unto itself nor does it know anything that is other than itself. If it possessed thought then there would be for it the absence of thought, forgetfulness. [Therefore it does not possess thought]. There is for it no birth or death. The five divine operations unfold in its mere presence. The blissful voice of the *Vedas and Agamas* gives only the merest hint of its nature.

25. Beginningless, it exists for all eternity; it is unchanging and all-transcending; it is infinitely subtle; it neither waxes nor wanes; it is unmoving like the ether through which the air moves; know that it is the absolute fullness [of the Self].

26. Its eightfold form¹⁵; Its five divine operations¹⁶; the divine forms [in which it manifests according to its] will; the rewards [accorded to the worshippers of those forms]; its absolute perfection, which is impossible to perceive with the mind¹⁷; the revealing of it [through the agency of the guru]; the meditation practices [which are prescribed on the spiritual path]; the non-dual state in which you subside, as bliss arises upon the loss of yourself; the duality [which precedes that state] – all these are due to *Sivam's* grace.

27. When we speak of 'you', of the worldly bond, and of Him who is your support, [you should know that] you alone are the ground [for the other two]. Just as, when firewood is kindled into fire, the flame cannot be known separately from its heat, just so, you are That [*Sivam*].

¹⁴ The direct path in which the disciple seeks to attain direct intuitive awareness of their oneness with Sivam

¹⁵ The eight forms are the five elements, sun, moon and soul

¹⁶ The five divine operations are creation, maintenance, destruction, veiling and granting of grace

¹⁷ Impossible to show or point to

28. Ceaselessly the conscious soul, along with the body and the rest of the faculties, endures unbearable torment, veiled by the three *avasthas*¹⁸, waking, dream and deep sleep. It is as if it had taken poison. That is the way of the three impurities, which constitute the objects of your desires. Know that if [the *avasthas*], the mould [that shapes the individual consciousness], is removed, it will be seen that the way of divine grace is only yourself.

29. If, for those who know their true Self, there are no instruments of knowledge, no [embodied] self, and no fruits [of these to be experienced], can we say, 'Know *Sivam* !'? Lord of consciousness, like the gold which shines ever brighter on being refined, we will eliminate your personal consciousness, so that, as it is worn away, you remain as *Sivam* only.

30. Is the Self, which is infinite bliss, exterior [to the individual consciousness]? Observe the nature of a life subjugated to the ego, which is like that of a fish swimming in the milk ocean¹⁹, [yet unable to drink the milk] ! The light of the Self endures without rising or setting, yet that [ego] transforms it into darkness, just as the action of fire can be suspended by mantras.

31. *Sivam* can be compared to the ocean; the soul, to its water; the impurity [which gives rise to the ego] to the salt in the water; *karma*, to the wind that stirs up the ocean, and the ego consciousness, to the waves upon it. Know that, in this way, that fundamental [ignorance], through the medium of the mental faculties and the five senses, whirls you ceaselessly about like a top.

32. Inwardly realise that you are the knowledge that knows the reality in which earth and the other elements, sound and the other subtle elements, the mouth and the other organs of action, the mind and the other organs of perception, the eye and the other organs of sense, and *nada* and the rest of the pure, and pure-impure *tattvas* are seen to be unreal and cease to exist. [Know also that you are the knowledge that knows] the support that makes you aware of yourself as a finite soul.

33. The five divine operations are nothing other than the five states of the soul. Clearly understand the wondrous dance in which they ceaselessly delude you, spinning you endlessly like a whirling firebrand through these five states. You are like a clear crystal in which the five colours are reflected.

34. The modifications of *maya* are endless, like the delusion caused by intoxicating liquor. They will not be eliminated by your own efforts unless you remain as you are, without

¹⁸ As long as the states of waking, dream and deep sleep dominate consciousness there is no opportunity for the consciousness to free itself and glimpse its higher nature

¹⁹ The milk ocean is compared to the bliss of the Self and the ego to a fish swimming in it, which is imagined to be aware only of other objects and unaware of the milk [bliss]

identifying with them, as one who is merely playing a part in a masquerade. This you should know.

35. Once the fear caused by mistaking a rope for a snake has gone, will it come back, however much we try to recreate the situation, weeping and trembling as before? Similarly, even if a *Siva yogi*, in whom the elimination of the five divine operations, (i.e. the five *avasthas*) is firmly established, should fix his thoughts on these and summon them, bidding them return one more time, they will not stir. What more is there to say?

36. The knowledge of the *Siva jnani* does not know itself. It is like the eye of someone who is stripping away the husk of an immature plantain. Although he may continue to speak [of 'I' and 'you'], there remains nothing that is different from himself. The word 'I' is just a word to him, just as to the tongue the word 'tongue' is just a word.

37. Since it is said [in the *Vedas and Agamas*]²⁰ that all that one knows is not oneself, is it not evident that simply remaining still is to dwell as That (i.e. the Self, Brahman or *Sivam*)? Although its mouth may open and close, does a severed head know anything? Ascertain the truth for yourself.

38. If the Self, which neither knows nor forgets, is regarded as an object by those who would know it, is this delusion, or is it knowledge? To know consciousness is simply to remain as consciousness. Therefore know that, in one sense, consciousness is like the thirty-six *tattvas*, each of which, respectively, is not aware of its own knowledge (i.e. does not possess self-consciousness).

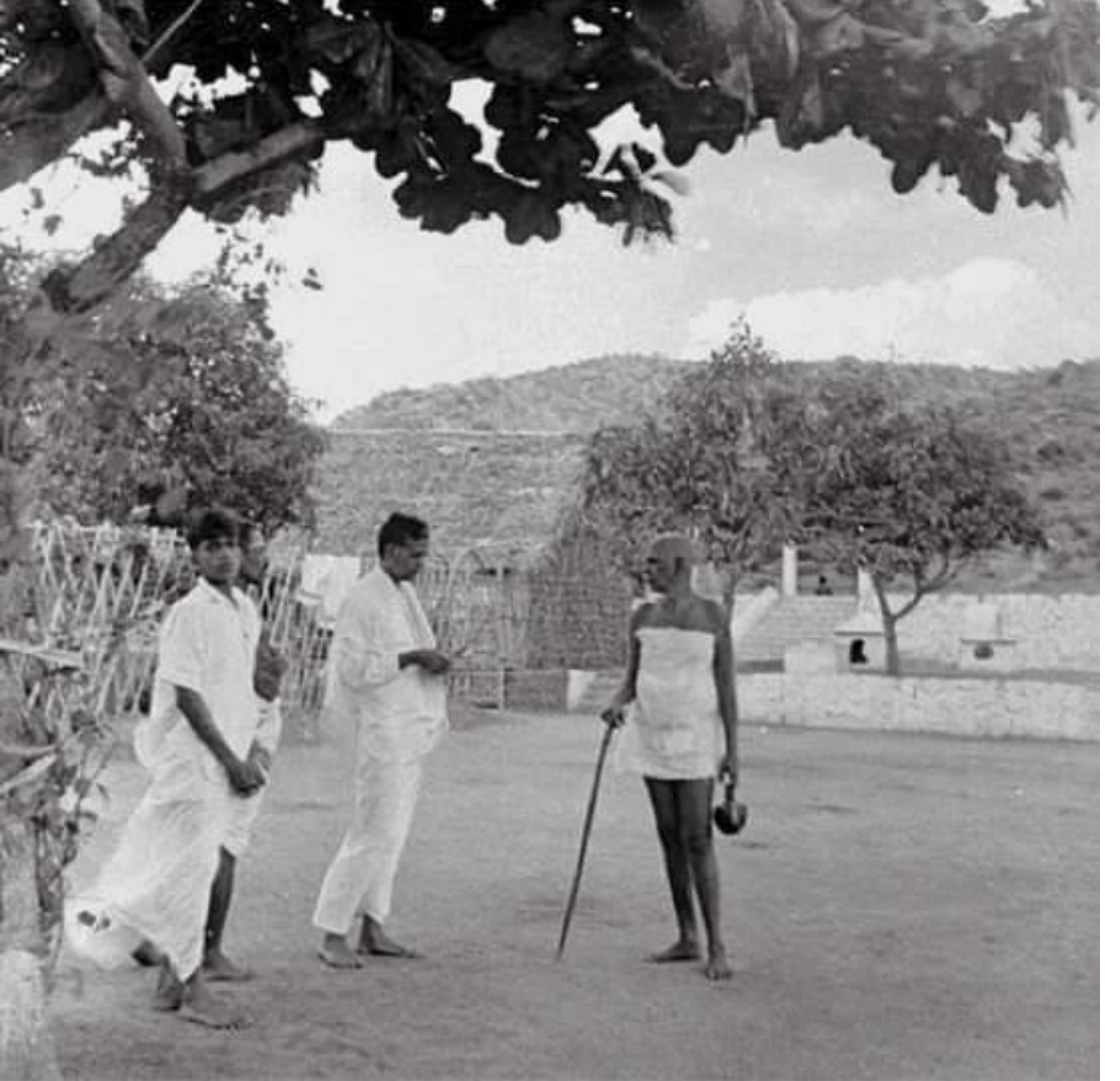
39. Will *Sivam*, your unseen support, which is beyond even the *nada tattva*, ever be known objectively by you? It would be as if you could lift the earth itself using a lever. If it did appear to you, it would be like a finger touching its own tip, or a mouth eating its own face and laughing about it. Consider and know.

40. You are like a clear crystal that takes on the colour of its background. Why then, in order to be free of attachment, do you attempt to know objectively the [true] attachment, [which is *Sivam*]? Know that the ignorance which attempts to know *Sivam* as an object separate from itself is known as *anavam*.

41. To know oneself through grace, to experience the all-embracing reality in the state of *parai*²¹ as one becomes merged with that grace, [to become bliss itself] as the state of *parai* disappears, and finally to attain the transcendent state which is beyond even bliss, is the [state of] divine silence of the non-dual *Siddhanta*. Know that this is also the final goal of *Vedanta*.

²⁰ Hindu Scriptures

²¹ A term in Siddhanta used to used for 'The state of the individual soul in which it remains actionless enjoying grace from Siva



Strangers too had access to Sri Bhagavan

42. 'The conclusion of the *Vedanta*, in which the first, second and third persons merge as oneself, one experiences the bliss that ensues upon the extinction of that self, and [finally] there is no one to say, "This is bliss", is the deathless state of liberation.' Thus spoke [Jnanasambandhar], he who, untaught, knew the *Vedas*.

43. Stripping away *kala*²² and all the rest (the *adhvan* – *paths to liberation* in Saivism), and revealing [to me my true nature], he annihilated my former vision so that it receded and vanished in the distance, just as, for those who climb a mountain, their new perspective replaces the one they experienced at ground level. Free of all *vasanas*, he shrouds me [in his infinite bliss] and never leaves me. Should I attempt to speak of his glorious might, only silence will result.

44. He said, 'All that you refer to [objectively] as "this" is false.' And now, for me, there remains no dwelling place other than the all-embracing expanse of the Self. 'Know that we are that,' he said. Shall we call it the sun that turns night into day, or shall we call it [the ocean of] supreme bliss? I know not.

45. Unless it is revealed to you, you cannot know [the Self], he said. Should you attempt to know that which endures as the cure for the forgetfulness [of your true identity], that would be like an arrow aimed at the sky as its target. Though we speak of knowledge, [the voice that communicated that knowledge] will be as a voice from the heavens.

46. [The three defilements], *anava*, *kanma* and *maya*²³, produce the illusion of veiling and multiplicity, but as these disappear, their foundation destroyed, can the state of *nishta*²⁴ which then remains possess duality? Apart from consciousness there is nothing. You should remain just as the ether remains, untouched by the shadow of any object.

47. When consciousness is without movement, that is the all-embracing fullness of Reality. Inasmuch as there is movement in consciousness, that Reality appears false. This is like the opening and closing of the eye. As an illustration of this, observe the manner in which there is wind when the air moves, and when it is still, there is not.

48. For those who have transcended even the consciousness that is experienced as the *nada tattvam*, *Siddhanta*, which is itself the final conclusion of the *Vedas*, will not be different from *Vedanta*. Between the state in which the practice of saying 'Not this, not this' has been transcended, and personal consciousness and the attachment [which gives rise to it] have been destroyed, [and the final state, beyond bliss], consciousness-bliss will arise in you.

²² One of the paths to liberation

²³ The three impurities- Anava – causes the soul to believe that it is limited, finite, kanma – makes the jiva believe that it is itself the author of its actions, not realising that Sivam, the Self, is their true author, maya - earlier mentioned as one of the universal constituents, the force which appears to restrict the infinite powers of Sivam and bring into existence the individual soul

²⁴ The state of dwelling as the Self

49. In the pure state of the Self, there is no movement, either in terms of the *jīva* merging with the Self upon the subsidence of the ego, which lies even beyond the thirty-six *tattvas*, or of the Self coming [to manifest upon the subsidence of the ego]. If you describe that state as 'oneness', there will still remain some residual trace of 'you'. Know, therefore, that nothing whatsoever can be said of it.

50. The unalloyed state of overflowing bliss is comparable to the state of total unconsciousness. Those who have transcended even that state will be like the rays of the silvery moon [of the Self], moving in the ambrosial essence which lies beyond the sphere of consciousness.

51. Rather than removing the states of remembering and forgetting, [showing you the means for] the destruction of your personal self, and thus destroying it, to babble on about using this method or that method to dissolve away that personal self is quite useless; it is akin to playing games with *mantras* or performing magic tricks; it is like throwing a gourd into the ocean²⁵; it is the imprisonment of true knowledge.

52. Upon the elimination of sound and the rest of the *tattvas*, when 'self' and 'other' cease to be, the question of the merits of *Siddhanta* and *Vedanta* will be meaningless. My son, the state of liberation is indescribable; it is beyond bliss itself. To define it in dualistic terms is merely the play of the mind.

53. The great drum of the lofty *Vedas* beats, declaring that these eight paths are not for the *Siva yogi*: mental anxiety, fear, disgrace, piety, revulsion, rites performed for removing the sins of the ego, and the observances of caste and religion.

54. Those who have not become one with the supreme reality are [ever-changeable] like the moon reflected in water. Know that the austerities and other actions performed by those who have attained that supreme reality are like the actions of washing the heavens with rainwater, or setting fire to the wind.

55. To impute wrongdoing to a *Siva yogi* is like censuring death [for killing] or accusing the wind or the sun of impropriety [for associating with that which is unclean or improper]. It is caused by the bondage of the three defilements, that powerful bewilderment which, whirling along [those who make such accusations], ceaselessly drives them before it.

56. If it is only a dog that one is riding, what does it matter if one falls off, or succeeds in riding it? Similarly, what does it matter to the *jnani* if the world, which to him is a ghost-like appearance, blames him or praises him? He is not touched by it. For him there is

²⁵ Like the gourd which floats and does not sink into the Ocean, the ego not sinking into Ocean of the Self

neither honour nor disgrace, neither past nor future. Free of all limitation, he does what is required.

57. We may refer to our Lord Sambandhar, who gave to us the four paths, the first of which is 'The Way of Truth' [*jnana*], and the last of which is 'The Way of the Servant' [*cariyai*], as an ascetic, a king, a blissful one, a yogi, a hedonist, a virtuous one, or as Death itself.

58. The holy form of the *jnani*, he who has attained mastery over the conjuring trick of the *tattvas*, he who is free of the personal self, he who is without anything that is his, is the place where perpetual bliss burgeons forth. All the delight experienced by his divine body, which resembles the trunk of the elephant [in its twofold nature], is *puja* to the Lord, and it is through this *puja* that the world flourishes. Consider this.

59. Bodily unguents, chaplets of flowers, jewellery and garments embroidered with gold are suitable for royal consorts, greatly desired by their kings, but not for widows bereft of all gold and jewels. Enjoyments are for the *jivan mukta* only, and not for those who are like oxen [toiling on the paths of *cariyai*, *kiriyai* and *yogam*²⁶].

60. The elephant is considered glorious in *must*, but when a dog goes mad, is that the same thing? Similarly when a *jnani* transgresses the accepted limits, it is considered to be decorous, but this is not the case when one bound by *karma* transgresses those limits.

61. For those of the highest spiritual attainment, the holy scriptures are not sufficient to bestow upon them the wonder of divine grace. It is a blessing which words cannot describe. It assumes countless forms, and those who come to receive it are of countless different types.

62. Those who dwell as knowledge upon the abolition of ignorance; who, upon the abolition of both [knowledge and ignorance], do not know even that knowledge, and hence are not separate [from the Self], have attained absorption in true knowledge (*jnana samadhi*) through the loss of their personal self, and in that very instant are liberated whilst in the body (*jivan muktas*).

63. To the unwitting onlooker the thousand eyes of Indra have a noble aspect, but to him, [knowing them as they once were] as vulvas, they possess the quality of unending shame. Of what use are the austerities of those who merely wear the bright ascetic's garb, even if they endure for countless eons of time? They are like courtesans [who feel their own shame] even as the world honours them.

²⁶ Cariyai – worship of deities and performance of various external religious duties, kiriyai – perform rituals including *puja*, *yogam* – performing yogic asanas and engage in meditation and contemplation



Chapter 2

The extinction of the superior ones' [attachment to the world] through the cessation of the veiling aspect of *Sivam's* energy of grace²⁷

64. The benefactor and king of gurus [Jnanasambandhar] taught me the way in which the four states beginning with *salokam*²⁸ correspond to the four paths beginning with *cariyai*. He also imparted to me the teachings [suitable for], and the qualities [characteristic of], the [corresponding] four degrees of spiritual maturity found amongst disciples.

65. The words of our master were not simple replies, made in the manner of a *kinnari*²⁹ player, matching his accompaniment to the measure of what he hears. His words were like the pure notes that rise from the golden lutes in the hands of those who remain lost in bliss whilst beholding the divine dance of Lord Siva.

66. For the highest degree of seeker, the pure state [of the Self] may be attained through the mere silent glance of the guru. For [the second degree], those who have understood the nature of the personal self, a single word will be as the elixir of life. [For the third degree] a few words [will be enough], like the intermittent call of the owl. [For the lowest degree that state can only be obtained by constant instruction], like the constant humming of a honey bee, drunk on nectar.

67. A young girl, during adolescence, her sense of modesty grows, becomes reserved and covers herself up, no longer exposing her naked body except in the embrace of her husband. In a similar fashion, the reality of the Self will only be known upon the eradication of the personal consciousness, which alternates between suffering from the fruits of its actions, and experiencing bliss when it is brought to stillness.

68. One may learn about the five *malams*, the myriad individual souls, the Lord, the five divine operations, the *avasthas* and the defective individual consciousness; one may follow the path of *cariyai* and the rest. However, the understanding in which the affliction of the ego has not been annihilated will be [useless] like the tiny gold fragments embedded in the wax of the goldsmith.

69. Like poverty in an alchemist, like disease in a great physician, or like betel spit on a self-proclaimed war hero, what a degrading thing it is for people to go about saying, 'I am that !' when what they are really doing is totally eradicating in themselves the bliss that comes from true knowledge. Who could save them from such humiliation?

70. The joyful words of the *jnani*, spoken before those who are free of delusion, will be fitting instruction to others of lesser attainment also. Remain still and listen, like the

²⁷ Saktinipata – Settling of the divine grace in the soul when it is ripe

²⁸ The spiritual state of the disciple on each of the four spiritual paths

²⁹ A musical instrument smaller than the Indian lute –(*Vinai*) with two steel strings

herdsman, [who watches over his herd, asleep yet] not sleeping. The malady [of your *karma* in this life] will be expunged, like dirt in cloth. I have said all that needs to be said.

71. Those who devote themselves to spiritual practice will have endured birth by egg and the other three kinds of birth³⁰ in countless different incarnations³¹; finally they will have been born in human births, and, once the effects of their good and evil deeds have been equalised, will embark upon the paths of *cariyai* and the rest in the service of god; these are the people who possess the four kinds of maturity that are hard to attain.

