

Saranagathi



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In this Issue

Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

Karthigai [Deepam](#) festivities are in full swing at Tiruvannamalai and will conclude with the Maha Deepam on December 1st, 2009.

Significance of the Beacon

(Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala – Invocatory Verses)

Getting rid of the 'I am the body' idea, turning the mind inwards, and merging it in the Heart to realize the real, non-dual Light of the Self, is the real significance of seeing the beacon on Annamalai, the center of the universe.

Sri Bhagavan

In this issue we carry the concluding part of the article on Kunju Swami as part of the 'attendants series'.

Stories of how devotees have been drawn to Sri

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Bhagavan and how Sri Bhagavan has transformed their lives through His Grace are inspiring. *The Mountain Path* ever since its inception has been publishing these stories regularly. This issue carries the first such article, 'How I Met the Maharshi' by Louis Hartz, published in the April 1964 issue of the *The Mountain Path*. This is followed by Reports from Sri Ramanasramam.

In Sri Bhagavan,

The Editorial Team.

The Essence of Instruction

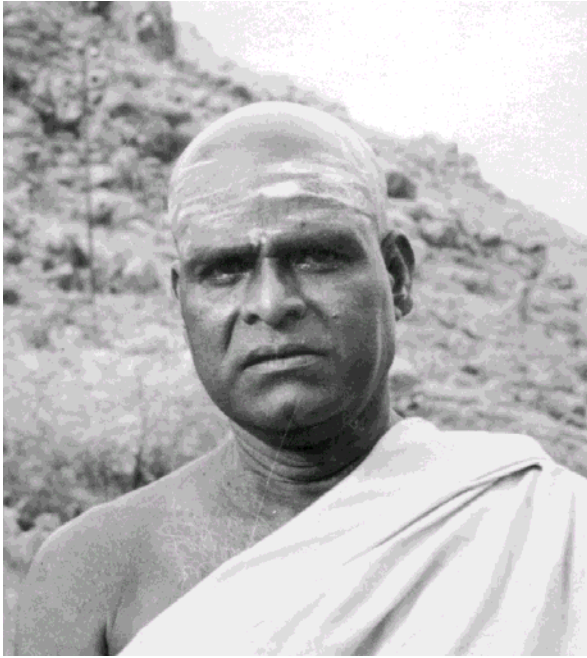
*Thoughts alone make up the mind;
And of all thoughts the 'I' thought is the root.
What is called mind is but the notion 'I'.*

– Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 18)

Kunju Swami

(Extracted from 'Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi')

Kunju Swami served as one of the Maharshi's attendants from 1920 till 1932. In 1977, he wrote his reminiscences which were later translated into English by Dr. K.Subrahmanian. This piece is a continuation from the last issue of Saranagathi and is the concluding part.



In his Arunachala Ashtakam (1913), Bhagavan gives the analogy of film projection by saying that a series of subtle thoughts that appear within us as shadowy spectacles of the world, appear without as the world perceived by the five senses like a film projected through a lens.⁴

One of the earliest persons to recognise Bhagavan's greatness was Achyutadasa, a famous poet and a scholar. When Bhagavan was staying at the Gurumurtam in the late 1890s, he went for Bhagavan's darshan. After performing bhajans for sometime, he sat near Bhagavan, caught hold of his feet and hands and immediately went into a state of

ecstasy. When Achyutadasa's disciples also wanted to hold Bhagavan's feet, he stopped them by saying, "This is a huge fire, and none of you can get close to it."

At the Skandasram we never saw Bhagavan lying on the bed fully stretched out on his back or his side. Nor did we ever see him with a pillow under his head. He never used to lie down and sleep like other people. Instead, he would sleep sitting down in a semi-reclining position, with a few pillows supporting his back. Sometimes, he would support his head with his hand while sleeping.⁵

Bhagavan's head would shake continuously and without the stick to support he could not walk or even stand upright. These were not symptoms of old age. Both the shaking of the head and his holding on to a stick date back to very early days. These were the marks left on him by the stupendous experience of atmanubhuti in Madurai! When asked about this condition, Bhagavan remarked, "What do you think would happen to a small thatched hut inside which a big elephant is kept tied up? Wouldn't it be shattered? Same is the case here!"⁶

An old woman living near Arunachaleswara Temple⁷ and some other elderly people in the town had decided that they would eat morning food only after Bhagavan's darshan at the Skandasram. One day the lady devotee could not come. Bhagavan asked her the next day as to why she had missed a day. She

4. David Godman asked Kunju Swami how Bhagavan managed to acquire knowledge of the film projection system during the very early years of the twentieth century. Sri Ramana used this analogy in Self-Enquiry as early as 1902. Kunju Swami's answer was: "I don't know. We always used to wonder where he got his practical knowledge. He lived a very unworldly life, yet somehow he amassed a vast repertoire of practical skills. He just seemed, quite naturally, to know them." (Source: The Power Of The Presence, op. cit, pp.28-9.)
5. Refer no.88, where Sri Ramana tells Dr. M.Anantanarayana Rao that "he had not slept flat on the ground or on the couch ever since he came to Tiruvannamalai," p. 23 3 •
6. Moments Remembered by V. Ganesan, Sri Ramanasramam, p.7.
7. Refer annexure-I, p.410.

