

1. *As I Saw Him, No. 2, S.S.Cohen*
2. *Meeting with S.S.Cohen*
3. *Death and Dying*
4. *Prof.N.R.Krishnamoorthy Ayier, part 1*
5. *Twenty Years Ago*
6. *A Retreat in Nova Scotia*

As I Saw Him - No.2

by
S. S. Cohen

MP 3

THE THIRD of February 1936, early morning, saw my horsecart rolling on the uneven two-and-a-half mile road from Tiruvannamalai railway station to Ramanasramam. Two sleepless nights in the train from Bombay found me tired in body and mind. My head was swimming and my senses confused. I had hoped for some rest at the Ashrama, but when I arrived there at last there was not a soul to be seen anywhere. Presently, a corpulent man with a giant, rugged head and scarlet-red lips from perpetual chewing of betel nuts appeared. "Is that Mr. Cohen? Follow me quickly before the Maharshi goes out for his walk," he called out. I obeyed, extremely eager to see the great sage who had haunted me night and day for three long months. I was led to a small dining room, at the door of which I was asked to remove my shoes. As I was trying to unlace them my eyes fell on a pleasant-looking middle-aged man inside the room, wearing nothing but a *koupin*, with eyes as cool as moonbeams, sitting on the floor before a leafplate nearly emptied and beckoning me with the gentlest of nods and the sweetest smile imaginable.

It was then the Ashrama's custom to honour the newcomer by giving him his first meal in a line directly opposite the Maharshi's seat and at hardly four feet distance from it. I took no notice of the cakes, although my hand fingered them, but directed my whole look at the peaceful countenance of Sri Bhagavan. He had by then finished eating and was slowly rolling a betel leaf for a chew, as if deliberately to give me a little more of his company, when a man entered from the back door, which was the passage to the small kitchen, and in a low voice said something in Tamil to him. Then Maharshi rose, looked at me by way of farewell, and left the room. I hastily swallowed half a cake, gulped the cup of tea and went out in search of my room to which my luggage had been taken, when someone announced that Sri Maharshi was coming to the *Darshan* Hall. I rushed straight to the Hall with my hat and full suit on. Behind me calmly walked in the tall, impressive figure of the Maharshi with leisurely though firm steps.

I was alone in the Hall with him. Joy and peace suffused my being - such a delightful feeling of purity and well-being at the mere proximity of a man, I never had before. My mind was already in deep contemplation of him - him not as flesh, although that was exquisitely formed and featured, but as an unsubstantial principle which could make itself so profoundly felt despite the handicap of a heavy material vehicle. When after a while I became aware of my environment, I saw him looking at me with large, penetrating eyes, wreathed in smiles rendered divinely soothing by their childlike innocence.

Bhagavan was then enjoying the sound, robust health of middle age and could very well afford to be available at almost all hours of the day to devotees. The years 1936-1938 were very blissful indeed to us, when we could gather round his couch and speak to him as intimately as to a beloved father, tell him all our troubles and show him our letters without let or hindrance. After 8:00 p.m. when the Hall contained only the local residents, we sat round him for a 'family chat' till about ten o'clock.

Then he related to us stories from the *Puranas* or the lives of saints, yielding to transports of emotion when he depicted scenes of great *bhakti*, or great human tragedies to which he was sensitive to the extreme. Then he shed tears which he vainly attempted to conceal.

On one occasion, Bhagavan recited from memory a poem of a Vaishnava saint in which occurred the words, "Fold me in Thy embrace, O Lord," when the arms of Bhagavan joined in a circle around the vacant air before him and his eyes shone with devotional ardour, while his voice shook with stifled sobs which did not escape our notice. It was fascinating to see him acting the parts he related and be in such exhilarated moods as these.

