

Saranagathi



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In this Issue

Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

This issue of Saranagathi carries a feature article by Sri Bhagavan's attendant Vaikuntavasar which was first published in the April 1977 issue of The Mountain Path.

This is followed by Dr. Lt. Col. P. V. Karamchandani's moving recollections in the article entitled 'How I came to the Maharshi'. Dr. Karamchandani was the District Medical Officer of North Arcot who attended on Sri Bhagavan during His last days.

Finally we have accounts of the major happenings at the Ashram in the month of July in 'Reports from Sri Ramanasramam'.

Please visit the Ashram website at www.sriramanamaharshi.org for regular updates and

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In Sri Bhagavan

The Editorial Team

The Essence of Instruction

*To know the Self is but to be the Self,
For It is non-dual.
In such knowledge
One Abides as That.*

– Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 26)

Vaikuntavasar

Vaikuntavasar was an old attendant of Bhagavan. He later served the Asramam as a Member of the Board of Trustees. The following article written by him entitled, 'Bhagavan the Way' appeared in the April, 1977 issue of The Mountain Path.



"Out of thousands, perhaps one strives for Perfection; out of those who strive, perhaps one knows Me as I AM" BHAGAVAD GITA, Ch. VII. v. 3

Many are called but few are chosen; many more are not even called! Mumukshutwa (the seeking) is a rare trait and God's grace is needed for one to become a seeker. One does not become a seeker simply by giving up attachment. The great Maharashtrian saint, Eknath, a great scholar himself, had to do seva (service) to his guru, Janardana Swami, for not less than forty years! The seva included all household jobs like washing, cleaning, fetching water and there was actually no spiritual teaching as such. Our tradition enjoins twelve years of service to the guru.

I was fully aware of what was in store for me when I went to Bhagavan. To become a chela I must do seva to Him. My whole mind was centered on this single thought. It was only in 1940 that I came to Arunachala. Actually I ran away from my house just eight days before my marriage was to take place. As

there were enough sadhus to serve the Maharshi and I did not want to be rejected, I refrained from approaching the Sarvadhikari, Niranjanananda Swami. I went to Palakothu where I befriended Somasundara Swami. I volunteered to sit and watch the dry fruits, nuts and other things exposed to sunlight. I did it with a plan. I knew Bhagavan was coming to Palakothu every afternoon. I spread the fruits very near where Bhagavan was passing by. I was thrilled to see Him notice my sitting there. With one pointed care I attended to this apparently simple work. Readiness to sacrifice personal comforts for a higher cause never goes unrewarded!

Bhagavan is an embodiment of compassion and tender affection. The opportune moment I was waiting for at last arrived. Thanks to my utter dedication to this task, I was introduced to the Sarvadhikari, with the useful recommendatory words that I was a sincere man devoid of family ties and perfectly dedicated to whatever work might be entrusted to me. This was put to test by him by assigning to me varied types of work, which included supervising the construction of the present hospital building, purchase of bulls and cows, rice, dal, fire wood, etc. Whatever the job, I used to report everything to Bhagavan before undertaking it and after completing it. Every job was a success. What else could it be when His attention had been drawn to it.

Bhagavan particularly bestowed his special grace on those who undertook service of the Asramam. Not only on me, but on Ramaswami Pillai, who was then going on cycle to town many times daily on Asramam work. Bhagavan used to tell him what had taken place during his absence.

Pleased with my work, the Sarvadhikari posted me in the Hall to attend on Bhagavan. It so happened that the chief attendant, so to say, Madhava Swami,

had then left the Asramam. This responsible duty, for which I had been longing all the time, devolved on me by His grace.

Before becoming an attendant of Bhagavan I had talked to Him only once, soon after my arrival. One day I approached Bhagavan on the Hill side when He was alone, placed some fruits at His feet, prostrated myself before Him and asked Him: "How is the mind to be subdued?" Bhagavan graciously replied, "Look within where the mind is."