72. Feeling revulsion for worldly enjoyments, feeling no desire for the lower worldly pleasures or the higher states of bliss, rejecting them all as absolutely false, a mere conjuring trick, the disciple will begin to ask, 'What is this body, who am I, and what is my source?' and he will say, 'We shall seek out the one who will reveal to us the truth of these matters !' Thus arises the longing to make one what formerly appeared as two.

73. They will perspire; tears will course down their cheeks; their hearts will thump and their bodies will shake; speech will desert them, and their minds will become agitated and confused; their bodies will burn feverishly, churned up like the roiling clouds; and their hair will stand on end. Such are the eight symptoms which mark those who desire[to find the guru].

74. An air of distraction; thoughts [fixed on the guru]; sighs [on thinking of the guru]; fevers inexplicable to others [caused by those thoughts]; refusal of all sustenance; reluctance to speak; keeping silence; mental confusion; fainting and death – these ten are the states [of the disciple before he finds his guru].

75. Know that at the very instant that the guru reveals his holy form, and that which is inner manifests outwardly, as the physical manifestation of their quest, he will grant initiation of the six kinds³² – three inward and three outward, as prescribed [in the *Vedas and Agamas*] – to those of highest maturity, who have petitioned him, as [the river of devotion] overflows its banks.

76. Through his touch, thought and glance, the guru will drive out all the three *malams*, *anavam*, *mayai* and *kanmam*. Then, bestowing his wisdom through his word, he will remove the illusion of personal consciousness – which leads to involvement in *cariyai* and the other three paths – whereupon that personal consciousness will be no more.

77. To some disciples the secret of the master's teaching will only be revealed at the appropriate time or in the appropriate situation; or it will require experience, like that of an expert in recognising a gemstone. Others will grasp the truth that is being

³⁰ Andaja – produced by egg; svedaja – engendered by heat and damp; udbhija – sprouting from seeds roots etc; jarayuja – born from the womb i.e. mammals and humans

³¹ The total number of species is given as 84 lakhs, that is to say 8400000.

³² Initiation- inner forms - by the holy glance, by thought, by yoga; the outer forms – by touch, by word, by holy scripture

transmitted like the swan, which drinks the milk, leaving the water with which it is mixed; like the oyster, which waits for raindrops to fall into it then closes up; like a heron, which remains motionless, waiting for a fish to pass; like water that vanishes instantly on falling onto red-hot iron, or in the manner of those who can correctly appraise a coin that is presented to them in the space of a flash of lightning.

78. The way in which the disciple is killed [by the word of the master], yet still lives, may be compared to a wife dying on merely hearing of the death of her husband; to milk [which boils over in an instant]; to a deeply devoted wife, immolating herself on her husband's funeral pyre; to a loving widow [who remains faithful to her husband even after he dies], or to the generosity of Karna at the time of his death³³.

79. Just as the gold which the goldsmith melts down in his crucible is of various degrees of purity, the results of the master's teaching, though taken from the Siva *Agamas* and clearly conveyed, will vary, depending upon the degree of ripeness of the disciple. Know that all do not share the same degree of maturity.

80. The true reality of the life of the householder will become clear [to those of low spiritual maturity] only very slowly. It can be compared to carving a statue by gradually chipping away the stone, or to the process of purifying muddy water with clearing nut.³⁴ In the end this ancient world will be as repulsive to him as rice vomited up. Like the stem of a plantain tree placed on the fire, [very slow to burn], true knowledge (*jnana*) will arise in him only very slowly.

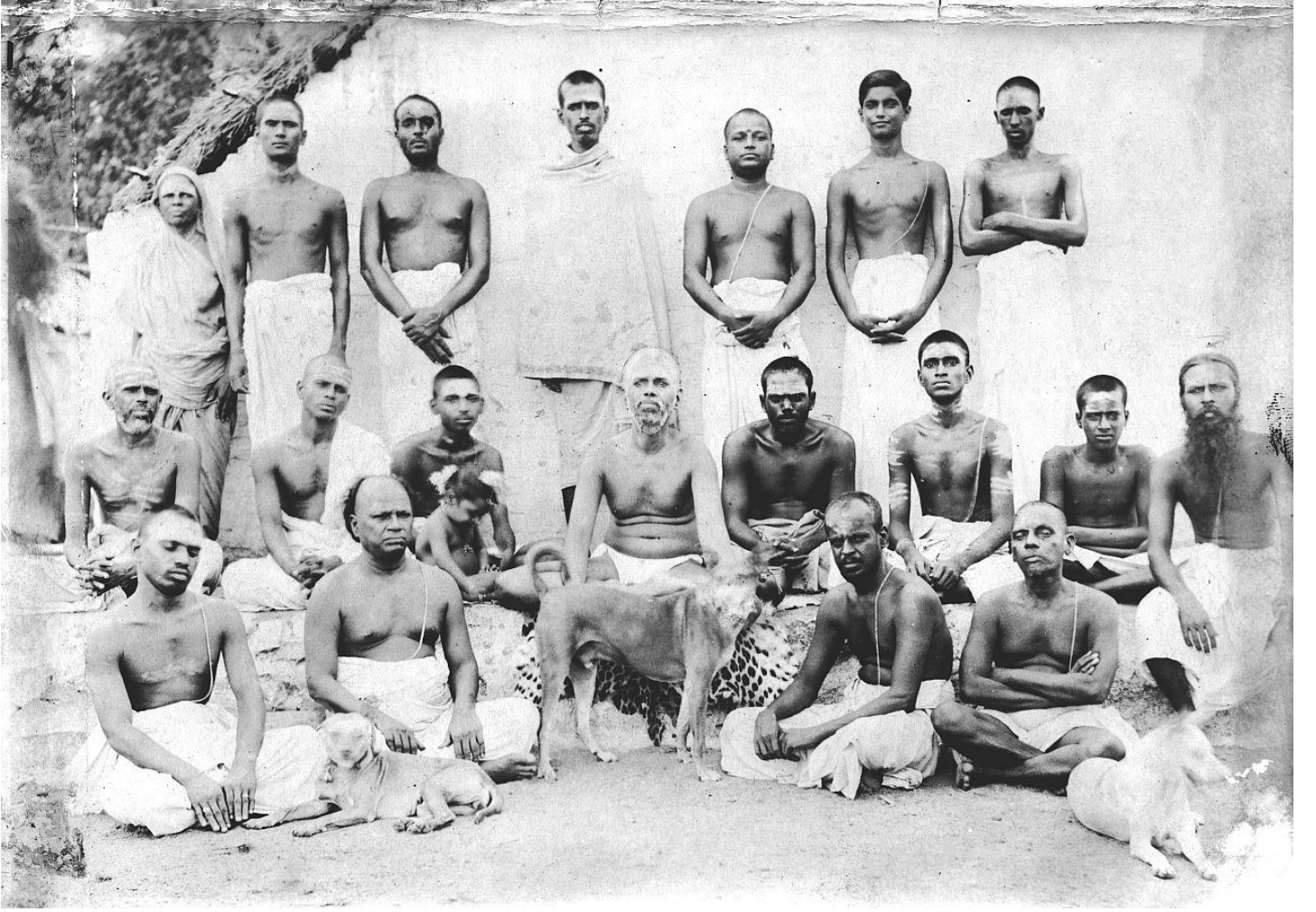
81. For those whose nature can be moulded as one would forge an image in iron, true knowledge will be won [more swiftly], as fire will burn green firewood. Then, like a drop of rain sliding from the leaf of a lotus, their worldly life will fall away. Divorced from them, the entire world will appear like a mirage.

82. [For the next highest class], to remove the body's inherited dispositions [and bestow *jnana*] will be like carving a wooden doll. [*Jnana* will arise in them swiftly], as fire consumes charcoal. They will be indifferent to the household they had previously cherished. It will be like a place of general assembly to them. Even the life of the gods will seem like an insubstantial dream.

83. For [those whose nature is easily moulded, like] dolls made out of butter, the acquisition of *jnana* will be swift, like squirrel fur or cotton falling into the flame of a lamp. For them there are no desires. Tears will pour down from their eyes; oblivious to time, sobbing and melting inwardly, they will laugh and cry by turns, and the hair of their bodies will stand on end.

³³ Karna is a major character in Mahabharata known for his generosity, is the half-brother of the Pandavas

³⁴ Clearing nut-Strychnos potatorum



Very old photograph surprisingly sent by an Old Devotee

84. [In those of the highest degree of maturity] the in-dwelling *anavam* and the outer *kanma* and *maya* have become separated [from their true self], just as the fruit of the tamarind becomes separate from its shell when ripe, and the seeds of future *karma* have been thus annihilated, just as an eyeless needle cannot be threaded. For such as these this freedom from desire is the bliss of the Self.

85. [The attainment of *jnana*] will be like the rising of the sun; like the overwhelming desire of the lover for his beloved; like a ship sighting shore after surviving the perils of the ocean; it will be like being freed from prison or being cured of an incurable disease; it will be like witnessing a miracle.

86. As the body, senses, mental faculties, the three *gunas* (principles of nature), and the ten vital airs fall away one after the other, [mature disciples will attain] the liberation which lies beyond *nada*, the highest of the *tattvas*; then the personal self, which stands in the middle ground [between the world and the Self], will be eradicated, and they will enter the ocean of supreme bliss. Finally, becoming free of all divisions, how will they not be amazed, knowing now that which they have never known?

87. What obstacle remains for those who have realised the nature of knowledge, the knower, and ignorance? Will they be parted [from the Self]? It is impossible, just as it would be impossible for the heavens, fearing they might be robbed, to go and hide in the kitchen.

88. For those experiencing blissful union [with the Self], having come to know the true reality as surely as they had once known the false, there is no longer any connection with anything whatsoever. What a wonder is the destruction of oneself, like the spreading rays of the sun, rising in the vision of a clear-sighted eye [and blotting it out completely].

89. For those whose personal consciousness has been annihilated, what association with anything whatsoever remains? For them, the whole universe has been destroyed. Where might they go and hide? Like the tale of the man who once went in search of a tiger, [was mauled by it and devoured], the Self will hold them in its unblinking gaze, and bring them to complete stillness.

90. Having realised the Self, they abide as That; for them, having perceived the nature of ignorance, there is neither knowing nor absence of knowledge. If one were to attempt to describe the bliss which flourishes in the pure emptiness of the Self, where they live without living, it would be like trying to calculate the volume of the heavens with a pint pot.

91. The *Agamas* speak of *Sivam* as 'the consciousness of consciousness', whilst *Vedanta* speaks of 'pure consciousness.' Both statements are appropriate when referring to the state in which there is no separation [from *Sivam* or Brahman]. Those who claim 'You are That' or 'I am Brahman' will try the patience even of Hari and Brahma.

Chapter 3

Transcending [the path of] yoga

92. Dismissing *cariyai* and *kiriyai* as worthless, the yogis perform *kriya yoga* to ward off physical death. It is difficult indeed to dissuade them from it. They do not realise that what appears to them as real whilst they are experiencing it is actually false. Will they ever escape from this fixed mindset?

93. They may gain the eight *siddhis*³⁵, and have the gods of the six paths manifest before them [in the six energy centres of the body], but in achieving that, a great sin will be committed, as they move up and down from one centre to another, going on and on, suffering and dying.

94. To attain the state of *samadhi*³⁶, remaining motionless like a wooden post through control of the breath, which is not [naturally] under conscious control, is comparable to the fate of a dumb blind man who has consumed poison, and who, in walking to a certain place, stumbles into a deep pit in a desolate area.

95. With your spiritual jargon, yogic postures and staring gaze, you act out a ludicrous pantomime of spiritual practice. Give up these worthless habits and remain motionless, as the pure consciousness which is all-embracing like the heavens, and in which there is neither knowing nor absence of knowing.

96. The yogi practises *samadhi*, burying himself beneath the *tattvas*. Could we blame anyone for calling him an ego-obsessed fool? Devoid of all common sense he is like someone who proposes to strip the bark off a stone to tie up an elephant, which even a tethering post cannot restrain, or someone who runs about trying to grasp the ether.

97. To undergo modifications of consciousness in the false world, which is like seeing one's reflection in ghee, or like seeing a person in the sky in the form of that reflection; to become one with pure light and sound and then to withdraw from those states – these are the activities of those who do not know their true Self.

98. The *jnani* rejects and eradicates the *tattvas* in order to merge into the absolute even in the waking state; the *kriya yogi* attempts to emulate him by enveloping himself in the *tattvas*, taking his perceptions to be real, just as the monkey who looks into a mirror sees his reflection as another real-life monkey. Since he has eliminated the *tattvas* and knows the true state, the *jnani* will reject the *kriya yogi's* practices as worthless.

³⁵ The ability to shrink oneself to the size of an Atom; the ability to increase one's bulk without limit; the power to make oneself or other things light, overcoming gravity; the faculty of increasing weight, solidity; the power of attaining everything desired; the power to overcome natural obstacles and go anywhere; the power of enchanting, changing the course of nature or assuming any form

³⁶ Become one with the object of meditation as all mental activity is repressed, the first state is manolaya – subsiding of the mind, the second state is manonasa – destruction of the mind

99. You so-called tapasvin! You are a fool whose thinking is like that of someone who seeks a cover to mask the heavens, rather than just closing his eyes! Is this madness due to the way you have been taught, to illustrations drawn from the *shastras*, to your own perversity of mind, to your habitual mode of thinking, or to something else altogether? What kind of yoga is this?

100. Like someone who mounts an elephant facing its tail in order to travel to his destination, will your ego consciousness ever be able to reach [the Self]? This (your attempt to know the Self as separate from yourself) is an occasion for much hilarity, like someone who attempts to seek out the demon which possesses and animates him, even though it is already clearly known to him.

101. Will sleep come to you if you summon it, rubbing your thighs, making snoring noises, and pretending to be unaware of your body? You complete good-for-nothings, if you try to mentally grasp the being-consciousness-bliss that manifests only after destroying your ego consciousness, will it not conceal itself from you?

102. Since oneself is not alone³⁷ [as a primal entity in one's own right], and since the Absolute is the all-embracing perfection, which is not different from oneself, then what good does it do to torment oneself in mind, word and deed, loudly proclaiming, 'The Self is beyond all measure !'

103. Can it be reasonable that you, having controlled your breath, mind and sight, so that they are entirely still, and buried yourself in that state so that you are entirely submerged in it, should expect to be able to merge with That which exists both within and without your body as your very Self, as being and non-being, and that which is beyond both of these?

104. Should you propose to remain free [of all the mental faculties], you will find that it is not possible, and that a sleep-like state supervenes; and should you attempt to remain [aware but] without any objective perception, you will experience [such phenomena as] flashing lights. Your aim is to establish the vital breath along with the errant mind in the *brahmarandhra*³⁸ *chakra* within the skull ! What kind of state is this?

105. The mind is like a caged monkey or the grotesque dance of a shadow puppet. Who could hope to subdue it, grasping it and bringing it under control? Even if one remains still, free of any objective perception, it will keep moving by itself, like a whirling rocket that moves under its own impulsion, the balls in a game of *ammanai*, or a spinning top.

106. It is the habitual nature of the mind to be active even when it is not directed towards any object. If you try to understand this nature, how will you not be confused? At the

³⁷ The individual consciousness is not a primal entity possessing an inherent reality of its own

³⁸ Brahmarandhra means fontanelle, aperture in the crown of the head associated with the Chakra sahasrara, the thousand-petalled lotus



slightest contact with it, there will be birth and death for you, but if it dies, you will become *Sivam*.

107. Abide simply as pure consciousness. Then delusion will not arise. If there is the slightest movement in consciousness, will not the world of diversity shoot forth like a sky rocket? This state of *samadhi*, can be compared to the perfect alignment of the pointers on a pair of scales. If that state arises, you will be a king of *jnana*. Who will be your equal?

108. Who taught water to be cool, fire to burn and the air to stir and be agitated? Whoever you are, the mind and the other faculties will not simply go away. To attempt to remove them is like trying to bury a shadow. You should see as the heavens³⁹ see. Only then will they be eliminated.

109. When you think of it, is it feasible to measure and know the extent of the earth and the heavens, the weight of the mountains and the volume of the surging ocean? Similarly, when you say that you are the Real, these are only words, [since it cannot be measured or known] without encompassing the destruction of your own ego-self. If you try to know it [otherwise], it will remain quite alien from you.

110. The world of *maya*, arising and subsiding by turns, is unreal like the clouds in the sky. If we do not realise this, and attempt to suppress the world that rises up using the mind that rises with it, will this not be like a ball, bouncing back again each time we hit it to the ground? Therefore observe it as the witness only. It will be like a tree dug up by the root, yielding neither flowers nor fruits.

111. Should you succeed even for a split second in reaching the state of absorption in the Self (*nishta*), which, as the pure state in which the discriminating consciousness has fallen away, is free of all limitation, ah! I am at a loss to describe it ! Is the bliss that rises up then a thing of little account? It would be as if one accessed the [vast] ocean of milk through the tiny hole in a teat !

112. Being totally identified with the body, you torment yourself saying, 'When will the time come that this body is no more, and divine grace will be mine?' What is the use of this? Do not the myriad phenomena that appear in the ether eventually subside again? Similarly, in the absolute fullness of Reality, which is beyond duality, there is nothing other than yourself.

113. Know that habit is pernicious. A fowl will scratch even at a bare rock, and dig around even in a heap of paddy. The blind man who recovers his sight will feel threatened by the light, recoil from it and refuse to give up his walking stick. Similarly the *jiva* will persist in perceiving distinctions in the grace of the Self [even after realising its non-dual nature].

³⁹ pure space has infinite capacity to contain and permeate all things and yet are not in contact with or affected by them.

114. Unless you slap it and drive it outside, a young calf will not leave its tethering post, even if you untie the rope. Likewise, even if you tell the *jiva* to abide as *Sivam*, so that it remains free of attachment like *Sivam* itself, thus removing its separate identity and bringing it to a state of oneness, it will revert to its dualistic mode of thought.

115. If someone tells you to abide as *Sivam*, you torment yourself thinking, 'I am that *Sivam*', thus falling from that very state. This is like the story of the man who, on being told not to think of a monkey, was unable to stop thinking about it. Is this not the work of the ego, *anava malam*?

116. Although the nature of the ego-consciousness has been pointed out to them, they still seek *Sivam*, just as the serpent with a jewel on its head continues to seek out darkness, even when it is already enveloped by it. Such behaviour is akin to someone digging a well in a lake to find water, or fighting with his own shadow to be free of it. Who are they that have the power to remove this ego-consciousness and abide as *Sivam*?

117. Abandoning formal worship, both inner and outer, yogic *samadhis* and those sleep-like states, in which the *kriya yogis* mimic the true *jnanis* who are free of the discriminating consciousness, the true *jnanis* abide in the Self, so that worldly bondage disappears, like the flame of a lighted lamp in daylight or the rays from a crystal at midday. Who can compare to them?

118. The Self now awakens the *jiva* from the darkness of absolute nescience, [unites it with the mind and senses], and [finally] abolishes the objective delusion of waking and sleep, gradually consuming the ego-consciousness as the flame consumes the wick of a lamp. Therefore the only recourse is to give oneself up as a prey to the Self. The very act of thinking about it will drive it away from you.

119. Even the Advaitins, who assert that all that they know objectively is false, cannot escape being trapped in an empty void. Like them you will be destined to repeated births and deaths. However, having experienced the loss of your ego-consciousness, and the bliss that arises thereafter, if you transcend even these, birth and death will end for you.

120. *Sivam* is the fullness of perfection which abides as the consciousness of consciousness itself; as that which is entirely without divisions. For those who presume to create and destroy *Sivam* in their minds, meditating on it sporadically, and in such a way that it is limited by their own imperfection, how can birth be avoided?

121. Even as I revelled ceaselessly in the alternating states of remembering (waking and dream) and forgetting (deep sleep), the mind's delusion, the appearance of a world of diversity and the consequent desire and aversion, Jnanasambandhar transformed me through his gaze and through his touch into his own likeness, as the sun dispels the darkness, and the philosopher's stone transforms base metal into gold.