Some disciples and his attendants used to sleep on the floor of the Hall at night. Bhagavan's sleep was very light. He woke every now and then and almost always he found an attendant nearby fully awake to say a few words to, and then sleep again. Once or twice he would go out for a few minutes and, by 5:00 a.m., when the Veda chanters came from the township, they found him fully awake and chatting in a soft, subdued voice. Now the *parayanam* would get started and go on for little less than an hour, during which everybody abstained from talking and Bhagavan often sat cross-legged and completely indrawn. Then he went out on the hill and returned at about 7:30, when visitors and devotees began trickling in - men, women and children, till they filled the Hall by about 9:00 a.m. This morning hour of the *parayanam* was the best time of the day for meditation. The congregation was small, women and children absent, the weather cool, and the mind had not yet completely emerged to run its usual riot. Over and above this, Bhagavan then throne in the stillness of his *samadhi*, which permeated the hall and the meditation of his disciples.

Bhagavan went out at his usual hours. These were : 9:45, for a few minutes; 11 o'clock, for luncheon, followed by the midday stroll in *Palakothu*; evening, 4:45 on the hill, preceding the evening *Veda parayanam*; and 7 o'clock for dinner.

The constant influx of visitors was of some help in that it afforded the much-needed relaxation to an otherwise tense life. Secondly, the peculiar problems which visitors brought with them were a useful study. Watching the masterly ways Bhagavan tackled these problems was a *sadhana* in itself.

Rationality was the very essence of his arguments, while the ultimate answer to all the questions was always the same, namely, "Find out who you are." He first met every questioner on his own ground, and then slowly steered him round to the source of all problems - the Self - the realization of which he held to be the universal panacea. When the audience shrank, he at times became humorously autobiographical about his early school and home life or about his many experiences on the hill with *sadhus*, devotees, etc. As time passed and the Master's state of mind and ideas took firm root in me, I ceased to ask questions, or to intercept him in his walks outside the Ashram grounds, as I used to do in the first six months. The final conclusion to which I came in the end of these six months I reported one day to Bhagavan. He showed his gracious approval by a gesture of finality with his hand and said: "So much lies in your power, the rest must be left entirely to the Guru, who is the ocean of grace and mercy seated in the heart as the seeker's own Self."

The invited devotees had put the finishing touches to my small mud hut in *Palakothu garden* on April 4, 1936. I completed my arrangements for the warming ceremony, known here as *griha pravesham*, to take place the next day. The builded devotees gathered in his hut, and about noon the Master himself strolled in, on his way back, from his usual walk and, refusing the special chair I had ready for him, he squatted like the others on the mat covered floor. After the ceremony, Bhagavan left. I followed him from a distance, waited till the devotees cleared away and approached him. "Bhagavan," I started, "you have given a home for my body, I now need your grace to grant the eternal home for my soul, for which I broke all my human ties and came." He stopped in the shade of a tree, gazed silently on the calm wave of the tank for a few seconds and replied: "Your firm conviction brought you here; where is the room for doubt?" "Where is the room for doubt, indeed?" I reflected.

Three years had passed since that *griha-pravesham* day. "Bhagavan," I said on a day then near my hut, "I feel a strong urge to go on *Yatra* (pilgrimage). I feel that I need a change for some months, which I intend spending in full places." He smiled approval and enquired about the date and time of my starting and whether I had made arrangements for my stay in the various places I was to visit. Extremely touched by his solicitude, I answered that I was going as a *sadhu*, trusting to chance for accommodation.

For three months thereafter I lay on a mat in Cape Comorin, immensely relieved of the mental tension which the Master's physical form had caused me. In solitude I plunged into reflections on his blissful silence and calm repose. The stillness of his mind haunted me everywhere I went - in the beautiful, gem-like temple of the youthful virgin goddess, on the shores of the vast blue ocean around me and the sand dunes, in the fishing villages and endless stretches of coconut groves, which ran along the sea shore and the interior of the Cape. I felt his influence in the depth of my soul and cried: "Oh Bhagavan, how mighty you are and how sublime and all pervasive is the immaculate purity of your mind! With what tender emotions do we, your disciples, think of your incomparable qualities, your gentleness; your serene, adorable countenance; your cool, refreshing smiles; the sweetness of the words that come out of your mouth; the radiance of your all-embracing love; your equal vision towards one and all, even towards diseased stray animals."