After that there was, no need for me to, think of anything else. Bhagavan was God for me.

Everything I did was done with care and dedication. For instance, I used to devote considerable time to wash the only two pieces of cloth Bhagavan had (loin cloth and a small towel), rinsing them many times in water, changing the water every time. I wanted the clothes to be spotlessly clean.

Massaging His feet was another duty I welcomed. How fortunate I was! I did see, touch, talk and live with Him. Bhagavan's rheumatism gave me an opportunity to massage His feet and legs. Whenever I felt Bhagavan needed massaging I did not hesitate to do so, even when there were people around. Bhagavan not even once objected to my doing so, even though I had heard that Bhagavan had not permitted some others to do so.

Once I was sleeping in front of His Hall on bare ground. Bhagavan noticed it and asked me that night: "Why do you sleep on the floor?" His sympathetic words were elixir to me. True, I had not thought of clothes or comforts. Yet, the very next morning, Krishnaswami, another attendant, of his own accord bought for me a long yellow bed sheet, though he had not heard of Bhagavan's enquiry the previous night.

Bhagavan often gave me tasks that others might not like. I give two instances. On great occasions like Jayanti, Bhagavan would ask me: "Have you attended to the 'boys' (monkeys)?" I used to take plenty of food and spread it on the rocks. After some time all

the monkeys would keep quiet, lying down, content, and Bhagavan would remark; "Look now, how good they all have become do they do any mischief now?" What compassion and love! On another occasion, when all the inmates of the Asramam were at Skandasramam together with Bhagavan, a grown up Veda Pathasala boy, stung by some insect, vomited and swooned. Bhagavan looked at me. I understood. I carried the boy, who was almost my height, and walked down towards the Asramam. The boy was vomiting profusely. I attended on the boy, gave him first aid, and then took my bath and returned to Skandasramam. The moment I stepped in, Bhagavan looked at me and enquired:

"Is the boy all right?"

Though I had been rendering personal service to Bhagavan I often felt I had not done enough. So I used to take a broom and sweep the whole path up the Hill, where Bhagavan walked twice daily.

To illustrate Bhagavan's sense of humour, I relate one incident: Once there was a snake below my pillow; and as usual I went and reported it to Bhagavan immediately. Bhagavan laughingly remarked: "Oh, it is quite all right. What else can make a better bed for you?" (Vaikuntavasar is one of the Names of Lord Vishnu, whose bed is the huge snake, Adishesha).

I shall conclude this account with a very thrilling experience.

It was round about nine one night, when Bhagavan walked towards the Hill, a little beyond the Asramam boundary. I went along with him. There was a sand bed between Bhagavan and me who had gone further up in order to ease himself. Then I heard the sound of wooden sandals moving nearer and nearer towards us and passing on. There was no one to be seen, despite the sound made by the wooden sandals. I was awe struck. I had heard from Bhagavan about the Siddhas living on Arunachala. I began to sweat. When Bhagavan came near me, he looked at me and said: "So, you too heard it."

How I came to the Maharshi

By Dr. Lt. Col. P. V. Karamchandani
(Published in *The Mountain Path*, January 1966)

Normally, as soon as I place my head on the pillow, I fall asleep. One night, in February 1949, at Vellore, for no conscious reason, I could not sleep and kept tossing in bed. That was something very unusual. At 1 a.m. a telephone call came from Tiruvannamalai, a place 55 miles away, asking me to reach there by 8 a.m. as Bhagavan Ramana was very ill. Having received the call, I fell sound asleep.

I was the District Medical Officer of North Arcot then and Tiruvannamalai was within my jurisdiction. I reached Tiruvannamalai without any emotion. My only thought was that I was on a professional mission of attending on a patient. The sainthood of Bhagavan Ramana had no significance for me. I examined Bhagavan Ramana. He had cancer of the main nerve, high up in the arm, I gave my prescription and returned to Vellore the same day.