Chapter 4

Transcending [the path of] *kiriyai*

122. Instead of remaining still, realising that the world of the *tattvas* is inert, and remaining free of all contact with it, [seeing nothing] like the eye of a dead ram⁴⁰, they invoke [the presence of the gods], perform worship to them, call upon them as 'The Absolute Perfection', seek them out [in holy *sthalas*], and, [when they cannot themselves find them], roll on the ground [in despair] and weep. Their actions are akin to the grotesque dance of a band of demons.

123. In those who, wearied by ritual activities, come to him asking for instruction, the illustrious One⁴¹ fosters the bliss of the Self, so that they dwell in silence. He is the true guru. As for the rest, know that, in so far as they cause the slightest movement in the minds of their disciples, they will be like Brahma, the creator of worlds, and the Lord of Death⁴².

124. Imagine the devotees of the god of Fire, grinding up ginger to ease the god's indigestion, covering him with straw [to keep him warm], and agonising [over their previous neglect] as if buried under a mountain of sorrow. To whom might we compare such people? To those who would try to wash water, bury their own shadow, or measure it [using their own foot]?

125. Those stupid teachers [of ritual worship]⁴³ do not realise that when we have to cross a river in spate or make a long journey on foot, there is no suffering for the water, nor for the road, but only for those who swim that water and walk that road. They might as well tell you to stop up the mouth of a river in spate, raise a ladder to reach the heavens or grab the feet of the wind.

126. Will even those who travel the heavens at will require a support? Are the heavens like the deep ocean to them, that they need to navigate it like a helmsman on a ship? What work do time and space perform? Similarly, can there be deeds performed by a perfected *Siva yogi*?

127. In fire itself there is nothing of the firewood, and in ghee there is no longer any milk. Similarly, *jnana* abolishes delusion as surely as the sun dispels darkness. Therefore it is given the name 'Destroyer of Actions'. This being so, can there be any performing of degrading actions by *jnanis*?

⁴⁰ The eyes of the dead goat glitter but see nothing; the eyes of the jnani are compared to the eyes of a dead goat – the Jnani is free from discriminating consciousness and therefore is not aware of the world and objects that others see

⁴¹ The guru is meant, who possesses the greatest wealth, the knowledge of Sivam

⁴² When the mind arises the world arises, therefore the false teacher will be like Brahma the creator of worlds in so far as his instructions cause the slightest movement whatsoever in the minds of the disciples and like Death in that he condemns them to repeated death and rebirth

⁴³ These are the teachers who purport to offer salvation by means of ritual worship



128. Even if *jnana* is attained through actions, it will not endure, just as all things that are born from a womb are destined for destruction. Your thoughts of grasping the Cause of all things [through your actions] is like trying to roll up ten million suns in a blanket of darkness.

129. If, desiring the state beyond even bliss, you say you will engage in actions to attain it, Will the true *jnanis* not ridicule you? Will anyone choose walking as a means of getting to Sleep? Your holy scriptures, *pujas* and *samadhis* are an aberration to true *jnanis*; they are no more than a collection of conditioned mental states, *maya*'s cohorts.

130. If it be said that bliss is in the ending of all actions, then we shall hardly need to assert that suffering is in the arising of actions. Whatever actions we do perform, we should perform them according to the example of those whose only concern is to feed and clothe the body, taking no pleasure in them, like a barren woman [with no prospect of bearing children].

131. To proclaim amidst tears and sobs the holy scriptures, which are the means expressly designed to make us still; to perform religious rituals; to sit in meditation with the body stretched and contorted in postures designed by the mind – all these things are a comedy show designed for the entertainment of *jnanis*.

132. Who has attained liberation by studying and learning the holy texts, which themselves are insufficient to contain all the religious systems with their commentaries and interpretations? To do so is like going to the lengths of covering the sky with a canopy and the earth with leather when setting out on a journey, instead of simply wearing sandals and taking an umbrella.

133. The supreme reality is not known [objectively], since, when you become pure consciousness, and then become the One that makes this consciousness known, both of these come to an end. Wicked wretches! How then can you hope to experience that reality through the false understanding in which you grasp it for a while with the ego-consciousness, then let it go again?

134. Since the destruction of your ego-consciousness is His wish⁴⁴, you should consider its loss to be your own goal also. Know that *ajnana*, ignorance, consists in not knowing how to achieve this loss. False one, hear then the means of the destruction of your ego-consciousness!

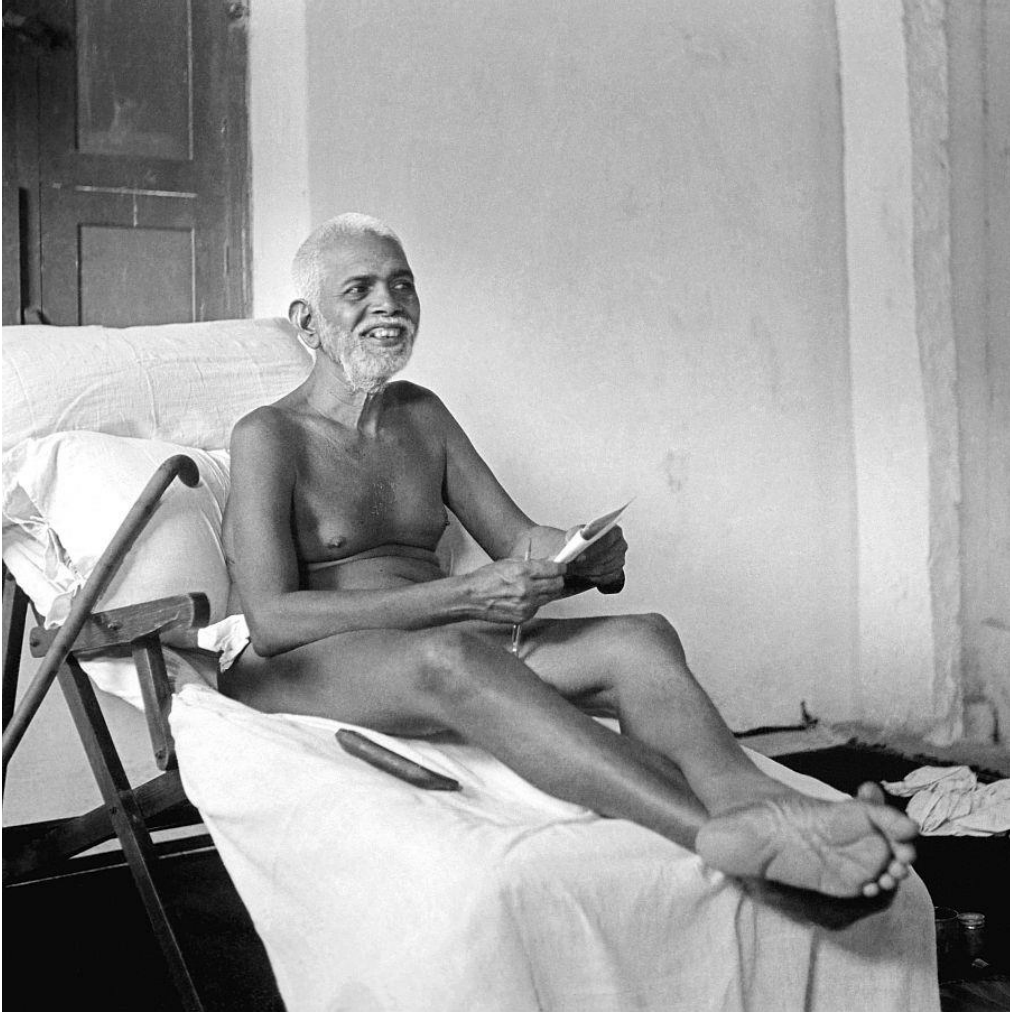
135. When a stick of firewood is burnt up completely there is no more smoke or flame, and when a disease is cured, the medicine that was taken to cure it disappears with it. Similarly your ever-ramifying actions are at the level of the mind [and will end when the

⁴⁴ Though Sivam, Self the Supreme reality cannot be said to possess any desire, it is the nature of the Self to manifest itself in the individual consciousness, overcoming all barriers, transcending it and annihilating it

mind ends]. Why then do you attempt to unite [with the Self by means of those actions]? Simply remain as pure subject, without a second, just as a smaller shadow is subsumed in a greater one.

136. You are the consciousness that perceives, and I, the Real, am the consciousness through which you perceive. Once you begin to investigate these, they will begin to loosen their hold. When they finally fall away, you should feel a degree of shame and not attempt to look back at me, thinking 'I'. Rather should you remain still, like a pot sunk in the ocean.

137. [To think that the performance of rituals] will pass for the bliss of *Sivam* is very strange, like a new bride mistaking the wedding rites for consummation! Just as, unmoving, the oil in a lamp spreads [through the wick and is consumed] by the flame, the true state is to give yourself up to be consumed [by the Self].



Sri Bhagavan enjoying reading a 'Questionnaire' given to Him by a devotee!

Chapter 5

Transcending [the path of] *cariyai*

138. When will there be happiness for those who do not subside inwardly, but instead, thinking these activities to be the means of liberation, torment their bodies with pilgrimages, bathing in holy tanks and observing fasts on days which they deem auspicious? Their present lot is suffering only. When will their objective consciousness be lost and bliss arise in them?

139. You lost souls, it seems you never asked if, the personal consciousness having died, you should not go about in the world as if your body were a walking corpse! Where have you heard that the body can be got rid of through the efforts of the body itself?

140. If you ask us what place we have come from just now, and if we have forgotten what place it is, when you ask us the way to that place, all roads will seem the same, as if the seven worlds had merged into one.

141. Displays of ochre robes, long strings of *rudraksha* beads, white ash, and white teeth [from abstaining from chewing betel] constitute the counterfeiting of *jnana*. To those who know the nature of the *all-pervading Sivam*, the One who is free of all desire, the *jiva*, the one of limited, worldly knowledge, and the *worldly bond*, which is unreal, will there be such things as word or form?

142. They flash their white teeth, which are well suited to the dispensation of limited, worldly knowledge; they display their erudition, flourishing weighty tomes; they wear ochre robes and earrings; they wear a *rudraksha* bead in a golden locket around their necks; they sit in meditation with their eyeballs rolled upwards, as if they have transcended the thirty-six *tattvas*. Yet all this is but the work of great *maya*, that whirls [like a toy windmill].

143. For those who merely act the part of the realised sage what enjoyment will there be, other than that of the daily offerings of food they receive? Can they know the bliss which is not known even to those whose consciousness is pure, who have cut away desire, renouncing both inwardly and outwardly?

144. Bliss is indeed the dwelling place of true knowledge. You are like the *acuna* bird⁴⁵, in that an atom of suffering in this world appears as great as a mountain, and through this virtuous quality a longing for supreme bliss has arisen in you. Listen now, and seeking supreme bliss [in the following manner], you shall obtain it.

⁴⁵ A very small bird, believed to be so susceptible to harmony that when it is fascinated by notes of music, a sudden loud beat of drum causes its death

145. Supreme bliss is not separate from you. It is your true being. That which arises with the sense objects is bliss also, but it is not the pure consciousness in which bliss itself is annihilated. In that state both kinds of bliss are annihilated⁴⁶.

146. The inferior bliss that arises with the objects of sense, lasts for some time, then disappears is of little worth; the superior bliss is that which is all-consuming and endures without intermission. Can it be gained by the discriminating mind? The bliss which appears and is subsequently lost is synonymous with the alternating states of pleasure and pain. Your true state is that of the bliss which neither appears nor subsides.

147. The scriptures declare that the all-embracing supreme reality is everywhere. When you say that it is to be found, not in one holy place, but in this or that other place, are you saying that it does not exist where you are? Witless fool, know that supreme bliss will only arise when you reach the firmament of true knowledge, upon the destruction of your defective, discriminating awareness.

148. As long as there is identification with the body, the objects of sense will not subside. If they do subside [through control of the mind and senses], unconsciousness will result. [Therefore you should cultivate the awareness that the world does not exist apart from the Self]. Is the space of the heavens disturbed when a bird flies through it? When one realises the true nature of the worldly bond, [it will lose its hold on you], just as the heat of fire is annulled by the power of the *mantra*.

149. What does it matter if the body remains or if it goes? Endless are the workings of those [divine beings] who dwell with form, without form and both with and without form. Is it necessary to break up a clay pot to prove that it is made of earth? Your course now is to abide in that state of pure *maya*, fully aware [of your nature as the Self].

150. The aim of *Vedanta* is to be free of the delusion of *maya*, [in which the world appears real], like the snake seen in the rope, and the thief seen in the wooden post⁴⁷, whilst the aim of *Siddhanta* is to dwell effortlessly in the state of transcendent bliss, just as those bound by the ego[dwell in the state of bondage]. To those who are free of the individual consciousness these two are one and the same.

151. Tirujnanasambandhar, he of the land of Sirkazhi, he who rules us through his grace, he whose divine sport is *jnana*, spoke saying, 'Not speaking of One or Two, just be. Thrice do I swear [that this is the truth] !'

⁴⁶ The Bliss and the enjoyer of bliss are not separate

⁴⁷ A wooden post mistaken for a thief in darkness

Chapter 6

In explanation of non-attachment⁴⁸

152. The sage who drank the ambrosial milk of non-dual bliss by the blessings of Parvati [in a cup of gold], said, 'In the state of true knowledge there is neither suffering nor happiness, and in the state in which that true knowledge is lost, suffering and happiness manifest, causing delusion. You are the knowledge which embraces both of these.'

153. All six religions⁴⁹ agree that the final goal is the pure state which results from renunciation and the cutting away of desire. Know that this is the state of liberation, free of the thirty-six *tattvas*, in which there is no more birth. It is the final state in which all effort comes to an end upon the annihilation of *karma*.

154. This book is for those who are free of desire, [and could not even bear to be accused of it], just as a warrior who is willing to die for a cause cannot bear to be accused of cowardice. It is for those who are like the camel, which will eat anything with relish as if it were well-cooked food. To those who are full of desires, and are accustomed to good food which bloats the body, it will seem flawed and unacceptable.

155. If the worldly bond falls away, the *jiva* will automatically come to rest in the Lord, just as someone swinging on a swing will come to rest on the ground if the rope breaks. Verse [349 of the Tirukural]⁵⁰, speaks of the ending of births upon the cutting-off of the attachments created by desire. Is this just your own understanding? Is it not also the understanding of all other religions everywhere?

156. The world appears to you as real, but annihilates you when it subsides. Even when you are told that it is inert, a mere consequence of actions, it still whirls you about in delusion, like someone who has taken poison. However, the real impediment to true knowledge is your own defective understanding, the failure to know your true Self.

157. In your state of limited, conditional awareness, your nature is veiled by the obscuration of the ego. However, like a bright, clear crystal, which holds the reflection of objects but is not affected by them, your essential nature is not affected. We have now explained to you your nature as the *jiva*, the form that the *jiva* takes, and your nature as the Self. Reflect carefully upon these matters.

158. It [your true Self] is free of the states of awareness and forgetting, abiding as all-embracing pure consciousness. Like the ether, it contains all things [yet is not touched by them]. Granting its grace to the *jiva*, it is like sugar, feeding it with the sweetness of its own bliss. To such a one do these three, (i.e. nature as the *jiva*, form as the *jiva*, and form as the Self, mentioned in the previous verse) belong.

⁴⁸ Refers to Inner renunciation not to outer renunciation

⁴⁹ Saivism (Siva), Vainavam (Vishnu), Saktam (Sakti), Sauram (Sun), Ganapatyam (Ganesha), Kaumaram (Murugan)

⁵⁰ Tirukural – a great Tamil work written in couplets – by sage Tiruvalluvar

159. Having perceived and grasped [the world through the mind and senses], remaining entirely submerged in them, and having come to realise the nature of this defective, discriminating awareness, to then remain in [unattached] purity as pure consciousness, untouched by the five divine operations, the first of which is creation, just as *Sivam* remains untouched by these, is true renunciation.

160. Who [amongst *jnanis*] will be cognisant of the world in which *jivas* live like a swarm of fireflies in the darkness? Know that to them the dawn of true knowledge is like [the rising of] the sun. [The great ones] have taught the five pure *avasthas* so that your defilement may be destroyed, just as the sun annihilates your shadow as it reaches the zenith of the heavens.

161. The false appears to be real, but if one enquires into it, it will disappear, as when what appears to be a snake turns out to be just an image painted on a wall. Otherwise, Sir, if you perform rituals and austerities [to discover the real], it will be as if you mistook a post for a thief, and beat a drum to scare it away.

162. On being informed that the world and the body, which are of the nature of *maya*, are unreal like a mirage, you should try to comprehend their true nature. Rather than that, do you expect to be able to eliminate them, shaking them off and obliterating them completely? Similarly the way to escape from a fire that surrounds you in a dream, is simply to wake up.

163. You say that it is the incontestable truth that the world is false. [If you fully realise the truth of your words], is it necessary still to go looking for 'the real'? Why do you cast doubt upon this, repeatedly looking at the sun [of true knowledge] that banished the black darkness [of ignorance], then blinking and turning away?

164. [True *jnanis* and false *jnanis* alike] proclaim that birth is to be abhorred. However will you not recognise those who subside inwardly as their external attachments subside, knowing that the body is an unnecessary affliction, and that true penance is the absence of all attachment, by the simple fact that they demonstrate their lack of attachment to the body [and senses] in their actual conduct? This is the trait by which you will know them.

* * *

Chapter 7

Renunciation

165. Those who are caught up in delusion, thriftily hiding away their accumulated wealth, vainly waste the days of a life which cannot be extended by a single minute, even if they expend ten million gold coins in the attempt. Those who are free of delusion will renounce those things, knowing them to be unreal.

166. Having observed [the way in which the friendship of] a brood of sparrows and a litter of kittens, reared in the same house, [soon turns to enmity], it is a wonder that we remain so attached [to our wife, children, family, and so on]. What fools we are! Will those who reflect that even the lives of Vishnu, Brahma and Indra do not last forever, and question whether their own existence amounts to anything at all, fail [to renounce the world]?

167. Even though they praise Pattinattu Pillaiyar and Bhadrakiri,⁵¹ those poor fools will not renounce [their family and possessions]. Need we cite the case of the dog who was gnawing on an old dry bone, and growled at the king on seeing him pass by?

168. For those who here and now contrive to be free of their entanglement with the nets and nooses which bind them – country, town, home, wife, mother, friends and relations, cattle, caste, wealth and the attachments of the body – what birth can there be henceforth?

169. If someone consumes poison whilst in an altered state of mind, the effects will take hold of him, run their course and eventually subside. But the mere thought of gold⁵² will not admit of any cure. It is a great evil which, [if one succumbs to it] cannot thereafter be dispelled by medicines or the recitation of mantras. It is a greater evil, even, than the desire for women.

170. What need is there to point out that wealth, youth, the body itself, are a mere mirage? It is plain for all to see [that they are impermanent]. Those who are swift to renounce the world, as their discriminating awareness falls away, will not return to the round of birth and death. Or if they do return, will [those attachments] affect [those who are as] Siva? Lo, they will not affect them.

171. Do we not know, from the way in which trifling pleasures arise and then just as quickly fade away, that supreme bliss is simply the eradication of desire? If we enquire into it and clearly understand that it is like the bamboo container into which insects enter, get stuck and die, desire for the pleasures of the five senses will end.

⁵¹ Pattinattu Pillaiyar – A famous Tamil saint and poet from Kaveri-pum-pattinam in Tamil Nadu who gave up great riches to renounce the world; – was once falsely accused of stealing a Necklace belonging to King Bhadrakiri and sentenced to death; before the sentence was carried out the place burst into flames and the King regretting his mistake - became the saint's devotee and eventually renounced the world also to follow him.

⁵² Desire for gold is much more dangerous poison

172. For those who perform worship to the rising sun, the sun's light shines, effacing all that is within and all that is without. Similarly, is not renunciation to remain free of all association, as when one sees a devoted wife offer herself up on the funeral pyre?

173. [The most ripe devotees] are like a bell without a clapper, which makes no sound even when you shake it. It will be hard indeed [for those of lesser attainment] to remain in that state. [For them] it will be like measuring with a grain measure, and throwing out, so that they are destroyed, all those unreal movements of consciousness that have [in the past] manifested and grown up [within them].