Evening Shadows

The years 1948-50 saw the evening shadows gathering and closing on the mortal coil of the Master. Advancing age brought a series of mishaps to it - a fall, a nervous hiccup lasting many days, a clinging rheumatism, and, lastly, a malignant tumor which inch by inch ate the flesh of his left arm, poisoned his blood and finally rang down the curtain on an immaculate life.

About a fortnight ago, the Ashrama doctor, Dr. Shankar Rao, assisted by Dr. Srinivasa Rao, removed a very small growth from the left elbow of the Maharshi, since when it has remained bandaged; but today the bandage has been removed and it is left exposed - it is presumed to have healed.

27 March 1949

The lump which was removed from Maharshi's left elbow last month and which was thought to be healing satisfactorily, subsequently started to grow again, so that the eminent surgeon, Dr. Raghavachari, came today from Madras with surgical instruments to remove it. The surgeon, we are told, performed the operation skillfully by cutting deep and removing the last cell of growth. He does not expect a recurrence of the growth.

4th December 1949

This is Deepam day, most holy to Hindus in the South. The holy beacon will be lighted tonight on top of Arunachala. Tonight Sri Maharshi sat in the north verandah of the *Darshan* Hall. All around him hundreds of devotees squatted. This jubilation is not without a sting. Will the health of Sri Maharshi favor us with another Deepam day and he be with us in the flesh, or is this to be the last? As we see him seated fresh and bright as ever, gazing expectantly at the top of his beloved Arunachala, we cannot help being optimistic of his recovery. The body which is stricken by a most malignant disease, hacked on many occasions by the surgeon's knife, burnt by radium, and drugged by all sorts of powerful drugs, bears no trace of the agonizing ordeal in the brilliance of its eyes or in the joyful expressions of its face. What miracles are being performed in it! What are its mysteries!

— The preceding was gathered from the pages of S. S. Cohen's book, *Guru Ramana*.

Meeting with S.S.Cohen A Devotee's Diary

MP 3

YESTERDAY, while waiting for *Sri Kunju Swami* and *Sri K.Natesan* to arrive to continue the recordings of all the different *parayanas*, Bhagawat and I took the opportunity to visit *S.S.Cohen*. He is now eighty-three years old, ill and weak.

His hired Tamilian attendant had just helped him to walk out of his room and sit in a chair under the shade of the banyan trees. We also grabbed two chairs and sat facing him.

As his attendant helped him into the seat he told him something, which he immediately translated to us with a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his face: "I just told him, 'Observe me carefully, because thirty years hence you are going to be in the same situation - old, feeble and sick.'"

This quip quickly put me at ease about his physical condition, and I cannot remember ever seeing such an old, feeble man exude such lightness and cheer.

We presented to him our Ashrama brochure and began describing 'Sri Bhagavan's Abodes' in New York City and Nova Scotia, Canada. I then offered him one of our treasured six ounce cans of Dole Pineapple Juice. He drank it with satisfaction.

Bhakta Bhagawat then began describing to him his life and how he experiences Sri Bhagavan's Presence. While pouring out his heart to this senior disciple of the Maharshi, he bent over and touched his feet several times and asked for his blessings.

"You don't need my blessings," *S.S. Cohen* said. "Blessings are always flowing to you."

Then Cohen continued, as if talking to himself: "I am old now. I have no desire to do anything." He paused. "Do you know, indescribable peace crawls over you slowly - one does not even notice it."

It is obvious that he is nearing death, but he is not sad; nor does he allow anyone else to be sad on this account.

Later he said to me, with that same twinkle and same smile, "If you want to take me to Canada, you will have to pay all the expenses; and I am not just talking about the air fare - you will have to pay the cost of burying me in the ground as well!" He laughed.

