

Saranagathi



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In this Issue

Dear Devotees,

The Advent of Sri Ramana Maharshi at Arunachala was celebrated at the Ashram on 1st September 2010. Sri Bhagavan has described Arunachala's mysterious magnetism in His composition '*Eight Stanzas to Sri Arunachala*':

"From the age of innocence it had shone within my mind that Arunachala was something of surpassing grandeur, but even when I came to know through another that it was the same as Tiruvannamalai, I did not realize its meaning. When it drew me up to it, stilling my mind, and I came close, I saw it (stand) unmoving."

In this issue of Saranagathi we conclude the Attendants Series with an article about Annamalai Swami. This is followed by the second and final part Sri V. Kameswara Rao's 'How I came to the Maharshi'

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culled from the Mountain Path archives. Finally we have Reports from Sri Ramanasramam.

Please send your emails to saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

In Sri Bhagavan

The Editorial Team

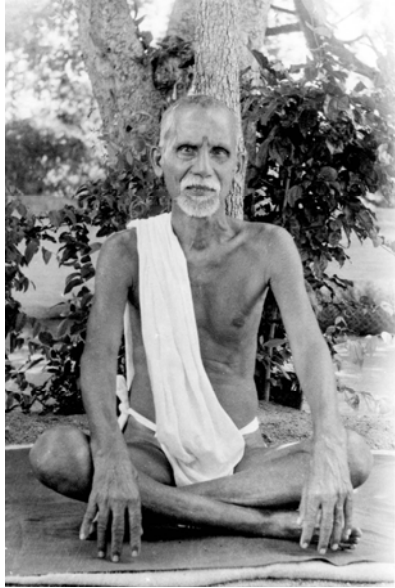
The Essence of Instruction

*Having known one's nature one abides
As being with no beginning and no end
In unbroken consciousness and bliss.*

– Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 28)

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

Annamalai Swami (1906-1995) since his childhood had a natural inclination towards spirituality. He came to Sri Ramana in 1928 and got a job with the Ashram. After being closely involved in many construction projects for ten years under direct supervision of Sri Ramana, he shifted to Palakottu near the Ashram to live alone and meditate.



In 1928, a wandering sadhu gave me a copy of *Upadesa Undiyar* by Sri Ramana. It contained a photo of the Maharshi. As soon as I saw the photo I had the feeling that this was my Guru. Simultaneously, an intense desire arose within me to go and see him. That night I had a dream in which I saw the Maharshi walking from the lower slopes of the hill towards the Ashram. Next morning I decided to go and have his *darshan*. Having arrived at about 1 p.m., when I approached the hall, a part of the dream I had repeated itself in real life. I saw Bhagavan walk down the hill as I had seen in the dream. When I sat down and Bhagavan gazed at me in silence for about 10–15 minutes, I had a great feeling of physical relief and relaxation. It was like immersing myself in a cool pool after being in the hot sun. I asked for permission to stay, which was granted and I got a job as Bhagavan's attendant. At that time Madhava Swami was doing the job by himself.

About ten days after my arrival I asked Bhagavan how I could attain Self-realisation? He replied, "If you give up identifying with the body and meditate on the Self, you can attain Self-realisation." As I was pondering over these remarks, Bhagavan surprised me by saying, "I was waiting for you. I was wondering when you

would come." As a new comer I was too afraid to ask him how he knew, or how long he had been waiting. But I was delighted to hear him speak like this because it seemed to indicate that it was my destiny to stay with him.

A few days later I asked, "Scientists have invented and produced the aircraft which can travel at great speeds in the sky. Why do you not give us a spiritual aircraft in which we can quickly and easily cross over the sea of samsara?" Bhagavan replied, "The path of self-enquiry is the aircraft you need. It is direct, fast, and easy to use. You are already travelling very quickly towards realisation. It is only because of your mind that it seems that there is no movement." In the years that followed, I had many spiritual talks with Bhagavan but his basic message never changed. It was always: "Do self-enquiry, stop identifying with the body and try to be aware of the Self, which is your real nature."

When I first came to the Ashram there were still some leopards in the area. They rarely came into the Ashram but at night they frequented the place where Bhagavan used to urinate. Once when a leopard appeared he was not in the least afraid. He just looked at the leopard and said, '*Poda*' [Go away!] and the leopard walked away.

Soon after I came I was given a new name by Bhagavan. My original name was Sellaperumal. One day Bhagavan mentioned that I reminded him of Annamalai Swami, who had been his attendant at the Skandasram. And within a few days my new identity got established.

When I had been an attendant for about two weeks, the Collector of Vellore, who came for Bhagavan's *darshan*, brought a large plate of sweets, which I was to distribute to everyone in the Ashram. While I was

distributing the sweets outside the hall I went to a place where no one could see me and secretly helped myself to about double the quantity that I was serving to others. When I went back to the hall and kept the empty plate under Bhagavan's sofa, he looked at me and said, "Did you take twice as much as everyone else?" I was shocked because I was sure that no one had seen me do it. This incident made me realise that it was impossible to hide anything from Bhagavan.