answered, “Realising my infirmity you gave darshan from near my house, while you were sitting on the rock near the ashram, brushing your teeth.” She added, “I am not able to climb the hill everyday, I would now have your darshan from my house.” From that day onwards, even when the weather was bad, Bhagavan brushed his teeth sitting on that rock. This proved convenient to many other elderly devotees who wanted to have his darshan but were unable to climb the hill.⁸

In the Ashram kitchen only Brahmins were allowed to cook, because Brahmins will not eat food cooked by non-Brahmins. Bhagavan approved of this not because he favoured religious orthodoxy but because he didn't want to cause offence to the many Brahmins who stayed at the Ashram.

Once it became necessary for me to go to my place in Kerala. I had just enough money to buy the train ticket and no extra money to buy food on the way. That afternoon a devotee unexpectedly brought a lot of pooris and served them to Bhagavan and others in Ashram. We were surprised to see that Bhagavan, who normally did not take more than two pooris, happily accepted six from the devotee. When the serving was over, he ate only one of the

six and neatly packed and tied the remaining five with his own hands and gave the packet to me. Everyone was deeply touched by Bhagavan's compassion.

We had the benefit of regularly receiving personal instructions from Bhagavan. One of them was that we should get into a meditative state before going to sleep. We were also advised to go into meditation for sometime, immediately after getting out of bed.

In 1932, after spending about twelve years in personal attendance on Bhagavan, I felt the urge to devote myself entirely to sadhana. I had been debating the matter for some days when the answer came in a strange way. As I entered the hall one day, I heard Bhagavan saying to others who were there that the real service to him did not mean attending to his physical needs, it meant following the essence of his teachings, that is, concentrating on realising the Self. This cleared my doubts and I shifted to a room in Palakottu⁹ to continue with my tapas, and at the same time remain in close and regular contact with Bhagavan.

8. The Skandasram is located on the hill facing Tiruvannamalai town.

9. Sadhus' colony abutting on the Ashram.

Maharshi's Gospel: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Work and Renunciation

The highest goal of spiritual experience is **Self-realization**.

Work performed with attachment is a shackle, whereas work performed with detachment does not affect the doer. He is, even while working, in solitude. To engage in your duty is the true *namaskar*...and abiding in God is the only true *asana*.

How I Met the Maharshi By Louis Hartz

*The following article was published in the April 1964 issue of **The Mountain Path**.*

I met Arthur Osborne in an internment camp in Bangkok during the Second World War. At first I had little contact with him because he was very reserved. After some time, however, I approached him. I had a craving to understand and asked him point blank what is Truth. What sticks in my memory is how, sitting beside his bed in the common dormitory, he said. "I will tell you one truth – Infinity minus X is a contradiction in terms because by the exclusion of X the first term ceases to be infinite. You grant that?" Yes, I granted that.

"Well, then," he said, "think of God as Infinity and yourself as X and try to work it out." When I asked for more explanation he just said: "Think this over and come tomorrow at this time and tell me what you make of it."

I returned to my place in the dormitory, which was only some eight or ten steps distant, and suddenly it flashed upon me that he was right, that you cannot take anything away from the Infinite, and that I was not apart from it, only I had not known.

The thought made me so happy that I could hardly wait to speak to him next day, but I did not like to disturb him earlier.

From that time onward he started to instruct me and after a few weeks he showed me a photograph of the Maharshi. There was an urgency in his voice as he spoke of him and he handled the photograph with reverence. I began to understand that there was only one 'I' and that it was in me and was everywhere.

The Maharshi grew so much in my heart that I felt him nearer to me than my parents or my wife. He lived more vividly in me than any person I had known. After some time we received permission to write a Red Cross letter to our families and I used

mine to write to the Maharshi and ask him for guidance.

Then the war ended and I left camp. The desire to enjoy life sprang up in me again. I was strongly drawn to the spiritual path but even more strongly for the time being to a worldly life. I wanted to make money, to have power and fine clothes, to be important. In camp I had eliminated daydreaming as far as possible. When I went to bed at night I slept straight away. But now my nights were often filled with planning and scheming.

A few years later, when I was in Europe and due to return to Siam on business, I wrote to Osborne, who was living at Tiruvannamalai, to suggest that I should break my journey in India and stay there for a few days. He at once wrote back arranging to meet me and conduct me there and inviting me to stay at his house.

In Madras we hired a car and drove to Tiruvannamalai. It was an old car and I felt that I was being slowly roasted in the midday heat. When I let my eyes rest on the sun-baked scenery or the country folk sheltering under the wayside trees I saw only the face of the Maharshi looming up before me. Nothing else registered.