I had conducted my examination of Bhagavan Ramana in a strictly professional manner. I carried no spiritual feelings for him. Nor did he speak a word with me. But he had directed a momentary gaze of grace at me which kept stirring me deeply. Involuntarily I felt a new vista of spiritual consciousness open out before me. That wondrous gaze of Bhagavan seemed to envelop me with an aura of bliss. The spiritual pull from him felt so irresistible that after a few days I myself arranged a visit to Tiruvannamalai just for the sake of having his 'darshan' I took my wife with me. We visited Bhagavan with a sense of curiosity and an indefinable sense of expectation. We made our obeisance and sat by his feet. We did not speak a word; nor did he speak. No speech seemed necessary. So surcharged with spirituality was he, that his spirituality wafted out to us, completely enveloping us. Serenity seeped into us. Our minds attained a state of blissful, ecstatic meditation.

The tumour that Bhagavan was bearing must have given him the most excruciating, nerve-racking pain. Such writhing pain would make the toughest man wince and moan. But Bhagavan's face was serene, smiling and radiant. All of a sudden a disciple accidentally touched only the fringe of the thin bandage that was covering Bhagavan's tumour. Bhagavan gave an involuntary start. The disciple felt bewildered and mumbled, "Bhagavan, did I hurt you? It was only the fringe of the bandage that my hand touched." Bhagavan smiled his benign smile and softly said, "You do not know the enormous weight as of a mountain that this fringe bears!" That chance exclamation of Bhagavan indicated the severity of his pain. But his godly face did not bear the slightest sign of his agony. It reflected only joy and peace. He seemed to have switched off his mind from the body to the divine.

The next occasion when I was summoned to Bhagavan's presence was when he had developed anuria. I now went to his Ashram not with the all-important feeling of a District Medical Officer going to visit his patient. I went in the spirit of a humble devotee going to serve a saint of colossal spiritual magnitude. My ministrations as a doctor were to be coupled with the devotion of a disciple. When I reached the Ashram, I was told that for the past 24 hours Bhagavan had not taken any food, not even a drop of water; that the disciples' implorations in this behalf had failed; and that, in consequence, the entire community was feeling most anxious. I was entreated to persuade Bhagavan to eat something. On examining Bhagavan I found that it was imperative that he should take some fluid. But what if he refused my request too? Ordering him in my capacity as a doctor seemed to be out of question. I felt like asking him as a boon to accept my prayer. I prayed inwardly and held a glass of buttermilk before him. He gazed at me for a second, took the buttermilk in shaking hands, and drank it. My joy knew no bounds. There were relief and jubilation all around. I was thanked profusely. But I felt infinitely grateful for Bhagavan's overwhelming grace. He had

heard my silent prayer and granted my boon. Wonderful was the spiritual exhilaration I experienced in Bhagavan's holy presence.

The next time I was called to him was at midnight. When I entered his room, four disciples were there. Bhagavan was saying something to them in Tamil. They told me that he was asking them to leave the room, but that they wanted to stay as, according to them, he was in a delirium. I persuaded them to go. Three of them went away. The fourth one stayed on. Bhagavan turned to him and whispered, "You are not going away because you feel that you love me more than the others!" The disciple now knew that Bhagavan was not delirious. He bowed and went.

I was left alone with Bhagavan. As usual, he did not speak with me. I was also silent. But the vibrations that emanated from him were celestial. His body must have been in terrific mortal pain. But his heavenly spirituality was unaffected by it. A rapturous thrill electrified my entire being. I administered to his body; but I was hardly conscious that I was a District Medical Officer. I was conscious only of an intense desire to worship this illumined soul. I had learnt that Bhagavan did not allow devotees to touch his feet. But I felt a deep urge within me not only to touch his blessed feet but to press them lovingly. I took courage in both my hands and pressed them. The wonder of wonders! Bhagavan let me do so! His grace was abounding. I considered myself in the seventh heaven. I glorify those few minutes of my life.