174. Can there be any attachment to house and home if one remains at rest with no thoughts whatsoever arising, free of attachment to the body and all the rest (sensory pleasures, the external world, and the physical, sensory and mental faculties)? [This state] is [one of stillness], like an iron needle placed inside a magnetised pot, or a lighted lamp in a windless place. All the *tattvas* will be alien [to such a one].

175. To enjoy the body of woman is akin to a dog greedily licking ghee smeared on a sharp blade, or someone drinking sweet *payasam*⁵³ mixed with poison. It is like trying to quench a thirst with the water of an entirely unreal mirage. Who would not renounce the world, having seen the evidence provided by the *acuna* bird, elephant, moth, fish and flying insect, [each being lured to its death by one or other of the senses]?⁵⁴

176. The life of the family is a boat laden with misery, which as its reward transports its occupants, who are blinded by the defect of the ego, to the seven hells. Will the wise not tremble with fear at the sight of it? When the one source of the five senses performs the six kinds of labour⁵⁵, reality itself is transformed into unreality.

177. Will the wise find family life acceptable? To them it will be like a bear coupling with its mate on a great heap of dirt, surrounded by a tribe of quarrelsome monkeys. Like the Lord of death [trapping him in its noose], like fire [surrounding him on all sides], like the ocean [to a shipwrecked sailor] or like a great mountain [heaped on his shoulders], it will consign him to the hell of future births.

178. The renunciant will leave [his home and family] without any warning, just as a cuckoo, which has been reared with crows, will suddenly fly off. Like Karna, [who was unaware of his true parentage], will he have any awareness of his social identity? Know that such a one will also be the teacher for others who strive to cut off birth.

179. Were someone to wake up in the night, find himself surrounded by fire, or under attack from a great army, and make a dash for the courtyard of his house, would he

⁵³ Sweet porridge

⁵⁴ The *acuna* bird by sound; the elephant by touch – lured by female elephant into the pit; the moth by sight – lured into a flame by its light; the fish by taste unable to resist the bait in the fisherman's hook; the fly by smell – attracted by the scent of the flower and trapped inside

⁵⁵ To satisfy the five senses - doing six kinds of labour – agriculture; manufacture; trade; literary work; sculpture and dance

hesitate for a second, even if someone shouted 'stop'. That would be the action of a madman. The nature of those who do not renounce household life is not other than this.

180. Those who renounce will leave swiftly, like a thief whom someone has released from his bonds and set free, like people who run away in fear from a ghost in the dark, or from a battlefield, or like those who escape with their lives from a pursuing army which is trying to kill them.

181. Will those who are not even aware of what they are wearing know the difference between the town and the forest? Possessed by the demon [of the Self], will they know anyone, whether relatives and friends, or complete strangers? For those who have let go of everything, just as people will immediately drop anything red-hot placed in their hands, is there any point in them continuing to live where they lived formerly?

182. For those who are free of the discriminating awareness, in which pain ever alternates with pleasure, is any place different from any other? Everywhere is the temple of Lord Siva. To appease their hunger, there are alms. [To provide shelter and quench their thirst], there are public places and water sources. It will not even occur to them to speak of such things. Their only desire is to dwell in total solitude.

183. The behaviour of worldly society is like the antics of an actor in a masquerade; they are like people who consume poison and find it tasty, or like prisoners who enjoy being in chains. Those who have renounced will have nothing do with this mentality, avoiding it like the plague. They have died whilst still in the body. Thus do they conduct themselves.

184. To invite those who have gone beyond the *nada tattva*⁵⁶ to one's house and so forth is to be like a *hari* (frog)⁵⁷ who calls out to Hari (Vishnu), who dwells in the Ocean of Milk, saying, 'Come and join me !' To the *jnani* the *ajnani* will appear as do the people of the earth to those who traverse the heavens about the summit of golden Mount Meru.

185. Will the *jnanis* expect anything from the path of devotion, upon which they are worshipped, praised and ensnared in the net of endless bizarre ritual acts of homage? [If you were to suggest that they could at least accept food and other such essentials from devotees, we would reply that] their very greatness, in which they have cut off all desire for food and all the rest, which are only the source of troubles, will cause these things to come to them automatically, even though they don't want them.

186. When the fetters of *karma* [*anavam* and *maya*] fall away through the threefold agency [of the guru]⁵⁸, his body will seem like a snake, and he a frog gripped in its jaws, or like a firebrand, burning at both ends, and he an ant trapped upon it. It will be as death

⁵⁶ Transcended the Nada tattva

⁵⁷ Hari is name of a Sea frog ; just as a frog assumes Vishnu is another frog like itself on account of his name an ajnani falsely assumes kinship with a jnani since both or men and ostensibly the same as each other

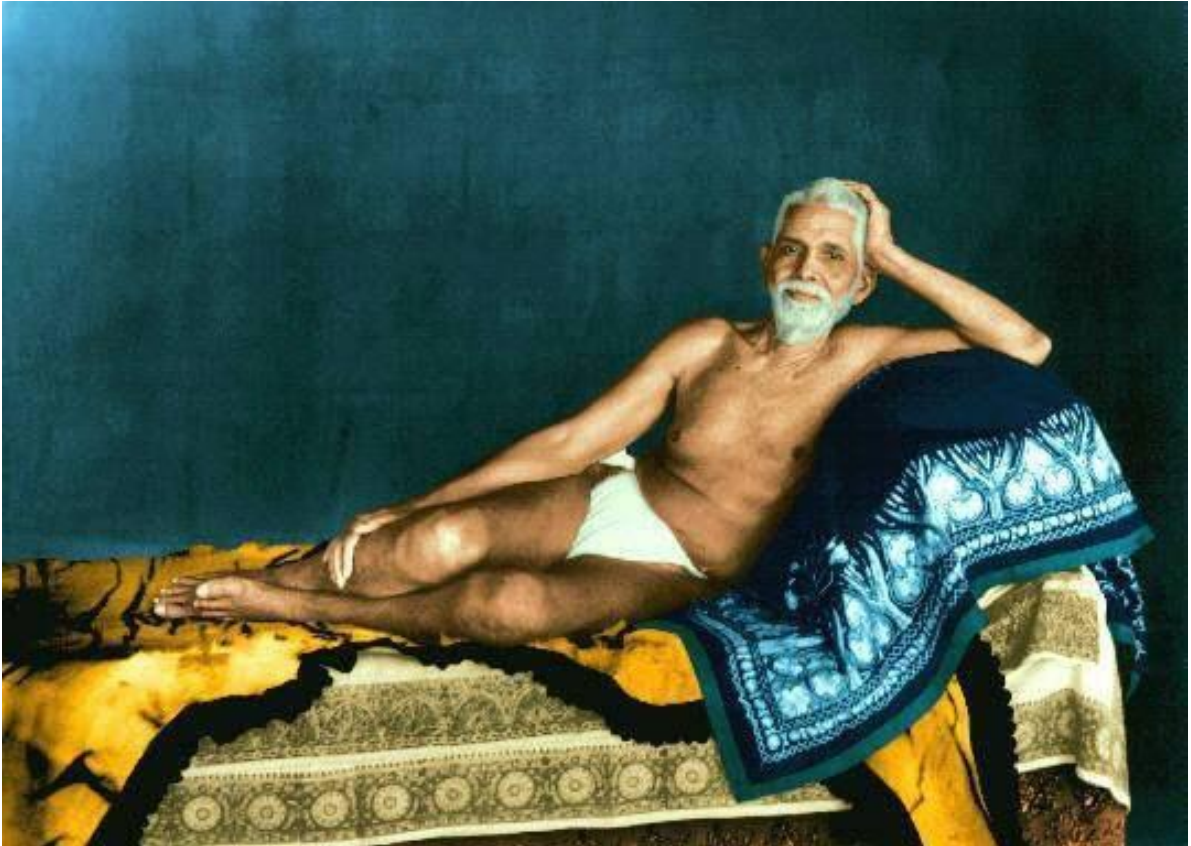
⁵⁸ The guru's look, touch and word

itself to him. This being so, what [will he think of] those who propose [to pay homage to that body], and [of] the places [that give it shelter]?

187. Having taken birth in so many forms, first non-human and later human, and then, having come to know the knowledge which transcends knowledge itself, through the enquiry, 'Who is the "I" who knows everything?',⁵⁹ they have now taken birth in the manner of a young hawk hatching from the egg of a fish!⁶⁰ Will such as these see the world [that others see]?

188. Just as for a king, greatness consists in the amassing of possessions without limit, for these [*jnanis*] greatness now consists in reducing to an atom and eliminating completely all attachment to any existence, even one which surpassed that enjoyed by Vishnu and Brahma.⁶¹

189. *cariyai* is to feel revulsion for the body; *kiriyai* is [the discipline of] knowing oneself; *yoga* is non-attachment [to the mind and senses]; divine *jnana* is that which cannot be conveyed in words; it is the state of being nothing other [than the Self], the state in which there is no enjoyment even of the lofty state in which supreme bliss neither arises nor departs.



⁵⁹ Loss of the ego through the enquiry 'Who Am I ?' – as the pure consciousness cannot be known by other means as there is no 'other' to know it.

⁶⁰ The fish's egg hatching into a hawk is a metaphor for the jiva who spend aeons in the ocean of birth, until, transformed by realisation of the true reality, it takes one final birth in which it merges as one with the open skies itself.

⁶¹ The state bliss is exceeding than that enjoyed by the gods themselves.

Chapter 8

The nature of the [pure] *avastha*⁶²

190. Taking on a body, they experience and exhaust the fruits of their former actions, and go on to seek another body. Starting in this world and going even beyond the realm of the gods, they go on experiencing through the five senses until they finally become disillusioned. It is only then that grace will arise in them,⁶³ so that former pleasures are seen as suffering. What a wonder is this ! I am helpless to describe it !

191. Featured in the compositions [of the *Sangam* and other poets], which are spoken of as gems, and the *kovai* compositions [of Manikkavacagar⁶⁴ and others], countless love situations are described. In these there are two kinds of love: the mutual and the one-sided. Of these, one-sided love is comparable to renunciation, is it not?

192. The renunciant, exhibiting the eight *sattvic* qualities⁶⁵, [freedom from desire and so on], and the ten states [a one-pointed mind and so forth], discards the personal consciousness, remaining alone as himself, before becoming [immersed in] the love [of the Self]. However all these subtle experiences only serve to demonstrate the instability of those pure states. For those established in the non-dual state which is without defect, no such experiences whatsoever will arise.

193. When speech ends, the mind continues to operate; when that ceases, that is the experience of grace⁶⁶; when that comes to an end, that is the motionless state in which the individual consciousness is lost (*parai yogam*)⁶⁷, and when that ends, that is the state beyond bliss.⁶⁸ For those who possess the merit of attaining that state, the unreal does not manifest. For the rest, it is manifold.

194. When the [physical, sensory and mental] faculties fall away, [the world will seem tiny and insignificant,] as if viewed from [the top of a high] mountain. And when the individual consciousness becomes detached from those faculties, the mere thought [of what he has suffered] will bring forth sighs of grief. As grace overtakes him, his body will grow feverish and will cause him fear, and as bliss arises and a divine madness takes hold within him, he will forsake speech and cease to care what others might think of him.

195. He will perspire; his eyes will overflow with tears; upon perceiving the unreality of the world, his body will grow feverish; he will cry out and then freeze as if paralysed. As grace arises, speech and thought will desert him, and as that grace becomes his whole

⁶² The state of the jiva which has passed through the preparatory stages before the Final union with Sivam

⁶³ In whom the worldly pleasures have lost their savour

⁶⁴ Minister turned Saint – who wrote 'Thiruvachagam'

⁶⁵ Freedom from desire, austerities, patience, compassion, cheerfulness, truth, wisdom and humility

⁶⁶ Since our true nature is only the Self, the irresistible power of the Self, in its dynamic aspect of revealing itself is called Grace (Arul)

⁶⁷ The state of the individual soul in which it loses its self-consciousness expecting the grace from Siva

⁶⁸ Describes the inalterable state of mukti – final liberation – even beyond the 'attainment of bliss'

reality, ecstasy will boil up within him like the roiling clouds, and the hairs of his body will stand up on end.

196. On the day that grace overwhelms him, his mind will die, and his delusion will be banished; womankind will seem like the very devil, gold will seem of less worth even than brass, and he will eat what food is given, knowing it to be an illusion. The very fear [of association with those things] will make him seem insane, his very sanity appearing as delusion to others.

197. Picture a mother who, having remained barren for many years, finally bears a son, who subsequently leaves home. Just as she will rejoice, hugging him to her bosom and weeping⁶⁹ when she finally sees him return, so will the renunciant laugh and weep with joy at the thought of the limitless ages spent in futile births, and the absence⁷⁰ of any sign of grace till now.

198. The ills of birth do not exist for those possessed by the madness [of divine grace]. In them there is no separation; they walk with a measured gait, unmindful of the body, and not caring about the opinion of others; they speak softly, and are frail of body, having no craving for food; [desiring only divine grace, they are like a spurned lover], mounting the palmyra branch;⁷¹ hearing and the other senses do not affect them, nor does the mind touch them.

199. Occasional snatches of song; the hint of a smile; a sharp, unblinking gaze; a distracted air of amazement even when objects of worthless pleasure are heaped upon them; a quiver of revulsion [at the sight of such objects], and a complete insensibility to them; total impassivity [in the face of danger]; a tendency to leap up [in transports of bliss], followed by a return to clear awareness – [such are the traits of those who have attained the state of bliss].

200. Who can comprehend their amazement at the blissful joy that overwhelms them? They will be like the lame who regain the use of their legs; or those who master a difficult skill after much effort; or those who sing out loud in the throes of lustful infatuation. The world will view their behaviour as pure madness.

201. Surrendering your consciousness [to the bliss of the Self], exchanging the 'I am the body' idea [for grace], so that it is no more, abide in true knowledge through the divine madness in which even the concepts of gain and loss [of the Self] do not arise. Does an unmanned ship on a perfectly still ocean pitch and roll, or remain perfectly still? [So let it be with you].

⁶⁹ In her emotion the mother might think of her son as a young baby again as she embraces him

⁷⁰ The mother represents the renunciant seeking realisation through divine grace and the Son is the grace itself

⁷¹ The story from the sangam era love poetry – as the last recourse the spurned lover would threaten to ride on a Palmyra branch [as horse] holding a portrait of his beloved and proclaiming her cruelty towards him; the Jnani resembles him in that he cares only for the Self and not what people might think of his conduct

202. When people laugh at him, he laughs back at them; if they drive him away, saying, 'Fie on you, you devil !' he makes the cremation ground his home; as he wanders as a naked ascetic, he rejects nothing as 'unclean';⁷² celebrating the death of the ego in song, he dwells in the firmament of pure consciousness; he dances the devil dance, clapping his hands in accompaniment; his dance is the dance of bliss.

203. Only the Lord of Chidambaram could know the hearts of those who look bizarre with their excessive ornaments, [holy ash], and strange clothing; who affect true knowledge in their speech; who dance and prance about, performing rituals in the guise of austerities, and affecting a feigned air of wonder.

204. Observing the profound delusion in which even the gods, Vishnu, Brahma and Indra, flourish, [believing themselves immortal], then pass away, the *jnanis* shake their heads in disbelief; and seeing the frenzied contortions visited upon the people of the world by the same delusion, they cry out, 'Alas for them !' As for the *jnanis*, seeing themselves only as the Self, they dance to the rhythm 'taam taam'.

205. For them, all that has its root in desire has gone; the idea 'I am That' is no more; infused with the divine love in which there is neither knowing nor absence of knowledge, they dance the silent dance of blissful joy; they move about with the playful innocence of children.

206. Do not view them simply as enjoying the bliss that is gained after transcending everything that gives rise to pain and pleasure. See them as people [who see both the suffering of the world and the bliss of liberation], like the eyes of the cat, which though despised, sees in both day and night; or a man standing on the bund of a lake or on the top of a mountain; or as the sun at the zenith.

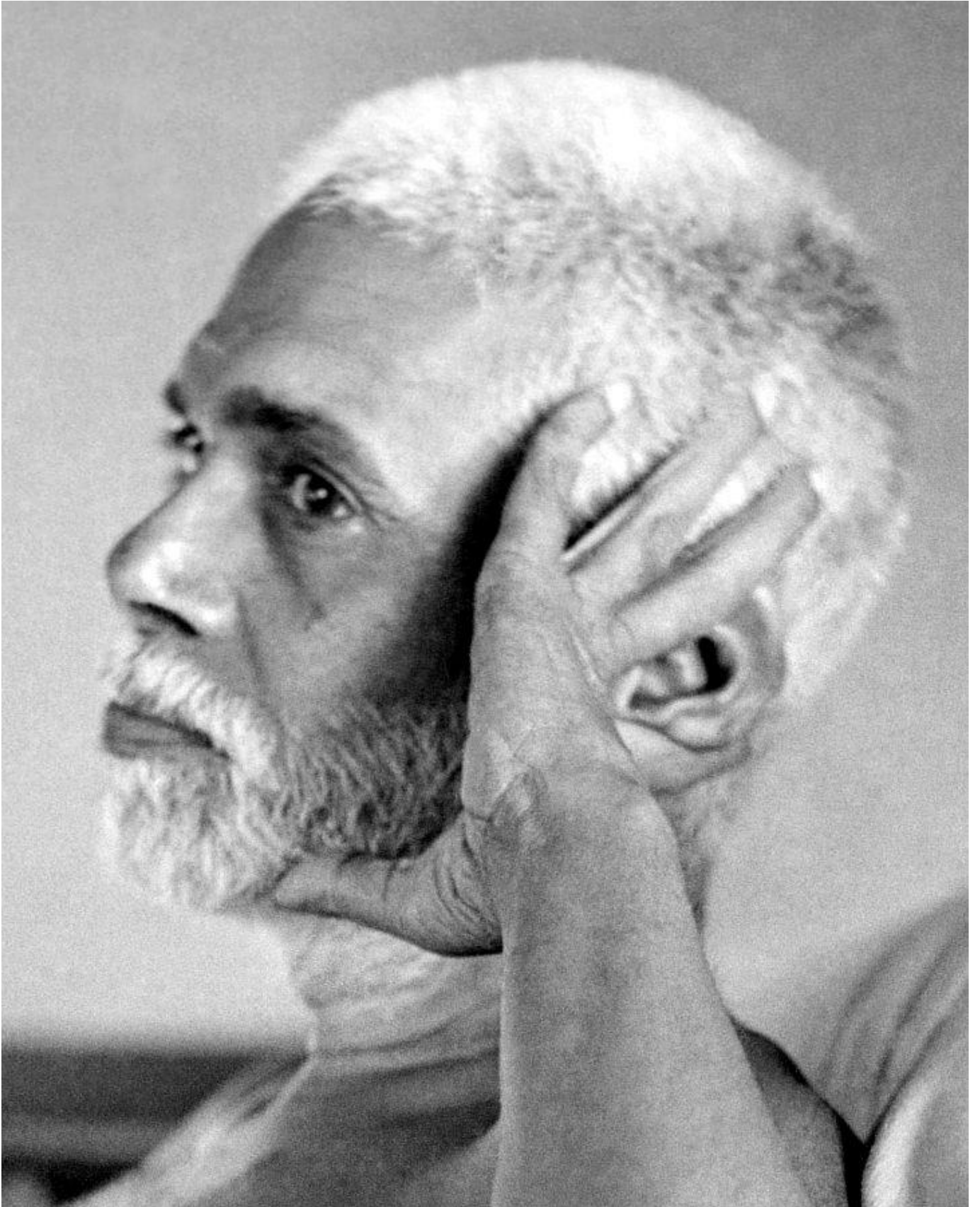
207. Just as people who are mentally deranged or are suffering from a painful disease naturally assume that others see things exactly as they do, those whose perception is masked by primal ignorance will say to those who have known by divine grace, 'What kind of behaviour is this?'