I was terribly scared that the Maharshi would look in my eyes and see into me. I cursed myself for a fool for coming to this desolate place, with its heat and discomfort. I don't know what prevented me turning back; perhaps I was afraid to show Osborne what a coward I was. The nearer we approached the Ashram the more I shrank from meeting the Maharshi.

It was nearly dusk when we arrived and he had already retired, but Osborne went in to see him and

asked whether he would see me for a few moments. I entered the hall and saw an elderly man reclining on a couch, who gave the impression of great reserve and a certain shyness. It was not the severe Master or the Guru with the burning eyes that I had expected. Osborne explained who I was, and his replies were, monosyllabic and sometimes in Tamil. With a slow movement of the head he turned to me and held my eyes for a moment. His eyes were like empty, bottomless pools and at the same time they worked like magic mirrors, because suddenly I felt at peace as though I had come home after a long journey.

I can't recall where I slept that night, but I do remember that before going to bed I sat and talked with a number of people, Indians and foreigners, at Osborne's place. One of them was a diplomat from some European country, stationed in China. He talked about seeing spirits and even conversing with them, and it struck me as funny that anyone should be interested in such things at a place like this.

Sitting in the hall next day I saw that the Maharshi's smile was tender and gracious. I not only lost my fears but felt at ease. I had no questions to ask. Before coming I had prepared a number of questions that had been worrying me to ask the Maharshi, but now I couldn't remember them. My doubts had simply evaporated. Questions seemed unimportant.

I felt that there was nothing strange about the Maharshi. He was just a man who was himself, whereas all of us were growing away from ourselves. He was natural; it was we who were not. We call him a saint or sage, but I felt that to be like him is the inheritance of everybody; only we throw it away.

There were a lot of people in the hall Indians and foreigners, learned professors and simple country people. I reminded the Maharshi about the Red Cross letter I had sent him and he replied that he wanted me to come and I had come. There was something

childlike about him: he was free and natural and could laugh with the spontaneity that only a child shows.

A discussion started in the hall and they appealed to the Maharshi to say who was right. Someone spoke about unity and I objected that the word implied two to be united and that a better word was Oneness; and the Maharshi confirmed this. He said that there is only One, and that One is indivisible. I felt that he meant that the divisions are all unreal, just as we say rain, ice, water, coffee-water, washing water, but it is all water.

A group of devotees started singing and I asked the Maharshi what he felt about it. He laughed and replied that it pleased them to sing and made them feel peaceful.

Next morning again I sat in the hall. There was a yogi with matted hair. The diplomat was there, sitting in concentrated thought. I wondered whether I should imitate him, but I did not feel like meditating. Suddenly the Maharshi looked at me with great intensity. His eyes took possession of me. I don't know how long it lasted, but I felt at ease and happy.

Afterwards a disciple who had been with him for twenty years told me that this was the silent initiation. I felt that it probably was, but I wanted to make sure, so in the hall that afternoon I said: "Bhagavan, I want your initiation." And he replied: "You have it already."¹

Knowing myself and feeling anxious about what would happen when I left his presence, I asked for some sort of reassurance from him, and he replied very firmly and decisively: "Even if you let go of Bhagavan, Bhagavan will never let go of you."

There was some whispering and exchange of

1. This is the only occasion on which I have ever known the Maharshi give an express verbal confirmation of having given initiation to anyone. It will be noted that the request was phrased in such a way that the confirmation could be given without any statement implying duality. (Editor)

glances when people heard that. The diplomat whispered to a Muslim professor who was sitting beside him and then the latter asked the Maharshi whether this guarantee applied only to me or to him also. The Maharshi did not look very pleased but replied briefly: "To all."

Nevertheless, I felt that there was something

intensely personal in it, that it had been a confirmation of the initiation and a direct, personal guarantee of protection.

Certain it is that, whatever else may have happened, there has been no day since then when his face or his words have not influenced me.

Reports from Sri Ramanasramam



Fifth Samvatsara (Annual) Abhishekam (Consecration) of Sri Ramaneswara Temple (Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi-Shrine) and Sri Matrubhuteswara Temple

A Special Puja and Homam were conducted on Sunday, the 8th of November 2009 at Sri Ramanasramam to commemorate the Special Kumbhabhishekam of Sri Ramaneswara and Sri Matrubhuteswara Shrines which was performed on 3rd November 2004. The programme included, among other things, Mahanyasam, Maha Ganapati Homam, Navagraha Homam culminating in Purnahuti and Maha Deeparadhana.

Veda Parayanam

Since the 22nd of November 2009, Yajur Veda Ghana Parayana and Sama Veda Parayana are being chanted at Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi Shrine from 7.15am to 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 4 pm. respectively, by a group of Pandits from different places and will conclude on 2nd December 2009. This has been done in previous years too as part of the Kartigai Deepam Celebrations.