The next time I was summoned to him was about three hours after midnight. Pain must have been torturing his body. Still, he was sound asleep. Holy silence filled the room. It was the ambrosial hour of the dawn. I did not wish to disturb him. I sat quietly by his feet. Suddenly he opened his eyes. His gracious gaze fell on me. He softly muttered, "D.M.O.!" The peculiar tone in which he mentioned me indicated that I had been in his sacred thoughts and that he was expecting me. I felt myself blessed. I silently worshipped him. My whole being seemed to vibrate with ecstasy.

At that time I had been feeling restless about promotion to the rank of Major-General (Surgeon General), which was legitimately due to me as the senior-most I.M.S. Officer in the Province of Madras. Howsoever I tried to banish the idea of that coveted promotion from my mind, it loomed large before my mind's eye and marred my equanimity. Then I said to myself, "Why am I fretting unnecessarily? The next time I visit Bhagavan, I shall request him to grant me this promotion!" When I visited the Ashram again, I went before Bhagavan with my mind resolutely set on requesting him for that boon. But marvel happened. As soon as I saw Bhagavan my mind melted, the resolution evaporated, and I felt filled with strange contentment. A request did formulate itself within me, but it was an entirely different request. I inwardly prayed, "Bhagavan, free me from my craving for this promotion. I don't want anything mundane. Instead, grant me my soul's evolution." My prayer seemed to be instantly granted. Effulgent joy flooded the very depths of my being. I reverently bowed before Bhagavan and he gazed at me benevolently.

My last visit to Bhagavan was on the day he attained Nirvana. I have described it in my book *Saintly Galaxy*: how, on visiting him, I found that his body would not last beyond that day; how I silently prayed that he might retain his body till I brought my wife from Vellore as she had always been anxious to witness a great saint's last moments of life; how she brought orange juice for him how he would not accept any drink at all how, once again inwardly, I implored him to drink the orange juice to save my wife from deep disappointment; how he accepted my unspoken prayer and asked for orange juice, to the transcendental delight of my wife and myself; and how, shortly afterwards, in utter tranquillity, he passed on. That was a scene of great sombre beauty.

During my two months' contact with Bhagavan, I did not speak a single word with him. But, what wonderful grace he poured into me through his benign, benevolent gaze!

A peerless spiritual experience indeed!

Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

Nochur Sri Venkataraman Discourse

Nochur Sri Venkataraman, the much-beloved speaker on Srimad Bhagavatam, Adi Sankara and Sri Bhagavan gave a week-long discourse in the Ashram's New Hall on Bhagavan's "Ulladu Naarpadu" from 3rd to 9th July 2010. As usual, the Hall was overflowing with audience who listened in pin-drop silence. Venkataraman's discourses are backed by a very careful study of existing commentaries and soaked in his own deeply meditative study of Bhagavan's potent, mantra-like words. His exposition of verse No. 10 was particularly riveting. When he concluded his talk that day with the words, "Bhagavan has saved us not only from ariyaamai (ignorance) but also from arivu (knowledge) the listeners were deeply moved.

At the request of non-Tamilians, especially Western devotees, a Talk in English by Venkataraman was arranged on the 9th July at the New Hall from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. He spoke on the first verse of 'Hastamalakam', a work which has been rendered into exquisite Tamil poetry by Sri Bhagavan. The listeners were overwhelmed by his speech in a language in which he rarely gives talks.



Khanna Day

On Friday the 23rd July 2010, around 10 a.m. devotees in the Ashram gathered beside the Samadhi of Sri H.C Khanna. His Samadhi was decorated with garlands. Aksharamanamalai was chanted by the devotees. After arati, prasadam was distributed to the gathering.



Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni Day

The Anniversary Day of Sri Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni was observed on Sunday the 25th July 2010 at around 10.45 a.m. in the New Hall. Puja was performed to his photograph. Devotees chanted Sri Ramana Gita. After Arati, prasadam was distributed to the gathering.