208. Are those who are insane and incapable of speech somehow able to accept good advice? Worldly people will remain convinced that the very darkness of delusion is the light of true knowledge. Will they not say that those who are possessed only by the power of grace are the very devil? Milk is anathema⁷³ to the tongue of the bilious⁷⁴, as is the sun to creatures that see only in the dark.

⁷² Since for him all is the Self, every place is like every other and nothing can defile him by its contact

⁷³ Strong dislike

⁷⁴ Affected by jaundice



209. Clad only in the four directions they wander at large; they are like a bird sitting on her eggs, or like a tortoise when someone comes near. Who are their countrymen? Like walking corpses, or madmen bereft of speech they may be, yet even the hosts of the gods raise a cry to invoke their help, and Indras accompany them, wielding sceptres of protection.

210. Some liberated ones will leave the place they are in never to return, just as life never returns to a dead body; others will remain where they are, regarding all places as only one. All they know is that the body is but a temporary dwelling place for the soul, and the world, the stage upon which they act.

211. When the pleasures of the body [are seen to be unreal and] fall away, the enemy of the soul (the ego, *anava malam*) dies. Then, as bliss itself dies away, discriminating awareness, along with the idea of a personal self disappears. For those who are thus established in the all-embracing fullness of reality, moving about will be like measuring the ether.⁷⁵ Will there be any place where they are not?

212. What does it matter if they live in a dense forest, or a place inhabited by men with royal palanquins, umbrellas and fans? What does it matter if their dwelling place is high, low or middling? They are like Lord Siva himself, having no contact with anything whatsoever, or like his grace, which does not [leave Him to perform the divine operations and then] return to Him again. For them, all places are one and the same.

213. To those who have known themselves through grace, and then transcended entirely even that knowledge, attaining thus to the greater life of realisation in this lifetime, the very destruction of that consciousness, in which they acted in and experienced [the world objectively], is their dwelling place. For them there is no saying, 'this is a cremation ground,' [or 'this place is pure'].

214. To those who have abandoned lust and all the rest⁷⁶, whose hands are their only eating utensils, who sleep on the bare ground with only their arms and legs as a cover, who are untouched by even the idea of name, reputation, caste or occupation, what religion might we ascribe?

215. If we compare the life of the *jnani* to that of the world in general, the former will be like a lamp [which is the source of illumination], and the latter, a pair of glasses [which require illumination to be of any use]⁷⁷. To the rest of the world he will appear to have strayed from the path. But does that world affect him? He knows only that forgetfulness [in which one forgets the world]. He does not know [that forgetfulness in which one forgets the Self].

⁷⁵ Since Ether is the same everywhere – to measure it or to cease to measure it has no effect on it whatsoever

⁷⁶ The six inner enemies –lust, anger, avarice, sensuality, pride and envy

⁷⁷ To look for an object in total darkness, a light is required

216. Some will say of the *jnani* that he is a fool, one who is improper in his conduct, or a complete ignoramus; others will call him a great scholar, the scion of a noble family, or the seed from which virtuous conduct springs. However, when we think about it, the clear understanding of the *jnani* cannot be comprehended, for he is the very measure of that which is set as a measure [by the holy scriptures], and even beyond all that. How wonderful is this!

217. When grace overwhelms him, the *jnani* will be like someone who has rubbed magic ointment into his eyes and is able to see hidden treasure; or like someone who now feels ashamed of what he did under the influence of poison or demonic possession; or like someone who has been released from a cruel curse. However, to those [whose vision is limited] like frogs in a well, his conduct will appear fraudulent.

218. The *jnani* who remains a householder will be like one who has renounced the world in terms of his spiritual knowledge, but will differ from him in his outward conduct. Conversely the householder who is not a *jnani* will resemble the householder who is a *jnani* in his conduct only but not in his spiritual knowledge.⁷⁸ If we must draw a comparison, the *jnani* who is a householder is like a whore; like wealth; like the sun; like a *vina*; like the ether; like a fan, and like a someone who gives blessings [to people without judging them].⁷⁹

219. Though they prosper as great kings, leading an army with its four divisions, possessing [the trappings of royalty such as] palanquins and royal parasols, and praised by a host of servants and retainers, do the pure ones feel any pleasure in experiencing those things? They are like the flame of a lamp [that transforms oil into radiant light], transmuting false pleasures into the welling-up of the Real, or like someone who is about to die accepting repayment of debt, [accepting the fruits of his *karma* without attachment].

220. Since it is the case that the body is the source of great ills, indulging in its pleasures will cause them (the *non-jnanis*) to experience the torments of the seven hells. Their *karma* will not bring them enjoyment unless the ego dies and they remain in the body simply as the Self. As for the *karma* of the devotees of the holy feet, it will be like a prison guard or a set of manacles to them.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ The general idea is that it is not possible to recognise a *jnani* based on his conduct, as he may appear outwardly to be totally involved in the affairs of the world whilst inwardly he is as much a renunciant

⁷⁹ Though the whore appears to be fond of her client, but in reality desires only his wealth, a *jnani* appears to be attached to his householder life but in reality desires only the riches of the Self; Wealth – has no feelings towards the people who desire it – just like the householder *jnani* is has no attachment to the wife and family who lavish their affection on him; like the Sun fostering all activities but not taking part in any of them; like *Vina* the Indian lute – all musical instruments remain inert until played – likewise a *jnani* will respond appropriately but without attachment in his dealings with others and subside again in his former state when the interaction is over; like space containing all phenomena but remaining untouched by them; like the fan which performs a service to others but confers no benefit on itself; just as people blessing others do not consider the worth or lack of it – the *jnani* householder acts with total equanimity and freedom from bias in his dealings with the household.

⁸⁰ Since the *jnani* has no *karma* past, present or future – however it seems like he has to wait for the now inoperative *karma* of current birth to be expended – like a prisoner in chains awaiting the expiry of his sentence in order to be free.

221. For those whose form is bliss there is no suffering. To them the cremation ground is as heaven itself. Within themselves also they have discerned heaven and hell. There is no body [and therefore no experiencing of the fruits of their *karma*] for those experiencing non-dual bliss. It is to those that practise devotion towards them that the fruits of actions will accrue.

222. If we are to speak of the bliss of that renunciant, it would be exact to say that it equals the bliss of Vishnu, Brahma, Indra and the rest of the gods, all combined; or that it equals the bliss of the supreme Lord Siva himself. To take it further, we might say that his bliss has no equal but itself. Even the *Vedas* cannot know the bliss of those who stand apart [from all things, including bliss].

223. The superior seeker is one who pays homage to an adept of *Saiva Siddhanta*, a teacher of the four paths beginning with 'dwelling in the realm of god,'⁸¹ in order to learn from him the state of Oneness. Can there be any greatness which exceeds⁸² that of those who, with melting heart, dedicate their service to his divine essence?

224. Just as life leaves the body when the head is severed, when the personal self is no more, the *jnani* will be free of the constraints of [auspicious or inauspicious] times, places, directions, actions, bodily attire, religions and the knowledge of their peculiar characteristics, and considerations of proper conduct.⁸³ Such a one is none other than Lord Siva.

225. The true *jnanis* dwell in the non-dual state, taking the death of the ego as the greatest of penances. If even the *Vedas and Agamas* are at a loss to say whether for them there can be chanting of *Tevaram* hymns⁸⁴, observance of holy occasions, meditation practices, virtuous and sinful acts and proper and improper behaviour, who else then is qualified to say?

226. The love which he bestows upon silent ascetics as he looks upon them with his unblinking gaze; his divine form, which no artist could picture, and which resembles the white moon, shining with holy ash – these images come to me unbidden even in dream, like the sun arising before the eight eyes, set in glorious array, in the four heads of lotus-seated Brahma.

227. The joyous gaze which melts the heart in supreme bliss; the beatific countenance; the radiance of his gentle smile; the holy ashes – these are merely incidental marks of beauty which adorn a body in which the personal consciousness has died.

⁸¹ Refer Verse six

⁸² It is stated that there is no knowledge equal to the knowledge of Siddhanta, and that the greatness of those who worship those who have attained this knowledge is true greatness

⁸³ Refers to the loss of the personal, ego-consciousness- once this is eliminated all concepts relating to exoteric worship, such as auspicious times and places, rituals and appropriate dress, proper forms of worship cease to exist – just as life leaves the body the moment the head is severed

⁸⁴ hymns composed by Tamil saints Appar, Sundarar, Jnanasambandar

228. Dwelling detached from a body weakened through its effortless rejection of worldly desires; the last residue of spent *karma* lingering about him like the scent of faded flowers; his gaze, that ever dwells in the joyous bliss which is not dependent upon the objects of sense; his divine countenance – these images shall never leave my heart.

229. You shall speak of the one who has cast off the cloak of the thirty-six *tattvas*, and is clothed in the four directions, by the names of 'Non-Dual One,' 'Solitary One,' 'Pure One,' 'Blissful One,' 'One who dwells in the fourth state [beyond waking, dream and deep sleep],' 'Avadhuta'⁸⁵, 'Forswearer of the world,' 'Siva yogi,' 'Nirvani'⁸⁶, and 'Renunciant.'

230. Oho ! There are those who, feigning to be free of desire, have outwardly renounced all, [and those who have truly renounced all]. Yet can we not distinguish them [one from the other] by the signs of spiritual ripeness, [or the lack of it]? [The former] seek out maths⁸⁷ where the best alms may be got; they whisper in corners like a [newly-wed] girl [in her mother in-law's house]⁸⁸; when people come [with offerings], they stretch out their own hands towards theirs in anticipation of gifts.

231. Just as the waves will rock a ship when it comes close to the shore, the false personal consciousness will reappear when you come into contact with the objects of sense. Like a warrior who has taken a vow [to defeat his enemy], or someone who accepts a challenge to jump [over a deep well]⁸⁹, you should stand firm in your determination to renounce. Otherwise that which you have renounced will return to grip you once more.



Sri Ramanasramam in 1926

⁸⁵ One who has freed himself from the world – literally to shake off or cast off

⁸⁶ Emancipated One

⁸⁷ Hindu monastery

⁸⁸ Just as a newly married girl might hesitate to voice her wishes openly in her mother-in-law's house, but rather choose to speak of them to her husband in private, the false renunciant will target only certain devotees who are convinced of his spiritual purity, with his selfish requests, whilst maintaining the appearance of a selfless renunciant with others

⁸⁹ If someone who sets out to jump across a sixty foot well jumps sixty one feet, that is victory; if he fails, victory is lost and he falls into the well. Similarly for someone who sets out to renounce the objects of sense, renunciation is to renounce those objects of sense along with his personal consciousness. If he does not do so, and those objects of sense grip him, he will lose the glory that comes from that renunciation, and fall back again into birth.

Chapter 9

The nature of those in whom attachment [to the life of the householder] has died⁹⁰

232. Renunciation without true knowledge is worthless. What good does it do for jungle tribesmen, robbers and the chronically sick?⁹¹ What does it matter [to the *jnani*] what station in life he occupies, or what sense objects he comes into contact with? ⁹² The loss of his personal self is his true home, which itself is bliss.

233. What good does it do to give up the life of the householder, which all religions praise? Whatever they give up, what is the good of it? If they attain true understanding, so that worthless discriminating knowledge is removed, and become free of attachment even to *Sivam* itself, only then will there be an end to birth.

234. It is not renunciation simply to give up the life of the householder, when the mind [that is attached to it] has not changed. [Nor is it renunciation to control the mind, since the ego consciousness] that controlled it [still remains]. Even if the ego consciousness is eliminated, the experience of bliss upon uniting with *Sivam* still remains, and even if that goes, the [thought, 'I am] the all-embracing fullness [of *Sivam*]' will persist. Who are those who can know the state in which even that thought does not arise?

235. Only they have truly renounced who, even though they live like kings amongst worldly pleasures, are quite untouched by them, like a ruby [which imparts its colour to other objects but is not affected by them]. Should they become contaminated by those things, they will return to the body the moment they are freed from it, just as [a new shoot grows up where] a seed falls to the ground. This is *karma*, the one root of all births.

236. For those who dwell in the world under the authority of a single king⁹³, will there be any village in that kingdom that seeks to do them harm? Similarly, if the consciousness of the *jnani* becomes involved with the mind and senses, what harm can that do? [Will his consciousness be usurped by them] as dust is absorbed by mud? Not at all. It will pass over and leave them, just as the shadow of a kite passes over the ground.

237. In his life as a householder the *jnani* can be compared to a dog which has eaten ghee, [and vomits it up, unable to digest it]⁹⁴; he is like the reflection of trees, seen in water, [giving the appearance of being upside-down]⁹⁵; he is like eyes decorated with eye-paint, [looking beautiful to others, but knowing themselves to be blackened] . [The *jnani* is not

⁹⁰ Those who have attained Jnana even whilst living the life of a householder and are established in the state in which the inherited propensities (vasana) relating to the household has died

⁹¹ Someone who has renounced outwardly but not inwardly has not truly renounced, albeit his behaviour may appear so. Otherwise we should say that the harsh existence of jungle tribesmen, the rejection of worldly pleasures by the chronically sick and lack of regard for personal safety of a robber are also forms of renunciation

⁹² Whatever condition he dwells in

⁹³ Literally – under the shade of one umbrella – being one of the twenty-one symbols of royalty, authority of kings

⁹⁴ Just as a dog will vomit up food which is too rich for it, the householder *jnani* will not become attached to but will automatically reject all worldly pleasures

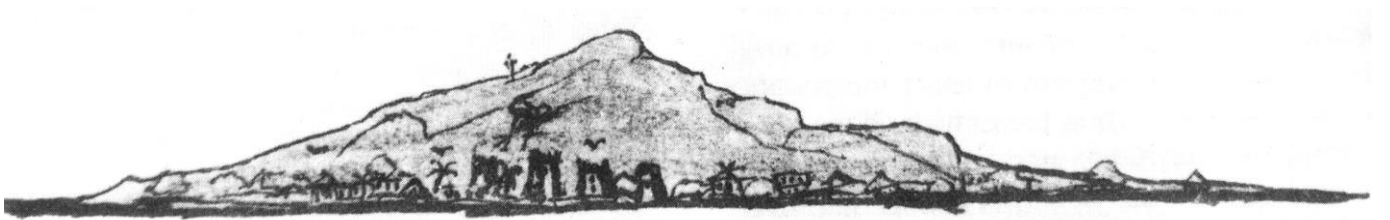
⁹⁵ Will appear to be fully immersed in worldly activities but in reality he is united always with the Self

masked by the householder life, but shines more brightly because of it], just as darkness makes a precious, pure ruby appear brighter, unlike all other things [which fade into obscurity].

238. The single expedient of patting the thighs is equally useful both for putting a child to sleep and for waking it up.⁹⁶ Will darkness affect a ruby as it affects a crystal [filling it with darkness]? Since the *jnani* is merely playing the role of the householder without any attachment to it, like a thief who joins in with the chase, following his own footprints, why should there be for him any birth henceforth?

239. As it grasps the objects of sense and then lets go of them, the consciousness of the *jnani* operates like a whirlwind, which draws up dust and later lets go of it. However, also like that whirlwind, which plays about [and finally subsides] without leaving the space of the sky, the consciousness of the one-pointed *jnani*, [having discarded the objects of sense] subsides [into the expanse of the Self without ever having left it]. What does it matter whether he is a householder or an ascetic?

240. Many are those who have achieved the state of desirelessness through knowledge; there is Sundaramurti Nayanar, there is the Chera king, Cheraman Peruman Nayanar; there are the Chola kings, Chenkan Chola Nayanar and Pukal Chola Nayanar; there are petty chieftains like Meyporul Nayanar and Kazhal Singa Nayanar; there are those who have wounded their own body, like Kannappar Nayanar, and those who have afflicted that of their own son, like SiruTondar Nayanar; there is the eternally illustrious Adipatta Nayanar. Yet for all, [whether householders or ascetics] the achievement is the same, the elimination of discriminating awareness.



Drawing of Arunachala by Sri Bhagavan in Sivananda Swami's notebook

⁹⁶ Just as patting the things can be used to put a baby to sleep or wake it up, depending on the situation, the presence of a wife, family, children and relations will cause the *jnani* householder to turn inward, in rejection of those things, the effect will be opposite on an *ajnani* householder drawing him deeper into the world of sensual pleasures

Chapter 10

The nature of being established [in the state of reality] ⁹⁷

241. People who do not know the way to a certain place will enquire of others and find it out. But later, as they walk along, they will forget that this knowledge originally came from someone else. [So it is with seekers and divine grace].⁹⁸ They are like those who launch themselves into a heavy rainstorm, forgetting they are carrying an umbrella, jumping and leaping about [in a vain attempt to dodge the rain].

242. You should dwell in the pure consciousness of grace, so that the states of dark unconsciousness and discriminating consciousness that occupy your awareness are removed. Instead you wander about, dying and being reborn, all the time outwardly seeking, in your confused state, the means of avoiding death and rebirth.

243. 'Will the disciple himself be able to ward off the onslaught of the states of unconsciousness and discriminating consciousness? It is we who will bring you to a fit condition, dispense to you your deeds and their fruits, and lull you to sleep, [so that your ego consciousness will disappear], like the flame of a lamp in full daylight, or like the colours in a prism when the sun is at the zenith. You should abandon any attempt at union with Ourselves.' Thus did [Jnanasambandar] graciously decree.

244. Those who in the waking state transmute all the agitation of discriminating consciousness, treating it as a dream, will come to possess the pure consciousness of grace. They will become *parai yogis*, who transcend [even that grace]; pure ones; ones who are experiencing the bliss which is pure enjoyment; ones who have gone beyond even bliss to dwell in the fourth state [of union with *Sivam*].

245. Once the thirty-six *tattvas* and the state of unconsciousness [in which one remains unaware of them] have gone, the ego [which knows those states] subsides. When the grace [which arises thereafter] falls away, one remains in the pure state of readiness for Lord Siva's grace (*parai yogam*). Then when [the last vestige of] individual consciousness⁹⁹ has gone, and the work of Lord Siva's grace (*para sakti*) has come to an end, one is annihilated in the One, other than which nothing is, (the non-dual reality).¹⁰⁰ This is the [supreme] state beyond bliss.

246. As it rides in state through the avenues of the five senses, mounted upon the steed of the ego, consciousness is like a whirling rocket, [as it engages with the objects of

⁹⁷ Regaining the state of the real, should one have fallen from it [which is the subject of this work]

⁹⁸ The seekers may at some point feel that the quest is somehow under their conscious control, and they can realise the Self through an effort of mind or will, rather than surrendering them to the Self

⁹⁹ one's independent awareness having gone

¹⁰⁰ The One other than which nothing is

sense]. But if the steed is consciousness and its rider grace¹⁰¹, supreme bliss will arise, in which nothing is gained or lost. Know this, my disciple!

247. Disciple, [know that] true renunciation is the ending of all conflict upon the elimination of the activity of the discriminating consciousness, [in which you are deluded], as you investigate [the objects of sense], examining them inwardly and outwardly [through the mind and senses], knowing them, [grasping and] becoming immersed in them before forgetting them again, and mistaking them for yourself, so that you are wracked by pleasure and pain, as [by turns] you [gain and] lose them.

248. All that occurs [and is known through the physical, sensory and mental faculties] is yourself (your own consciousness) only. But if you think, therefore, that to remain in the state where all those faculties are eliminated is *Sivam*, [you should know that] when [those faculties] subside, the [defilement of *anava*] *malam* will delude and overwhelm you. The state of union with *Sivam* will only occur through grace, in which the *maya* [of the faculties] and the forgetfulness [of *anavam*] do not arise.

249. The state of grace and the actionless state beyond grace are like the sun and moon¹⁰². The place in which the day of the former and the night of the latter are no more, is the state of supreme bliss. The pure state which arises on the elimination of the experience of that bliss, which is of the nature of being-consciousness-bliss, is the state in which you are not.

250. Know this, O disciple! One should offer oneself up to be consumed by *Sivam*, just as food is consumed to support the body; then having transmuted one's experience of the world through the medium of grace, one should become established in the state of *parai*, [in which grace is eclipsed]; then as one's own self is annihilated, the aggregation of the five defilements will be destroyed. [If this is not possible, this state may be gained] if one pays homage to the devotees of Lord Siva, worshipping through the agency of the five holy syllables.