After serving as an attendant for a month, Bhagavan asked me to supervise construction work within the Ashram. My big assignment was supervising the construction of the cowshed. The problem was of funds, which came almost under miraculous circumstances.

The editor of The Sunday Times, Madras, published a long complimentary article about Bhagavan after he had his *darshan*. This article came to the attention of a prince in North India, who was much impressed by Bhagavan. Sometime later, the prince went for a tiger hunt. He managed to track down the tiger but when he raised his rifle to shoot, he felt paralysed by a wave of fear. Suddenly he remembered about Bhagavan and prayed saying, "If successful, I will not only send you Rs.1000, but also donate the head and skin of the tiger." The paralysis left him and he killed the tiger and saved his own life in the process, as the tiger was within attacking distance.

Two days after all the quarrels about the size of the cowshed, the postman appeared with Rs. 1,000. Our finances were always in a precarious position but we never experienced any real financial crisis. While the work was going on, enough donations would come to cover all costs.

Bhagavan took a keen interest in the construction work, guiding me at all stages of the work. In the evening, when I went to him with my daily report, he would tell me the work to be done the following day. For any difficult jobs he would even explain how to go about it.

In the 1930s Bhagavan alone decided when and where the buildings should be built, on what scale and what material be used. He drew up the plans for Ashram buildings, and told me what to do. If instructions were complicated he would sometimes sketch a few lines on a piece of paper to clarify or illustrate what he was saying. When he gave me plans he would always say that it was only a suggestion. He never presumed to give me orders.

Bhagavan himself wrote in Tamil '*Pakasalai*' in big letters on a piece of paper. These along with the year '1938' and 'Sri Ramanasramam' in devanagari script, appear today on the top of the eastern wall of the dining hall.

Bhagavan would frequently come out to see what we were doing. He bombarded us with advice and instructions and would occasionally join in the work himself. But he would say, "I am not connected with any of the activities here. I just witness all that happens". We would start projects when no money was available to pay, happily ignoring all predictions of imminent financial doom made by the sarvadhikari. Bhagavan never asked anyone for money and he forbade the sarvadhikari from asking for donations. Yet somehow enough donations came to complete every building.

Once when Bhagavan was very sick, Maurice Frydman gave Rs. 1,000 to the sarvadhikari for buying fruits for Bhagavan. Knowing that Bhagavan would not eat fruits unless everyone else was given an equal share, he avoided use of the money for the purpose. Some months later, Frydman complained to Bhagavan that his donation had not been properly spent. Bhagavan said rather angrily, "When you give something you should regard the matter as closed. Why use this gift to further your ego?"

Annamalai Swami moved to Palakottu (a colony abutting the Ashram) in 1938. Till the end of his life in 1995, he lived peacefully and silently in his little ashram. He also provided spiritual guidance to seekers who wanted his help and guidance.

How I came to the Maharshi (...continued from previous issue)

By V. Kameswara Rao (From 'The Mountain Path', April 1966)



I continued to be curious how smallpox came to be mentioned in the Ashram letter. Some elderly persons suggested that the moment Bhagavan saw my letter he received a mental picture of my son bedridden with smallpox. Later, however, Sri Bhagavatula Annapurnayya Sastri of Tenali gave an explanation that appealed more to me. "Was it necessary for you to write to Bhagavan in order for him to know what was happening in your house? Is he not all-pervading and all-knowing? But he does not interfere unless asked to and called upon. If a man is singing in Bombay and you want to hear him you must switch on the radio. If you don't, the radio will not receive his song and you will not hear it, although he is singing just the same. Similarly if you want Bhagavan's blessings you must establish contact with him in the right way."

My faith in Bhagavan increased enormously as a result of this, because it was a matter of life and death for my boy and he gave him life.

On 17th March 1949 a big ceremony was held at the Ashram for the consecration of the temple over the shrine of Bhagavan's mother. I decided to go and to take my family and my mother with me. I applied for

two days casual leave, made all arrangements and came home at 2 p.m. A car was waiting at the door to take us to the station. Suddenly I felt that I should not go. My wife and mother naturally protested, but it was no use. Our baggage was taken out of the car. Everyone was annoyed about it but I merely said: "Perhaps Bhagavan doesn't want me to see this function. I too am sorry but I can't help it."

At about nine o'clock that evening I received a telegram that the only son of my third sister was dangerously ill with meningitis and that I should send my mother there at once. I put her on the train together with the sister who had looked after my own son when he had smallpox. On arrival this sister wrote me a frantic letter saying that the case of my nephew was hopeless and that the only chance of saving him, if at all, was to invoke the blessings of Bhagavan. So on March 30th I again wrote to him. The following reply was received with the next day's date:

Your letter of the 30th instant was received and placed before Sri Bhagavan. May Sri Bhagavan's blessings be on the child and his parents. Herewith prasadam enclosed.

My nephew recovered. We understood then why I suddenly had to cancel my journey to Tiruvannamalai. If we had gone the telegram would not have reached me, my mother and sister would not have gone in time, and I should not have written to ask Bhagavan for his blessings. Hence my erratic decision, prompted by something unknown to me at the time.