Later that evening, as I passed his room, the door was open and a dim light shone from within. There he was sitting, alone, quiet, eyes closed and at peace. Leaving the world behind, with the goal at hand, he sat, waiting. What a lesson for a young aspirant like myself!

— by Dinesh Dayalu

The Maharshi shed his mortal frame on April 14, 1950 at 8:47 p.m. According to the Indian (lunar) calendar, the event will be celebrated this year at Sri Ramanasramam on May 12, 1991.

"To those who feared that the guidance might end with death he replied curtly, 'You attach too much importance to the body.' Now, as then, he guides whoever approaches him and whoever submits to him he supports. To all who seek he is here."

— by *Arthur Osborne*

Death and Dying

MP 3

Once we are born, there is nothing more certain - among all the uncertainties of life - than death. Yet, when it comes knocking at our door, or the doors of our near and dear ones, we are often caught by surprise and thrown into a whirlpool of confusion and sorrow. Why does this event, as inevitable as the morning light, cast a shadow of darkness all around?

While, traditionally, people of all nations rely on the revelations of their seers and prophets to clear the confusion regarding death, a tinge of wonder and timidity ferment in the hearts of even the most faithful. Death, shrouded in mystery, forever the burden of poets and philosophers, scriptures and dogma, has nothing to do with oblivion or loss; indeed, for those endowed with right understanding and a keen aspiration to know what death is, the once foreboding door of death opens to the eternal glory of immortality and bliss.

Sri Maharshi was born into that world of eternal Reality through the womb of death, during a brief, intense experience in his seventeenth year. From then on, he was established in the realization of his true Self and the illusion of death died forever.

Here, as recorded in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, are a few words he spoke, from the depth of his experience, on death and dying.

MOURNING IS NOT the index of true love. It betrays love of the object, of its shape only. That is not love. True love is shown by the certainty that the object of love is in the Self and that it can never become non-existent. There will be no pain if the physical outlook is given up and if the person exists as the Self.

There is no death nor birth. That which is born is only the body. The body is the creation of the ego. But the ego is not ordinarily perceived without the body. It is always identified with the body.

If a man considers he is born he cannot avoid the fear of death. Let him find out if he has been born or if the Self has any birth. He will discover that the Self always exists, that the body which is born resolves itself into thought and that the emergence of thought is the root of all mischief.

Find where from thoughts emerge. Then you will abide in the ever-present inmost Self and be free from the idea of birth or the fear of death.

Recall the state of sleep. Were you aware of anything happening? If the son or the world be real, should they not be present with you in sleep?

You cannot deny your existence in sleep. Nor can you deny you were happy then. You are now the same person speaking and raising doubts. You are not happy according to you. But you were happy in sleep. What has transpired in the meantime that happiness of sleep has broken down? It is the rise of the ego. That is the new arrival in the *jagrat* (waking) state. There was no ego in sleep.

The birth of the ego is called the birth of the person. There is no other kind of birth. Whatever is born, is bound to die. Kill the ego: there is no fear of recurring death for what is once dead. The Self remains even after the death of the ego. That is Bliss - that is immortality.

Training the mind helps one to bear sorrows and bereavements with courage. But the loss of one's offspring is said to be the worst of all griefs. Still it is true, pain on such occasions can be assuaged by association with the wise.

The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: 'Now that death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies . . . But with the death of the body am I dead? Is the body I? . . . The body dies but the Spirit that transcends it cannot be touched by death. That means I am the deathless Spirit.' All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living truth which I perceived directly. . . From that moment onwards the 'I' or Self focussed attention on itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death had vanished once and for all. Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on.

— Sri Ramana Maharshi

Interviews *Professor N. R. Krishnamurthy*

MP 3

I am now ninety-two years old and I first met the Maharshi in the summer of 1914, when I was just a boy of sixteen. We were then on a pilgrimage to Tirupati and had halted in Tiruvannamalai, from where my grandmother hailed. We were not strangers to this town.