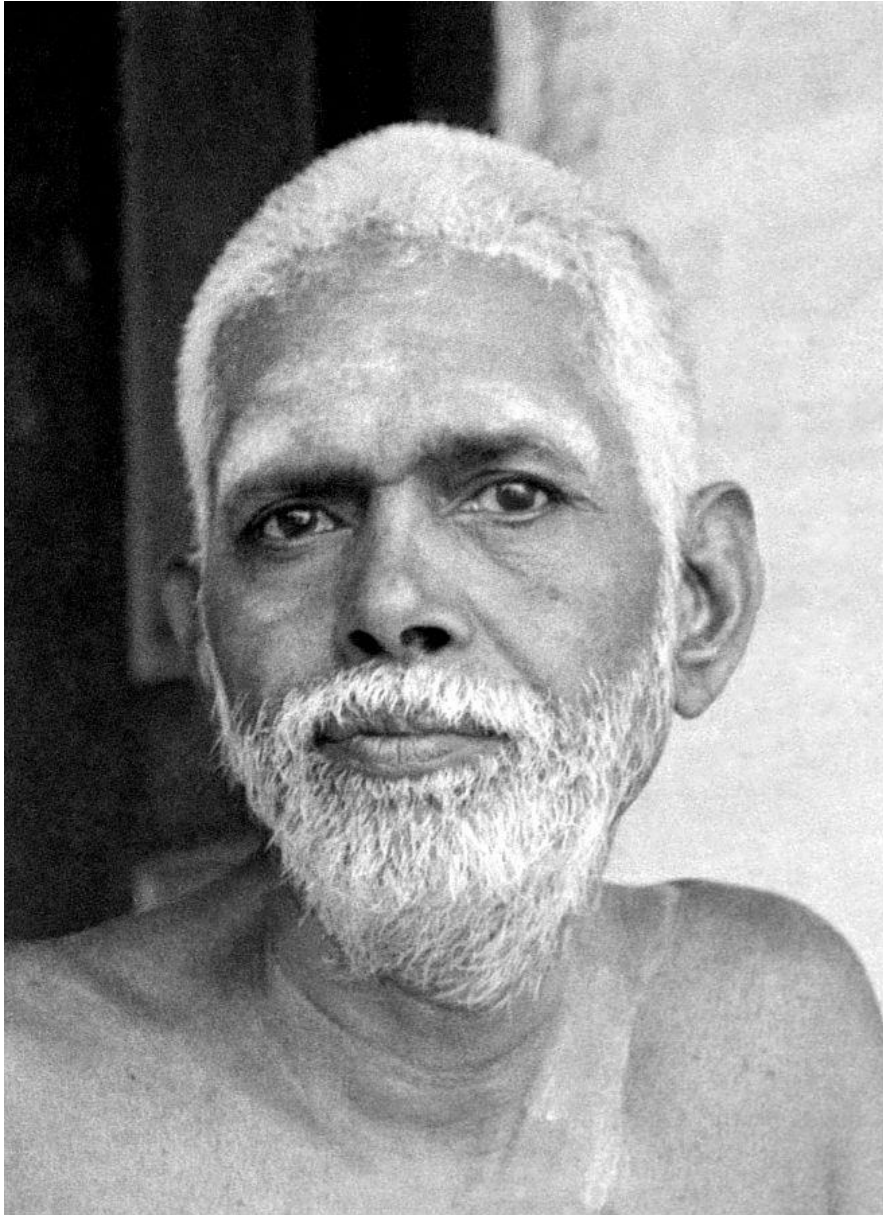
251. When your faculties were in operation, we revealed to you the nature of the states of *cakalam* (waking consciousness) and *kevalam* (unconsciousness). Then when grace arose [as a consequence of that], we placed you in the states [of grace and *parai yogam*], in the same way [that we had previously shown you the states of *cakalam* and *kevalam*]. And now it is our responsibility to establish you in the condition of purity, which is untouched by the day and night [of those aforementioned states, [just as it is your duty] not to bring into play [your personal consciousness].

¹⁰¹ Any attempt on the part of the consciousness to control the ego is doomed to failure, however if consciousness abandons itself to divine grace the ego will not arise and bliss of the Self will be gained.

¹⁰² The active state in which the jiva becomes aware of the power of grace and surrenders to it is compared to daylight and fiery sun, the passive state in which the jiva becomes established in grace, transcends it and awaits the final union with *Sivam* is compare do the night and cool moon.

252. [Grace] will establish [the ripe devotee in the state of liberation], like sugar appearing fortuitously in the mouths of those who go about biting the bare ground of a sugarcane field [in the hope of finding sweetness].¹⁰³ If, like those of low intelligence [who think they can achieve anything they want without help], you claim that [the gaining of liberation] is due to your own excellence, you will be in the state where the greatness of your true Self is lost.

253. As I pay homage to him¹⁰⁴, my unspoken words offer praises to the one who suddenly turned his gaze upon me, like a painted picture which had come to life revealing to me the truth, 'You are reality itself, [which is merged with you] just as the radiance of the heavens is merged with the pupil of the eye !'



¹⁰³ When you give up your futile efforts in seeking the Self [without thinking of divine grace]

¹⁰⁴ The Guru Jnanasambandar

Ellam Ondre (All Is One)

This small but extraordinary book was written in the 19th century and has been translated from Tamil into English. The author is unknown. It was popularized by the sage, Ramana Maharshi, who often named it along with a few others to disciples who were in pursuit of wisdom. This book, highly saturated in wisdom teachings, names the single most effective method of attaining to realization (i.e. enlightenment, moksha or liberation). The Maharshi especially emphasized the book to those who had difficulty reconciling the concept of multiple gods (as in the Hindu religion) with the Advaita concept of a single Universal Creator. This book explains how there is no basic conflict between these points of view, as long as things are viewed from the perspective that all the diverse beings and objects in this expansive universe are essentially parts of a greater whole - or as the book sums it up: All is One.

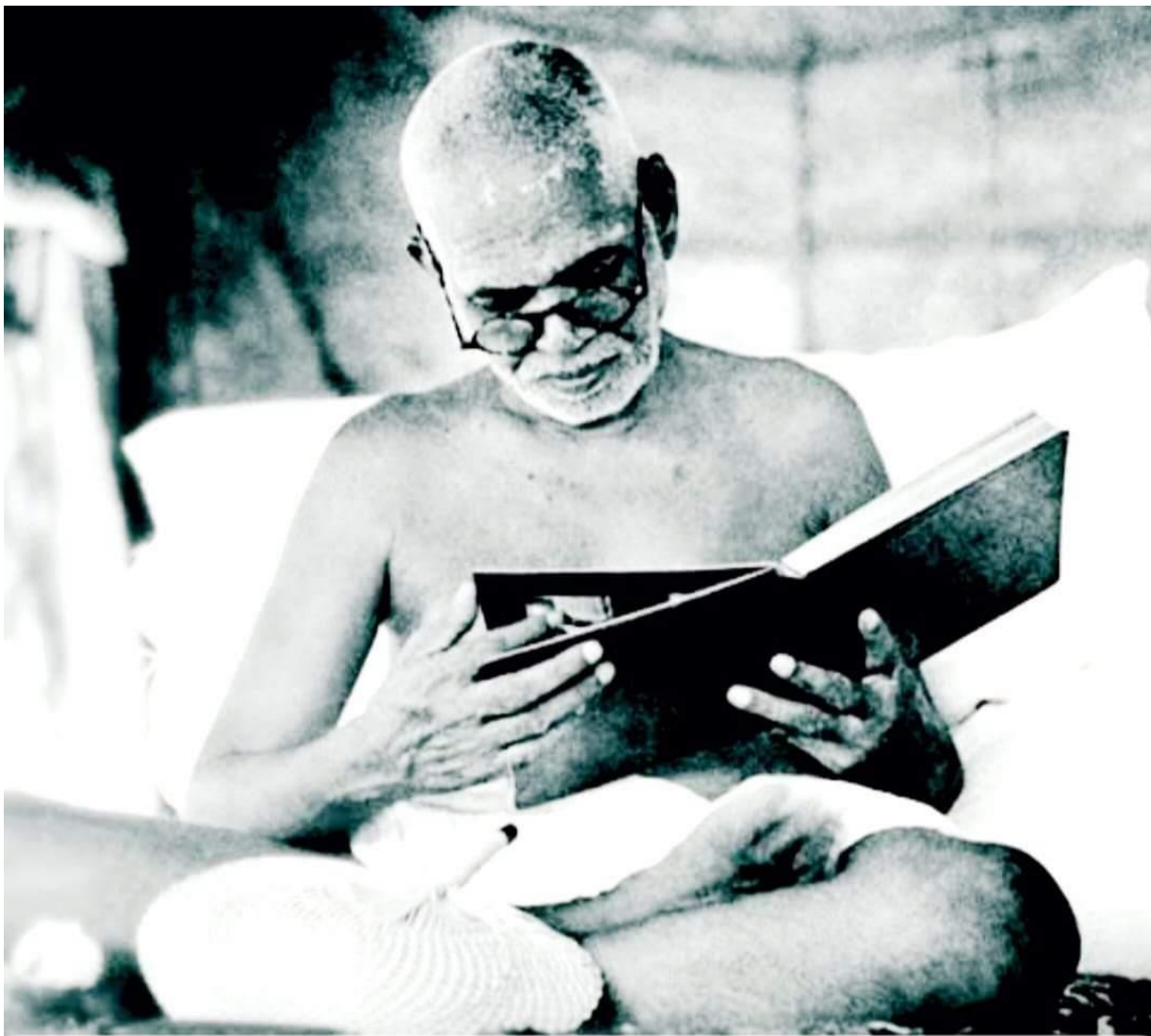
"If you want moksha write, read and practise the instructions in Ellam Ondre."

- Ramana Maharshi

* * *

I. Unity

1. All including the world seen by you and yourself, the seer of the world, is one only.
2. All that you consider as I, you, he, she and it, is one only.
3. What you consider to be sentient beings and what you consider to be insentient, such as earth, air, fire and water is all one.
4. The good which is derived by your considering all as one cannot be had by considering each as separate from the other. Therefore all is one.
5. The knowledge of the unity of all, is good for you and good for others as well. Therefore all is one.
6. He who sees "I am separate," "you are separate," "he is separate" and so on, acts one way to himself and another way to others. He cannot help doing so. The thought "I am separate, others are separate" is the seed from which grows the tree of differing actions in relation to different persons. How can there be any lapse from righteousness for a person who knows the unity of himself with others? As long as the germ of differentiation is there, the tree of differing actions will flourish, even unawares. Therefore give up differentiation. All is one only.
7. Ask: "If in the world all things appear different, how can I consider all as one? Is there any way of gaining this knowledge?" The reply is: "In the same tree we see leaves, flowers, berries and branches, different from one another, yet they are all one because they are all included in the word 'tree'. Their root is the same; their sap is the same. Similarly, all things, all bodies, all organisms are from the same source and activated by a single life principle." Therefore all is one.
8. Oh good man! Is the statement that "All is one," good or evil? Think for yourself. Just as the person will always be righteous who regards himself like others and others like



Whatever form your enquiry may take,
you must finally come to the one 'I', the
Self. All these distinctions made between
'I' and 'you', master and disciple, etc., are
merely a sign of ignorance. The supreme
'I' alone is. To think otherwise
is to delude oneself.

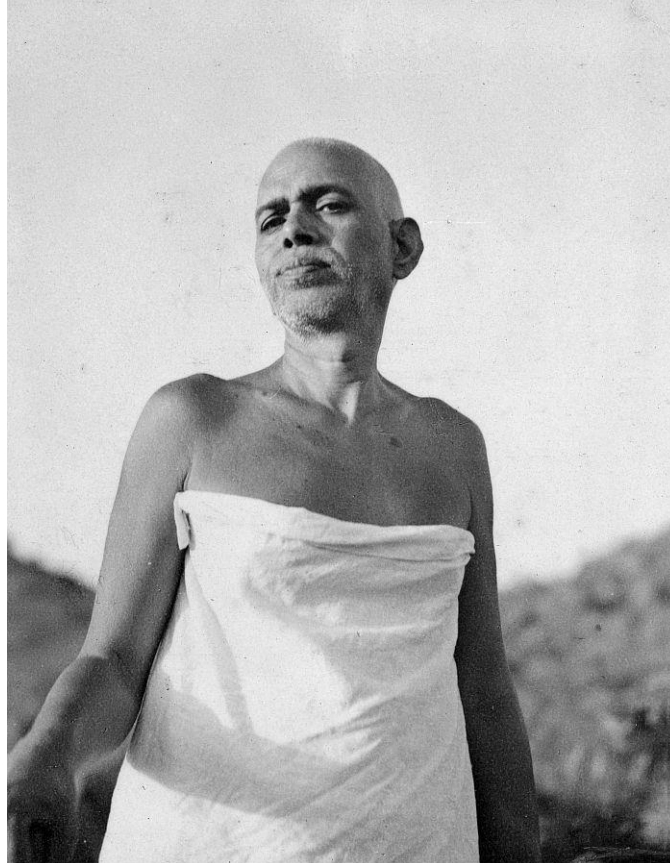
Sri Ramana Maharshi

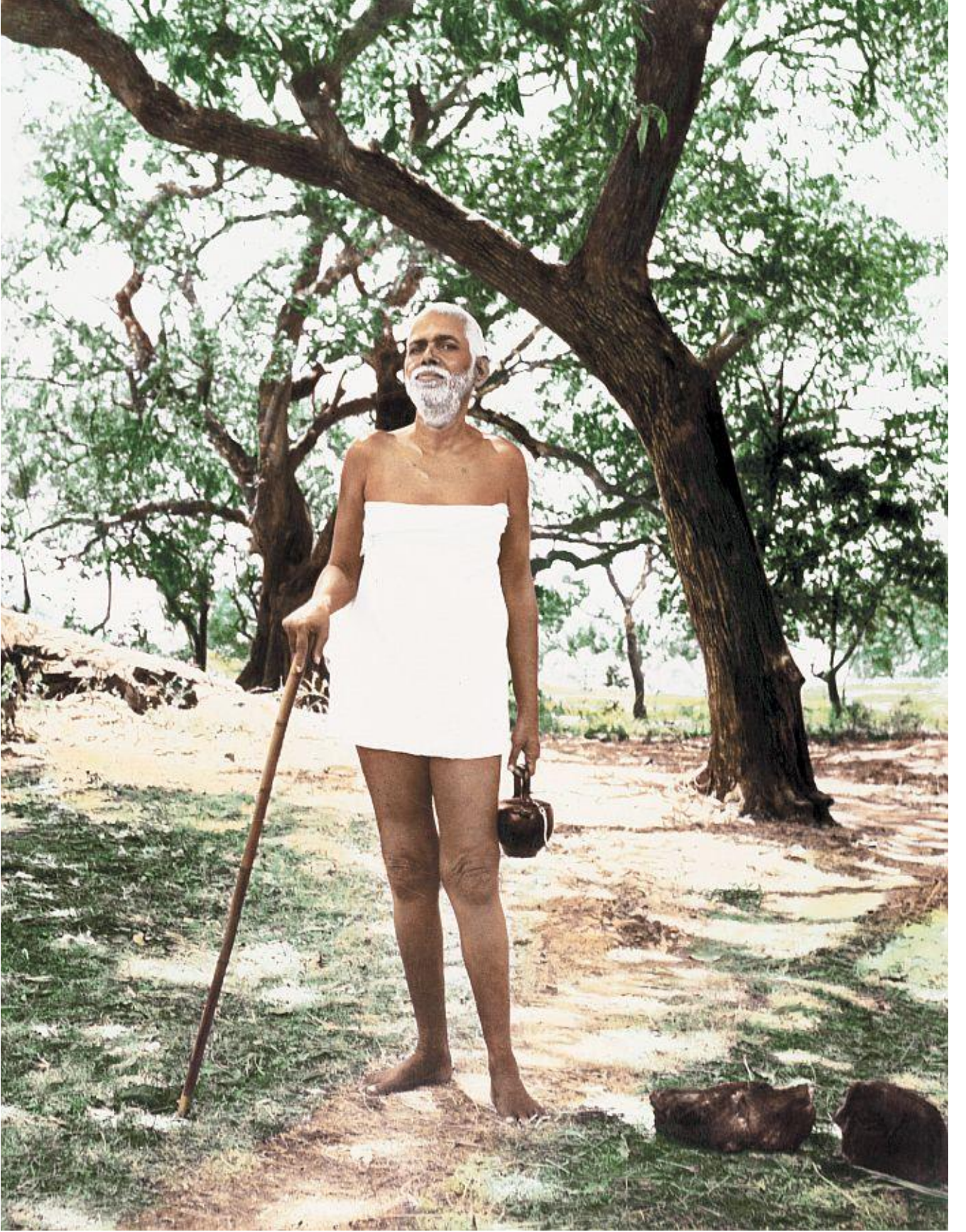
himself, how can any evil attach itself to him who knows himself to be others and the others to be himself? Tell me if there is any better way for obtaining good than the knowledge of unity? Certainly other methods cannot be as good as this one. How can anyone love others more than when knowing them to be himself, to know them in unity-love as unity, for they are truly one.

9. Who can share the mental peace and freshness of the knower of unity? He has no cares. The Good of all is his own good. A mother considers her children's well-being to be her own well-being. Still, her love is not perfect because she thinks she is separate and her children are separate. The love of a Sage, who has realized the unity of all, far excels even the love of a mother. There is no other means of gaining such love than the knowledge of unity. Therefore all is one.

10. Know that the world as a whole is your undecaying body and that you are the everlasting life of the whole world. Tell me if there is any harm in doing so? Who fears to go the harmless way? Be courageous. The *Vedas* teach this very truth. There is nothing but yourself. All good will be yours. Yea, you become the good itself. All that others gain from you will be good only. Who will work evil to his own body and soul? A remedy is applied if there is an abscess in the body. Even if the remedy is painful, it is meant to do good only. Such will be some of your actions; they will also be for the good of the world. For that reason, you will not be involved in differentiation. I put it briefly: The knower of unity will act as one should. In fact, the knowledge of unity makes him act. He cannot err. In the world, he is God made visible.

All is one.





A rare photo taken while Sri Bhagavan walked inside "Palakottu" everyday in the noon after lunch.

II. You

1. Who are you? Are you this body? If so, why are you not aware of a serpent crawling on it when you are in deep sleep? So then can you be this body? No, certainly not. You must be other than this body.
2. Sometimes in sleep you dream. There you identify yourself with someone. Can you be that one? You cannot be. Otherwise, what becomes of that individual on our waking? You are not he. Furthermore, you are ashamed of having identified yourself with him. Clearly, you are not that particular person. You are the one that stands apart from him.
3. Recall the state of dreamless slumber. What is your state then? Can that be your true nature? Surely you will not subscribe to this belief. Why? Because you are not so foolish as to identify yourself with the massive darkness which obstructs you from knowing the state you are in. Discerned by the intellect from the things around, how can you admit yourself to be the same as ignorance or blank? Or, how can it truly be your real nature? It cannot be. You are the knower who knows that this state remains one of dense darkness veiling your true nature. How can you be that which you have experienced and condemned? Therefore you are not the dark ignorance of deep sleep. You stand apart from this too.
4. When it is said that even this gross body is not you, can you be any other thing which is yet farther away from you? In the same way that you are not this gross body, you are not anything farther from the body, nor the dream person, nor the ignorance of deep sleep. You are distinct from these three states and this world.
5. These three states can be reduced to two conditions only-namely, the one of the subject and object, and the other is the unawareness of the subject itself. The former includes the waking and dream states, whereas the latter represents deep slumber. All your experiences are comprised in these two conditions only. Both of them are foreign to you. Your true nature remains distinct from them.
6. If you ask what that is, it is called *turiya*, which means the fourth state. Why is this name used? This name is proper because it seems to say the three states of your experience-waking, dream and deep sleep-are foreign to you and your true state is the fourth, which is different from these three. Should the three states, waking, dream and deep sleep, be taken to form one long dream, the fourth state represents the waking from this dream. Thus it is more withdrawn than deep sleep, also more wakeful than the waking state. Therefore your true state is that fourth one which is distinguished from the waking, dream and deep sleep states. You are that only. What is this fourth state? It is knowledge which does not particularize anything. It is not unaware of itself. That is to say, the fourth state is Pure Knowledge which is not conscious of any object, but not unconscious itself. Only he who has realized it even for a trice, has realized the Truth. You are that only.
8. What is there more for him who has gained the fourth state? Practically, it is not possible for anyone to remain forever in that state, that is, the state of no particular knowledge. He who has realized the fourth state later wakes up in this world, but for him this world is not as before. He sees that what he realized as the fourth state, shines forth as all this. He will not imagine this world as distinct from that Pure Knowledge. Thus what he saw within, he now sees without in a different form. In the place of the differentiation

of old, he is now established in the state of non-differentiation everywhere. Now, he is all. There is nothing distinct from himself. His eyes closed or open, howsoever the things may change, his state remains unchanged. This is the state of Brahman. This is the natural eternal state. You are that ever-true state.