Came the fateful year 1950 when Bhagavan left his body. Physically he is no more with us. But he remains forever in our hearts. There are thousands of humble folk like me who received from beloved

Bhagavan things they could never return. Nor was any return expected. God fulfils human needs so that man may develop divine discontent. It is human nature to get and forget; it is divine nature to give and forgive.

Man is God's child. Just as a parent satisfies the childish needs of a child, even though they may be

ultimately unnecessary, so does God satisfy the immediate though temporary needs of man so as to stimulate a desire for the ultimate and eternal need – the need to attain Godhead. Arthur Osborne wrote in *The Incredible Sai Baba* that Baba used to say: "I give people what they want in the hope that they will begin to want what I want to give them."

(Concluded)

Maharshi's Gospel: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Guru and His Grace

Devotee: What is *guru kripa*? How does it lead to Self-realization?

Maharshi: Guru is the Self.... Sometimes in his life a man becomes dissatisfied with it, and, not content with what he has, he seeks the satisfaction of his desires, through prayer to God etc. His mind is gradually purified until he longs to know God, more to obtain His grace than to satisfy his worldly desires. Then, God's grace begins to manifest. God takes the form of a Guru and appears to the devotee, teaches him the Truth and, moreover, purifies his mind by association. The devotee's mind gains strength and is then able to turn inward. By meditation it is further purified and it remains still without the least ripple. That calm expanse is the Self.

The Guru is both 'external' and 'internal'. 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 in the quieting of the mind. That is *guru kripa*. There is no difference between God, Guru and the Self.

Devotee: In the Theosophical Society they meditate in order to seek Masters to guide them.

Maharshi: The Master is within. Meditation is meant to remove the ignorant idea that He is only outside. If He be a stranger whom you await, He is bound to disappear also. Where is the use for a transient being like that? But as long as you think you are separate or that you are the body, so long is the Master 'without' also necessary, and He will appear as if with a body. When the wrong identification of oneself with the body ceases, the Master will be found as none other than the Self.

Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

Aradhana Day of Sri Muruganar

Tamil Poet Muruganar first came to Bhagavan after reading *Arunachala Akshara Mana Malai* and 'Naan Yaar?' On seeing Bhagavan's exalted state, he felt irresistibly drawn to Him and finally settled at Tiruvannamalai and led a life of complete surrender to Bhagavan.

The Samadhi Day of this great devotee of Sri Bhagavan was solemnly observed on 8th September 2010. On 6th September devotees from Choolaimedu, Chennai, accompanied by some inmates of the Ashram, started reciting Muruganar's *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* running into 1851 verses and completed the recitation on 8th September 2010. At 9.30 a.m. devotees sang selected verses from *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* at the Poet's Samadhi while the Priests performed Puja to the Lingam in the Samadhi. At the conclusion of the Puja, accompanied by singing, Prasad was distributed among the large gathering of devotees.

Homage to Muruganar was also paid at Muruganar's birth place 'Sri Muruganar Mandiram' in Ramanathapuram on his Samadhi day with special puja, talk and recitation of Siva Puranam and Ramana Puranam.



Carnatic Music

Abhishek Raghuram, disciple of Sri P.S.Narayanaswamy and grandson of the brilliant mridangam vidwan, Palghat Raghu and great-grandnephew of the legendary mridangam wizard Palghat Mani Iyer, gave a scintillating recital of Carnatic music at the New Hall of the Ashram on Sunday, 19th September 2010. A young man of 25, Abhishek delighted the audience from the very first song and kept them spellbound till the last song.

Abhishek was very ably accompanied on the violin by Sri Mysore V. Srikanth and on the mridangam by his cousin Sri Anantha Krishnan.



Sri Ramana Gita



Sri V.S. Ramanan, Ashram President, who is an avid reader of 'Ramana Gita', composed in Sanskrit by Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, setting out Bhagavan's answers to questions asked by himself and others, asked Nochur Venkataraman, the highly acclaimed young speaker on Vedantic subjects, especially on Bhagavan Ramana, to give a series of talks at the Ashram on Chapter 11 of the great work.

Sri Venkataraman gave 5 talks at the New Hall of Sri Ramanasramam from the 20th to the 24th September 2010. He devoted his first talk to a detailed exposition of Bhagavan's Sanskrit verse, known as *Ekasloki*, namely "*Hrdaya Kuharamadhye...*" from Chapter 2, '*The Three Paths*', of Ramana Gita. He then expounded in great detail several verses of Chapter 11 entitled, 'On Compatibility of Jnana and Siddhis'. Talks on the remaining verses of the chapter will be resumed later.

Sri V.S. Ramanan thanked Sri Venkataraman for his clear, detailed, perceptive and devout exposition of this great work.

Sri Ramana Gita

Chapter Two - Verse 2

*Hridayakuhamadhye kevalam brahmamatram
Hyamahamiti saksadatmarupena bhati
Hrdi visa manasa svam cinvata majjata va
Pavanacalanarodhadatmanistho bhava tvam*

In the interior of the Heart-cave Brahman alone shines in the form of the Atman with direct immediacy as I, I. Enter into the Heart with questing mind or by diving deep within or through control of breath, and abide in the Atman.