9. There is nothing beyond this state. The words, 'inward' and 'outward' have no meaning for him. All is one. His body, speech and mind cannot function selfishly. Their workings will be grace for the good of all. The fragmentary "I" is lost forever. His ego can never revive. Therefore he is said to be liberated here and now. He does not live because his body lives, nor does he die because his body dies. He is eternal. There is nothing other than he. You are He.

10. Who is God? He is grace. What is Grace? Awareness without the fragmentary ego. How can one know that there is such a state? Only if one realizes it. The *Vedas* laud such a one as having realized God and become one with Him. Therefore the greatest good that one can derive from the world and the greatest good which one can render unto it, is to realize this state. In fact, there are no states besides this. They appear in the state of ignorance. For him who knows, there is one state only. You are that.



Sri Bhagavan blessing a baby squirrel sitting in His palms

III. God

1. Who is God? God is He who has transcended all that is seen by us. If transcending this world, is there no relation between Him and this world? Not a particle here is unrelated to Him. Then what is meant by transcending the world? The world comprises us and the objects seen by us. In other words, the animate and inanimate together form the world. What shall we say of Him who created the beings and things? Of these two, we say the conscious beings to be superior. All that we can apprehend is that He belongs to the highest order of beings known to us. Our intellect cannot proceed further. Thus, our Creator is superior to us; He cannot be apprehended by our intellect; therefore His Name, Transcended Being, "Kadawul," means that He surpasses our intellect. Hence His Name is "Kadawul" – Transcended Being.

2. Can God then not be made known to us? Not quite so. In a way, He is known to us. This much of His Grace is enough for us. We have no need for all His Greatness. He has made known so much of His Greatness as will suffice to eradicate our misery. There is no reason for Him to reveal a jot more of His Power than is necessary to remedy our defects in the present state. Thus He is known according to our needs. Nay, He is in our grasp. However limitless, He is within reach of our knowledge to some extent.

3. What is it which brings Him within reach of our knowledge? That He is known as Being-Consciousness-Bliss. Being denotes that which is imperishable, that which exists forever. Should He become nonexistent at any time, who is His Destroyer? Who created Him? Since the perishable nature of all leads to the inference that they are lorded over by One who is imperishable, this immortal Overlord is God. His imperishable nature is Being (Sat). Now, what is Consciousness (Chit)? By Consciousness we mean knowledge. This is absolute Knowledge, and not like our erring intellectual knowledge. Irregularity or mistake cannot stain its actions. It is Knowledge, pure and simple. Frequently He teaches us saying, "Your knowledge is irregular and erring." How orderly are even the insentient objects of His creation! It is known to many how an atheist was taught a good lesson when he derided the scheme of things saying, "Why did He make the seed so small for the banyan tree which is so big?" That an insentient thing is found in good order and later becomes useful, implies a conscious agency at work. Can a simple, insentient thing do something which is possible for unfailing knowledge only? Or, can't it be done by our inadequate knowledge? No, it can never be. Therefore God is said to be Consciousness (Chit) also. Now, what is Bliss? It is the state of being free from desire for anything. It is Peace which is ever full. Were He to desire anything, how could He be better than ourselves? How could we gain Bliss from Him? He Himself would require another being to fulfil His desires. But who would think Him to be so? The state of self-contentment is that of Bliss also. Therefore He is called Bliss (Ananda). The three — Being, Consciousness and Bliss—are inseparable; otherwise, they would become naught individually. Hence, He is known as Being-Consciousness-Bliss (*Sat-Chit-Ananda*). Thus God remains not only transcendent but also falls within the reach of our knowledge as Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

4. He who has gained the fourth state and sees all as one, only he knows God truly as Being-Consciousness-Bliss. Words cannot express nor the ears hear how such a one is united with God; it is a matter of realization. But there are ways and means for such realization. They can be spoken of, learned and acted upon.

5. He who can be realized thus, is God. He has no name; we give Him a name. He has no form; we give Him a form. Where is the harm in doing so? What name is not His, or what form is not His? Where is the sound or form in which He is not? Therefore, in the absence of true knowledge of Him you can name Him as you please or imagine Him as of any form so to remember Him. Your hope for His Grace without any effort on your part is utterly fruitless. Should it be possible to have His Grace without any effort on your side, all would be alike; there would be no reason for any difference. He has shown us the ways and means. Make effort, reach the goal, be happy. Your idleness and selfishness make you expect His Grace without your effort. The rule for all is for you too. Do not relax your efforts. God can be realized by your effort only.

6. There is an effort which excels all others. This may, however, appear to be less effective than devotion to God with name and form. Nevertheless, this is the more efficient. It is simply the love which you extend to all beings, whether good or bad. In the absence of such love to all, your devotion to God amounts to a mere parody. Of what use are you to God? That you seek fulfilment of your desires from God without doing your duty towards the needy in the world must be attributed to your selfishness. In God's presence, there is no use for such. The workings that take place in His presence are all unselfish. Therefore, think that all the Centers are His and He is in all the Centers and thus be devoted to Him. God is truly bound by such high devotion.

7. As you go on ascribing names and forms to God and showing love to all because you have understood all names and forms to be His, your mind will gradually mature. Just as the taste improves with the ripening of a fruit, so also you will recognize the waxing of good and the waning of evil in you. As your mind matures, there will come a time when you should meet your Master. This is not to say that you go in search of him or he comes in search of you. At the right time the meeting will happen. All are moving in their own ways. Your fitness brings you together, makes you trust him, makes him teach you the right way, also makes you follow his instructions. That is the straight way to reach God, which is to gain the fourth state. You will follow the way and reach your goal which is Being-Consciousness-Bliss, which is God.

8. The way shown by the Master is final, straight and making for unity. It is well-tried, natural, and free from pain. When you are following the way shown by the master, doubts will not arise; there will be no fear. Are not fear and doubt the characteristics of the ways of darkness? How can they meet you in the way of Truth shown by the Master? In this manner, the way will itself speak to you and say that it is the right one. In that way, there will be nothing more for you to do but to meet your Master and learn from him. That way will be familiar to you, as the Master and God have made it so. Before you, he had treaded the way. He has shown you the way and you are following him. To how many will you show the same way? And how many more will follow the same way later? Obviously fear and doubt have no place in the way of truth. When once you have taken a step forward you will step back. The master's help is only for the first step forward. You need not do anything for your master in order to have the way shown to you. Know him to be the messenger of God sent down to disclose the way to the fit who have become ripe by their own efforts in either or both the directions mentioned earlier. It is God who sends this godly messenger just when you are ripe.

9. Practice with faith in the period of ignorance is called *Bhakti* (path of Devotion); the same, with knowledge, is called *Jnana* (the path of Wisdom). Of the two divisions of *Bhakti*, the one is devotion to God with name and form, and the other is karma which is love for all. Of the two divisions of *Jnana*, the practice of the true way shown by the Master is called yoga and the resulting state is called *Jnana* (knowledge). It is natural for all to believe in something which is not seen and then to find it. Those who do not believe can never find. Therefore, the believers will gain something sometime or other and the unbelievers never gain anything. You can believe even for the simple reason that faith in God is not harmful. Thereby you can share the good effects. This world is meant only for creating faith in you. This is the purpose of creation. Have faith and you can reach God.

10. Though you may not believe all that is said of God, believe at least "There is God." This seed is very potent in its growth. It is so mighty as to negate all else and fill all by itself. It is so almighty that you will not see anything besides God, not even yourself. Truly, God is all.



Sri Bhagavan feeding the monkeys

IV. Peace

1. What is peace? Although the world persists when a man is in deep sleep, does he have any cares concerning it? His mind is tranquil and refreshed. Should his mind be in the same degree calm and refreshed even when he is face to face with the world and is active therein, then there is peace.

2. Can the mind remain so even when the world confronts us? It depends upon our estimate of the world. The mind is more excited when one's own property is plundered than when another's property is similarly plundered. Of one's own things, the loss of one thing causes greater concern than those of another. Why? Because our estimate of the things is the cause of the degree of the delight or anxiety concerning them. Therefore, should one learn to regard all equally, the mind will be extremely peaceful. Or should all things be considered as our own and highly prized, then too there is no cause for pain. Why? What will a man regret? The mind which knows that universal concern is beyond its capacity, must needs become tranquil. Also when one feels that one has no claim on anything or that everything is perishable, the mind will remain cool. Thus there will be lasting peace if one looks on all as of the same value. Peace is dependent upon one's intellectual appraisals.

3. I shall now illustrate this. A man wakes up from a dream. His mind is happy or troubled according to his opinion of the things seen in the dream. But on waking, his mind remains unaffected by all the happenings in the dream; it remains the same. Why? Because, only now his mind has learned to value all the matters of the dream equally. He is not sorry for the cessation of the dream. Why? He is convinced that the dream is not everlasting and must end on waking. In the same manner, should a man be convinced that he cannot but wake up sometime from the long dream of the world, his mind will be unchanging. It is the state of freshness. This is the state of Peace.

4. This is not to say that his relation with the world will cease. Now only peace and freshness of the mind are his. His actions cannot but vary according to circumstances. The only change in him after the mind has become peaceful is this: his mind has known the truth and become unattached; therefore, it rests in peace. His actions though changeable will always be impartial. But the actions of others are changing and cannot be impartial. Thus, the coolness of the mind produces enormous good not only to himself but also to the world at large. Peace shows the way to right conduct.

5. A man walks with a lighted lamp in his hand. Can there be any hostility between the light and the ups and downs on the way? There cannot be. But light and darkness cannot be together. The light chases away darkness, it discloses the ups and downs on the way and makes the man walk carefully, whether he moves up, down, or sideways. It removes the cause of vain complaints, such as, "That snag hurt my foot" or "This hollow made me slip." Similarly, after peace is gained, the state of peace makes the man neither hate nor antagonize the world. Rather it dispels the darkness which conceals from our view the true nature of the world and its snags. In the absence of the light of Peace which enables

people to adjust themselves to varying circumstances, they condemn the world as full of misery, as they would complain of the snags on the road. Therefore a man who has gained the utmost peace after knowing the whole world as a complicated dream, should not be considered either unrelated to the world or unconcerned with its activities; he alone stands in effective concord with it; only he is competent to be a man of action. Thus Peace is that which regulates one's duties.

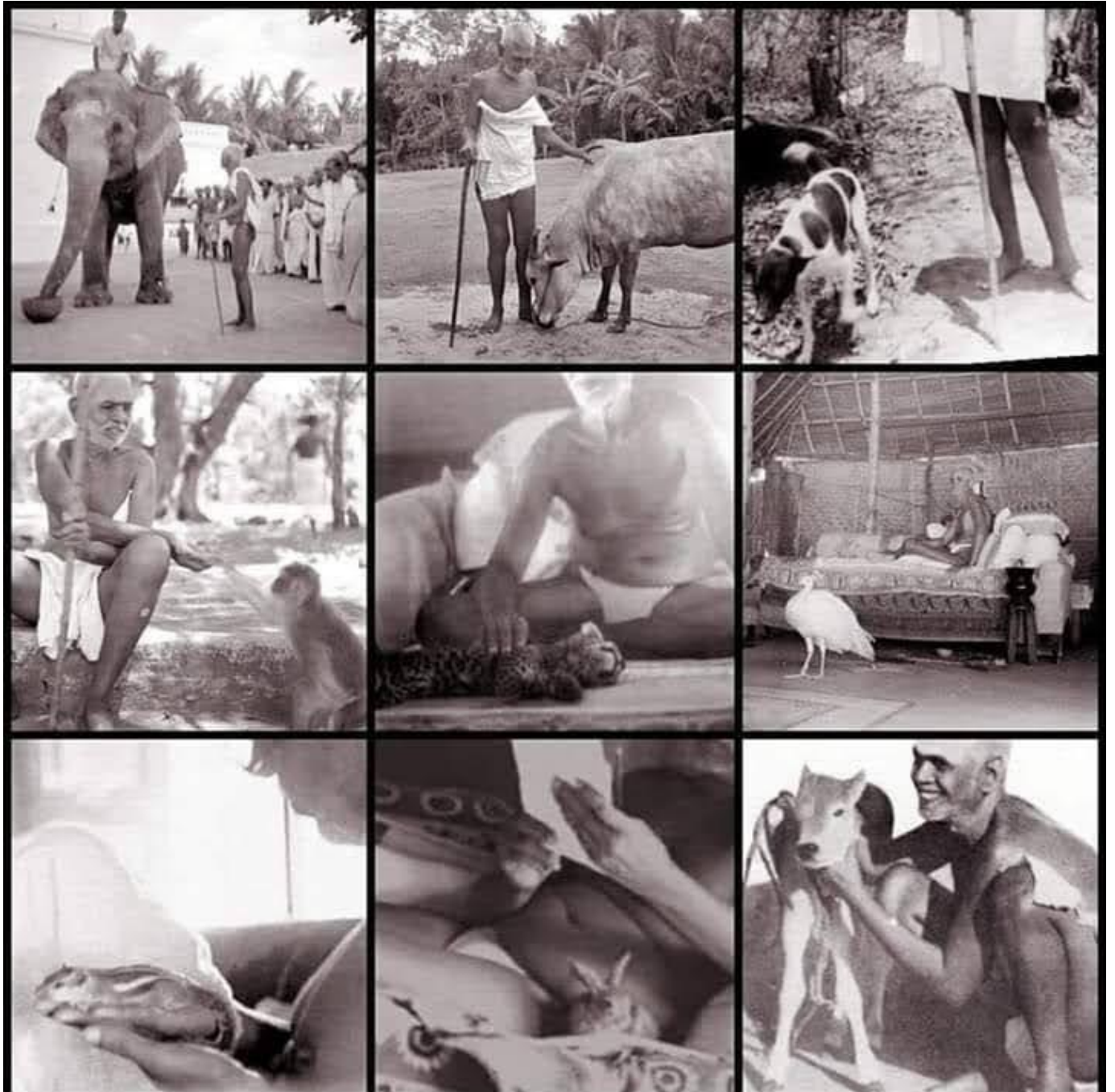
6. The concern of a man of Peace in the actions of the world lies in rectifying them. Should he feel fear before this world, what hope of reformation can there be, especially from those who esteem it and want to possess it? They are in the grip of selfishness, blind to impartiality. To guide the blind on the way or treat the blindness of the eye, one's eyesight must itself be good. Similarly, it is for him to reform the world who has already discerned his unchanging nature from the changeful nature of the world and become peaceful. These cannot help serving the world. Why? Can anyone be so hard hearted as not to lift up a child when it slips and falls? So also for the wise ones who can rightly appraise the troubles of the world and help the people. Because he has already withdrawn himself from the mind and body the sage feels no concern under the strain of service to the world, just as the life principle does not suffer even when loaded carts pass over the corpse it has left behind (by itself). He will not shrink from work or trouble. Only truly realized peace can bestow such courage and coolness.

7. To all appearances. Peace will look poor and quite weak. But in effect, it beats all. In tenacity and courage, it surpasses all. After all, success depends on these qualities. Even if Mount Meru should topple over, the incident will hardly produce a gentle smile in the man of peace, or it will leave him unmoved. This state is helpful both for worldly and spiritual matters. True happiness in the world is his, and that happiness comes out of release from bondage. Peace means doing good to any one in any manner.

8. The obstacles to peace are several. They are meant to prove the man. When they confront us we should be wide awake and keep the delicate flower of the mind distant from even their shadows. If the flower of the mind be crushed, it will lose its fragrance, freshness and color; it will neither be useful to you, nor can it be presented to others, nor offered to God. Know that your mind is more delicate than even a blossom. By means of a peaceful mind, all your duties to yourself, to others and to God must be discharged. Let it release the same freshness throughout. All blessings for the mind are contained in Peace.

9. Unremittingly worship the God of your Self with the flower of your mind. Let the children of the mental modes watch this worship. Gradually they will learn to cast away their childish pranks and desire to delight like yourself. As they watch your Peace, they will themselves recoil from their vagaries. Continue the worship patiently. Be not led away by the vagaries of the mind. On the contrary, they should become peaceful by your peace. All must get peace.

10. I shall finish in one word: The essence of all the *Vedas* is "Peace."



V. Action

1. All action is God's. His power has fixed each thing into its own individual function. By His agency the insentient objects and the sentient beings do their work. All actions are His.
2. All are doing their respective work. So what has God to do with it? We will first consider the sentient beings and, later on, the insentient objects. We are sentient beings. Let us first see whose actions are ours. We all desire a higher state and work for it. But our achievements are not uniform. Sometimes the goal is the same and so is the work, but why is there a difference in the results? Here God makes us understand that the action is His. Otherwise all must be alike. The difference in the conditions cannot be accounted for. Can there be anyone who does not wish to improve his position? Whatever their intention towards others, their intention towards themselves is surely honest. The conditions of people of the same intention are yet different. This is because all actions are of God.
3. All beings have the same intention; yet their efforts are of different degrees, so also their states. After saying this, the question arises: What is effort? Is it not simply a mental image? All these images have the same origin, namely, the common intention of all. Why then should the image of effort differ in each? Here too God makes us see that all actions are His.
4. If it is said that notwithstanding the same intention, the effort can vary according to individual capacity, the question arises: What is the source of this capacity? It is of the body and mind. The environment may also affect it. One must take account of all the factors before one makes an effort. However, these factors are not under one's control so that the effort may not be equal to the task. Therefore all actions are God's.
5. Again, if it is said that the body, the mind and the environment will gradually be made equal to the task, it implies a present incapacity. This is to admit that all actions are God's.
6. Now, is it for good or bad that people do not gain their objectives? It is certainly good. Why? Most of them are selfish. Judge for yourself if their success is for the good of the world or otherwise. You may ask: Should not the attempts of the unselfish be entirely successful? Though to all appearances they may look unselfish, yet they are not free from blemishes. These depend on the ego. If the imagined unselfishness has given rise to a sense of superiority over others, God frustrates their purpose and teaches them that "You are also like others and I govern you". On the other hand, free from selfishness and free from ego is the representative of God, within whom the cloud of ego that conceals God does not exist and from whom God is ever shining forth. To such a one of true purpose (*Sattva Sankalpa*) all his intentions come out true. God shines forth directly in him. There is no darkness in him. Only he knows the Divine purpose as it is. Through him God fulfills the purpose of His creation. All actions are God's.
7. If it is asked: Is there not a single person of true intent? And why should not the world have all blessings in full? The answer, which is a secret, is that the sages who are aware that all actions are God's, wish to make it known to others as well. There is no greater

good than to know that all actions are God's and not our own. This knowledge contains all the blessings in itself. Therefore the intention of the sages is to clearly instruct others in the knowledge of God and His actions. Even so, they do not say "Know God this very instant," but they teach the ways and means to knowledge and encourage us in right conduct-this much only. They do not say, "Be emancipated at once." Why? Because this is not possible for the common people. Nor do the sages say to God, "Liberate the people at once." Because the sages are free from the ego and think, "God knows what He should do and when to do it. What is there for me to say to Him?" Thus they wish only to do their work, without any interest in the fruits this work may produce. They have known that God alone dispenses the fruits of actions. Simply they watch the course of events in the world and do their work, never thinking of creating a world of their own. Why? To do so is a form of egoism. The creation is as it should be. Everything is in order. All actions are God's.

8. Knowing their actions are subservient to the Higher Power, how could they hope to achieve something dear to their hearts? No, they cannot. They will do their work simply as a duty. The scriptures say, "Do work, but do not think of its fruits." Just as anger unconsciously overpowers a man even though he is determined not to get angry, so also the sages of true intent (*Sattva Sankalpa*) may be shocked by the iniquities of the world and unwittingly think, "God, let that be made good!" If so, then it will certainly happen and good will prevail. This is the cause of some extraordinary events in the world. These extraordinary events are the results of a wish stealing into the mind of a sage. This is the law of nature. Who can change it? All actions are God's.

9. Whatever takes place, it is in the natural order of things. Also, it is right. Everything happens by His will alone. In truth, it is not wrong to think "He makes the thief steal." Why? Because at the time of punishment He also makes the thief suffer for the robbery. Thus, there should be no ill-will directed towards the thief. Such is the fruit of the knowledge that all actions are God's. Although there is no ill-will towards the thief, there is a dislike of theft. This is also the result of our knowledge that all actions are God's. How is this? Because the thief himself dislikes theft: Would he keep quiet if his own belongings were stolen by another? He would not. Who can be unaware that good is right and evil is wrong? Therefore the knowledge that all actions are God's will bring into the world an era of orderly conduct. Our knowledge does not extend further. We can repeat only what we know. We need not worry about what lies beyond our knowledge. This too is God's will.

10. One of the fruits of knowledge granted to us by God is the knowledge that all actions are God's. We are powerless to ask God, "Why do you act thus?" Because the fruits of our actions are not always according to our desire, all religions admit similar states of our powerlessness. In other words, because our powers are limited, we cannot but say that all actions are God's. The law which applies to us, applies to insentient objects also. Our law is no better than theirs. All is one. Even though some do not admit that all actions are God's, yet they admit their own incapacity. This itself is the act of God.

VI. Ego

1. Oh ego, all the evils of the world are from you. To crush you, the kings make laws and the wise give lessons. In spite of their efforts from time immemorial, alas! You are yet alive; you simply go into hiding and reappear again and again. Can there be no end to you? Yea, it is surely approaching. Another Ego has started to kill you. It is the Universal Ego called "I am Brahman".

2. Oh ego, think not that your enemy is of your kind. You are perishable whereas He is not. You are conceited as "I" because you always differentiate as "I", "you" and "he," but your enemy is free from this conceit. How? He harmonizes all differences, resolves all into Himself. Moreover, you feel enmity towards Him because he has arisen to kill you. But He has no ill-feelings towards you. How is this? Because you are not to be found in His presence. He regards you as a part of His limbs. Your loss in his proximity is the working of your own falsity; He would not think of killing you because you are of no consequence in His sight. Therefore, ego, you are His enemy, but He is not yours. More briefly put, you are your own enemy. Why? Owing to your greed you flaunted yourself before the Great One as you would elsewhere. Instantly, you were lost; therefore, the Universal Self obscures you by devouring you and then shines forth as All-light.

3. Oh ego, the evils of your works have no limits. You are not content unless you are exalted above others and others are lowered before you. Endless are your desires, such as "By what title shall I gain honor?" "In what form shall I appear elegant?" "Do others bow to me? Do others obey me in silence?" "Do others say that no one excels me?". Alas! How short is your life! And yet to how much do you aspire! And how much evil you do! You have deluded yourself that there is happiness in such ideas and in differentiating yourself from all others. This is not to your good. Why not? Are not others also entitled to all these? What is your share in things which are common to millions and millions of others? Such being the case, do not desire in vain to rule over all. By your vain desire you bring about evil to yourself and to others. Listen to my friendly advice. Truly speaking, He whom you regard as your mortal enemy is your friend. He knows how to make you worthy of true greatness and blessings. Surrender to Him. This Universal Ego does not treat you as an enemy but is your greatest benefactor.

4. By no means can you discover what He will make of you unless you surrender yourself to Him. However much I may speak of it, you cannot understand. It is a matter of experience. Doubtless He will do nothing less than exalt you to His state. Therefore, be not perplexed about your future; directly surrender yourself. You can always turn away if joy does not overtake you from the very instant of surrender. Just as the drinking of milk starts with an agreeable taste and ends with the satisfaction of hunger, so also surrender starts with delight and ends with Perfect Bliss, which lies beyond even pleasure and pain. Therefore your goal, without doubt, is this Universal Ego (I-am-Brahman).

5. What will be your new name after surrender? There is no name besides yours. The *Vedas* laud you; the world praises you; the essence of religious teachings is yourself. Then

what is your form? All forms are yours. There is no form which is not yours. What is installed in the temples of worship is you; what is described in the *Vedas* is you; festivities and celebrations are all for you. Now what can be your power? In your presence the world is active; each is what it is, because of you. Briefly said, all things glorify you and bear witness to your being. They are duty bound to do so. You would not have even dreamt that this will be your state. Start at once, be not self-conceited. The Universal Ego awaits you.

6. Do you wish to wake up from your dream or continue in it? How long will the dream images last? Be not idle, shake off your sleep, wake up! You are witnessing your own mental images and imagining more and more. It is all in vain. Just find out who it is that sees the visions. Do not delude yourself that you are these that rise and sink in you. Wake up. The instant you wake up you will know that waking is better than this dream. Get up! The Universal Ego waits to rejoice at seeing you awake.

7. Fear not the cessation of the present ego dream. Once you are awake you will enjoy the same all the more. You will no longer be deluded and will observe it with cheerful detachment, unconfused. The folly of all appearances will be understood and you will have no burdens. In dream your mental imagery assumes shapes. On waking you know the dream as just a dream. Do not mistake dream for the waking state. Know the dream as dream. For doing so, you must reach the state of "I-am-Brahman" (Universal Ego) and wake from the illusion of the ego.

8. I have instructed you for your good and not in my own interest. If you believe me, you should act upon what I have taught you. On the other hand, if you see no good in what I have said, then turn away from this ideal. How can I help you if my advice and all the advice of the saints do not make any impression on you? No state is higher than this. Believe me, it is for your good that you realize this truth; and through you others may realize the same. Be free from self-conceit. Start at once. Realize that the Universal Ego is your own.

9 Oh ego, see how you are a slave to all and therefore suffer. How pitiable is your state! All are hostile to you! When you say "for me only," all others will also contend "for me only, for me only". When you say "I am great," they protest, "Why? We are also." All are hostile to you. Owing to the troubles caused by others, your mental images increase a million fold. Should you not rise above them and profit by surrendering to a Master? Then all your enemies will befriend you. If you say to others, "All these are yours," everyone becomes your friend. There is only One who can make you that magnanimous and that is "I-am-Brahman" (Universal Ego).

10. I shall say one word only and this is not owing to my egoism. It is simply my duty. I do not say this word just for your or my good alone. It is for the good of all. The truth is "I-am-Brahman" (Universal Ego).

* * *

Sri Ramana Maharshi



All that is required of you
is to *give up the thought
that you are this body*

and to *give up all thoughts
of the external things
or the not-Self.*

As often as the mind goes out
towards outward objects,
*prevent it
and fix it in the Self or 'I'.*

That is all the
*effort
required
on your part.*

~ Day by Day, 17-10-46.

"WHO AM I ?" A Guided Meditation on Self-Enquiry

The Way Of Sri Ramana Maharshi

written by: V. Ganesan read by: Rory Murray

The Great Master: BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI is guiding us now. From His Heart these words are being transferred to your heart. No one is guiding you other than Sri Ramana in the form of yourself. No need or room for any intermediary – as a technique – is necessary. Just observe.

You are simply listening – not listening to some one about something. Though conveyed through words, these are not mere statements or sentences; but, the one and only true state, of your own being, potently being transferred to you.

Sit in a relaxed manner
Don't try to imagine, project, visualise anything
Allow things to happen
Watch
Witness what is taking place

YOU ARE

Suddenly, thoughts rush in
Don't worry
Don't try to do anything about it
Allow them to come up
One thought after another follows,
continuously
Don't make any effort to understand or analyse them
Nor try to restrict them, to reject them, to condemn them, to clear them
Permit them to rush through
Only watch
Don't become tense or rigid
Feel relaxed

JUST - NOW -

Catch a thought
That is
Do not allow it to be pushed out, quickly, by the following thought
This movement of an effort you will have to make, to stick to that thought
Assume an attitude of neutrality and impartiality
Look at the simple verbiage of the thought:

"I want to go to Los Angeles"

Stay with it
Don't get carried away by the meaning of it
Don't react to the sense behind what that thought conveys
You are merely looking at it
At this moment, don't permit other thoughts to rush in

NOW –

Collect your attention
And,
Question :

"To **Whom** is this thought?"
Understand unwaveringly :

YOU are raising the question,
And, putting it to **YOURSELF**

No one else – nothing else is involved
YOU are answering **YOURSELF**
The obvious answer therefore is

"To ME"

Feel it
Are there two entities involved?
One as 'You' and another as 'thought'?
How can it be?
So
The question is put by you to **YOU**
Clearly understand this, with feeling, but without any further movement
Without any urge to ponder over it
It is a simple fact

NOW - WAIT -

Again, gather all your attention
And,
Focus sharply the attention on the need to know the
'me'
So,
In all attention and one-pointedness
With great feeling
Ask

"WHO AM I ?"

Intently observe
All movements stop
No thought – No YOU
Only

SILENCE STILLNESS QUIETUDE

The purpose of insisting on your listening up to here, before you have heard this introduction, is that one has to have an experience of the 'Silence' within oneself first. Such an experience is a pre-requisite to move further. Sri Ramana Maharshi calls this a '**foretaste**' of the real 'I AM', the Silence within each one of us, behind, beyond and inclusive of our day-to-day elusive, changing egoistic 'I'-feeling, the '**me**'. Any amount of verbal explanation, pointing to a state of Silence behind the simple 'me' proves futile; as such, any effort lands one, ironically, in the conundrum of ideas and more explanations only. On the other hand, a glimpse of this Silence, brought about not by cleverness of words but by being directly in it, in the experience, is the only way to follow it, to cling to it, without the need for anyone else to explain it to you, verbally.

All efforts through words, sentences, statements prove of little help, for the simple reason that the experience of the Silence can never be brought within the borders of words and sentences. Hence, the *Vedas* declare it as *anirvachaneeya*, 'indescribable through words'.

A direct experience, however short, light or meager, helps equip one with a real understanding, which is very important for making the next movement.

The first glimpse or taste of the silence is only the beginning.

Thoughts continue to rush in.

What to do, now?

You have to accept every subsequent thought that arises. Do not try to fight them away or quell them by any other method other than patiently again asking the question : "To whom is this thought?", "To me": and, reach the Silence through the razor-sharp posture of "WHO AM I?"

Repeat it relentlessly, again and again and again!

Patience is required

More patience is demanded!

"There is no shortcut to Self-enquiry. The whole course has to be persevered with" – this seeming unpalatable but vital answer of the Maharshi is actually an enormous encouragement to pursue the path to Silence, patiently!

"Constant vigilance is the price a seeker has to pay" in this path, affirms the Maharshi.

The Silence will guide you, from within

No longer depend on or look to the vagaries of the mind. The mind is the real 'thief' robbing you of your precious jewel of Silence!

Shift your attention to Silence. Don't heed the doubting mind, which raises endlessly questions like 'How', 'Why' and 'When'. Once thoughts are arrested, restricted, looked into at their roots through Self-enquiry, the weakened mind tries to raise these shallow questions. Instead of feeling the need to face such a mind, raise the fundamental questions of 'WHO' and 'WHENCE', whenever it puts out its antenna. Sages abhor raising the questions of 'How' and 'Why'; and, they applaud the one who, of his own accord, raises the questions of 'WHO' and 'TO WHOM' !

Thought is a movement

Silence is its birthplace. It is *achala*, motionless

Thought is ignorance, bondage

Silence is Wisdom, Liberation

If submitted to thoughts, one is bound

**If denuded of thoughts, Silence dawns,
one attains Freedom**

With thoughts one is worried

With Silence one is ever happy

To think, effort is essential

Silence is one's own effortless, choiceless, natural state

'How long one has to practice the enquiry ?' is a wrong question, though it looks logical and important. Does anyone ask how long one has to continue to breathe; or, do you ever dare to stop breathing to raise such a question?

Silence is the way. Silence is the Goal.

Silence is the beginning. Silence is the end.

Did not Jesus Christ declare :

"I AM the way and I AM the Goal" ?

Silence is I AM !

I AM is "**NOW**" !



***Boy Ganesan following the Sacred Footsteps of SRI BHAGAVAN (a 'still photo' taken from an old Movie on SRI BHAGAVAN
- sent to him by a devotee from abroad, just before the completion of printing of the BOOK)***

Author and Copyright owner :

V. GANESAN

"Ananda Ramana"

C/o Sri Ramanasramam, P.O.,

Tiruvannamalai - 606 603

Tamilnadu, INDIA

{ Email : ramanamymaster@gmail.com }

Front Cover : Design by Amarnath

IMPORTANT = Weblinks

The text matter of the enclosed THREE weblinks are contained inside this book. While listening to any of the videos/audios being played, it is important that one reads the text matter as well -

1) "BHAJA GOVINDAM" (see, bookmark) :

<https://youtu.be/DEifvYfzmRQ?si=VnpILqoOXUyFSBCQ>

2) "LINGASHTAKAM" :

https://youtu.be/p_z4oRinK3E?si=38nmV1xx7VfqAC7

3) "WHO AM I ?" A Guided Meditation on Self-Enquiry :

<https://www.voiceofrishis.org/guided/guided.mp3?v=c86ee0d9d7ed>

Cover Page No. 3

In the last days of Sri Bhagavan (1950s), there came a sincere devotee — MANGARAM — from Punjab (a repatriate driven out of the freshly created 'Pakistan' — all through by walking to Sri Bhagavan). Though he was not known to many, his surrendered devotion to *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana was matchless. When Sri Bhagavan gave '*darshan*' seated in the veranda of the now 'NIRVANA ROOM', everyone was strictly prohibited from trying to draw Sri Bhagavan's attention either by talking to Him, or handing over anything to Him.

Mangaram obeying the rules stood in the queue and had '*darshan*' like all others. But, when his turn came to directly see Sri Bhagavan, he stealthily took out a hidden piece of paper of his prayer, rolled it and threw it on the lap of Sri Bhagavan. He moved away like a good boy — but not before noticing Sri Bhagavan picking up the note and reading it. The attendants of Sri Bhagavan noticing this atrocity being committed by Mangaram rushed to inform the Office.

Strangely, Sri Bhagavan Himself called the attendant and told him in a feeble voice: "Bring Mangaram, here!" The attendant had to obey. After the last line of queue was over, Mangaram was brought in. Sri Bhagavan with all compassion looked at Mangaram and with a Gracious Smile took out the piece of paper, again read it and nodded his head up and down symbolising His full approval to fulfil it.

Mangaram's prayer in it was : "Bhagavan ! SAVE ME !"

Was that assurance of the *Sat-Guru* meant only for Mangaram?

Most assuredly, the assurance is for everyone of us who have surrendered to *Sat-Guru* Sri Ramana !

Let us pray :

"BHAGAVAN ! SAVE ME !"

* * *

Cover Page No. 4

This Look of Sri Bhagavan is assuredly His famous "*Glance of Grace*"!

How fortunate we are all that — right now — we are the fortunate recipients of that "*Glance of Grace*" of Sri Bhagavan!

It communicates in the Heart of everyone of us:

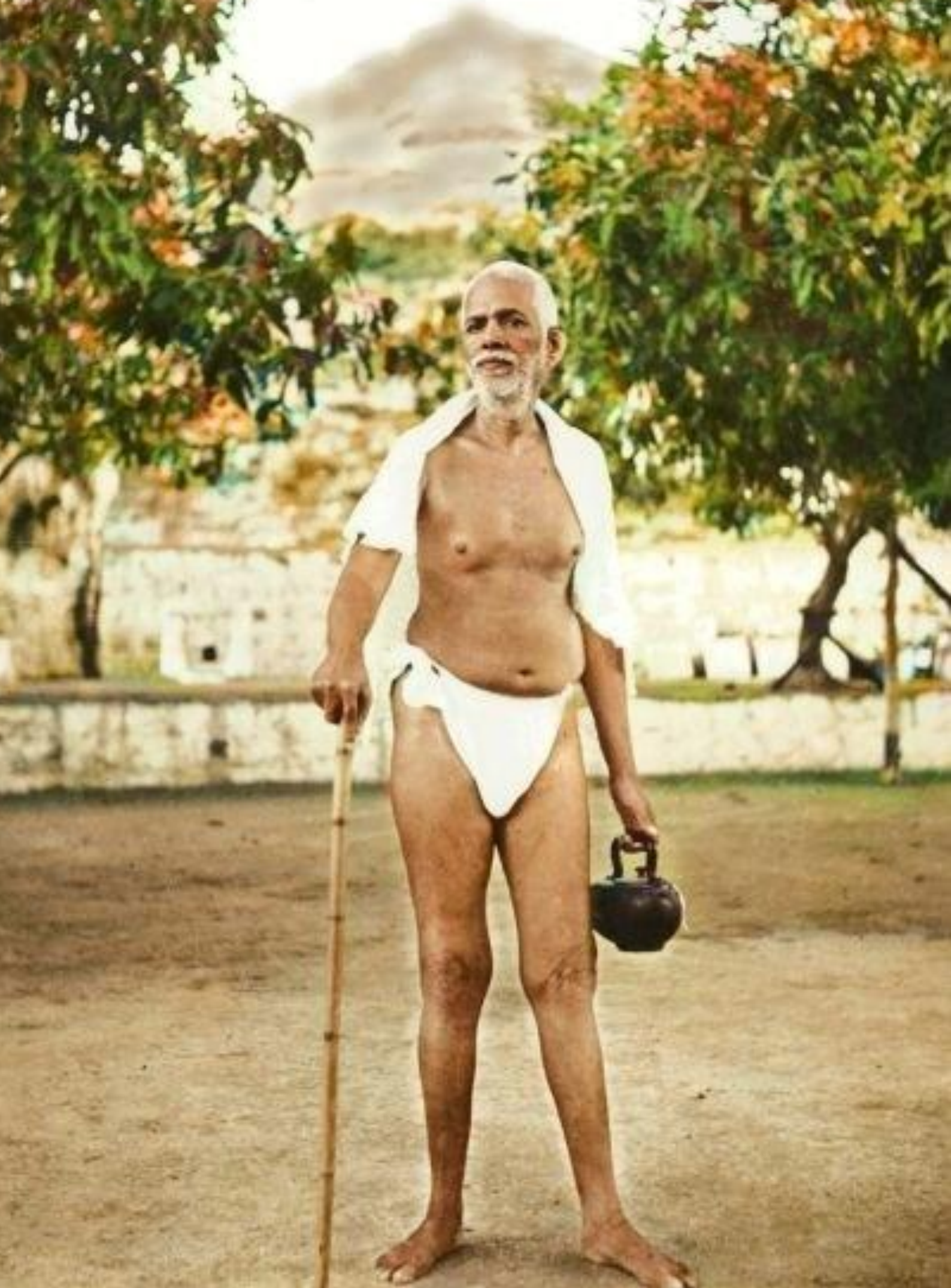
**"எண்ணில் பிறவி எடுத்து
— இறுதி" ("ஏகான்ம பஞ்சகம்")**

**" [One has] gone through innumerable
births, already. [This is] the last birth. "**

— "*Five verses on the Self*, v.1"



"BHAGAVAN ! SAVE ME !"



"அப்பாவிற்கு (ள்) பிள்ளை அடக்கம்"
"Son is beholden to the Father"