In the pilgrim party there were half a dozen boys, all of whom were about my age. We all decided to go up to Virupaksha cave. The Maharshi was then residing there and was attentive to all the activities of us youngsters. I noticed his gaze particularly focused on me.

We were all playing with the conch shell. The *sadhus* used to blow this shell like a horn when they went into town to beg for alms.

One after the other, we attempted to blow the conch shell. No one prevented us from doing this, and I noticed an encouraging smile from the Maharshi. This was my first visit.

Some eight years later, I came to Tiruvannamalai to visit my sister, who was married there. One evening, two companions and I went to visit Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni up on the hill where he had his ashram. What can I say about that great seer of *Mantra Sastra*?

I was just then out of college after finishing my masters degree in physics. I presented to Kavyakanta the latest views of Einstein, Planck and others in regard to the constitution of matter and the universe. He gave a patient hearing, and then said, "Can you put it in a brief way?" Answering in the affirmative, I went on explaining that there is a continuum in which time and space are involved, wherein particles change into waves and waves change into particles and all can dissolve into a single unitary medium. That is the prospect of the future.

He listened patiently to all this and said, "the world picture is in that frame;" and after a pause he exclaimed, "chitram, chitram !" These words mean 'picture' - you may call it a movie-picture. Those words sent a thrill through my mind, through my whole frame. I suddenly felt disembodied. I was myself the whole space in which the pictures were placed - this body being one of the pictures. This experience lasted for a brief eternity. When I came round to myself we took leave of Kavyakanta.

The next day we had a meeting with Bhagavan. This was about the time he arrived at the present site of Sri Ramanasramam (1922). There were no buildings at all, except for a small shed covering the samadhi (grave) of the Mother.

Bhagavan was seated on a bench under the shade of a tree, and with him, lying on the same bench, was the dog named Rose. Bhagavan was simply stroking the dog.

I wondered, among us Brahmins the dog was such an animal that it would defile all purity. A good part of my respect for the Maharshi left me when I saw him touching that unclean animal - for all its apparent cleanliness and neatness it was unclean from the Brahmin point of view.

I had a question for the Maharshi. At that time I was an agnostic. I thought nature could take care of itself, so where is the need for a Creator? What is the use of writing all these religious books telling 'cock and bull' stories, which do not change the situation.

I wanted to put to him straight questions: is there a soul? Is there a God? Is there salvation? All these three questions were condensed into one: Well sir, you are sitting here like this - I can see your present condition - but what will be your future *sthiti*? The word *sthiti* in Sanskrit means 'state' or 'condition'.

The Maharshi did not answer the question. "Oho," I thought, "you are taking shelter under the guise of indifferent silence for not answering an inconvenient question!" As soon as I thought this the Maharshi replied and I felt as if a bomb had exploded under my seat.

"*Sthiti*, what do you mean by the word *sthiti*!" he exclaimed.

I was not prepared for that question. "Oho, this man is very dangerous, very dangerously alive. I will have to answer with proper care," I thought.

So I said to myself, "If I ask him about the *sthiti* or 'state' of the body it is useless: the body will be burned or buried. What I should ask him was about the condition of something within the body. Of course, I can recognize a mind inside of me." Then I was about to answer "By *sthiti*, I mean mind," when it struck me what if he counter-questions with "What is mind?" This I am not prepared to answer.

As all this was passing through my mind he was sitting there staring at me with a fierce look.

I then questioned within me, "What is mind? Mind is made up of thoughts. Now, what are thoughts?" I landed in a void. No answer. I then realised that I could not present a question about a mind which did not exist!

Up to that point, the mind was the greatest thing that existed for me. Now I discovered it did not exist! I was bewildered. I simply sat like a statue.

Two pairs of eyes were then gripping each other: the eyes of the Maharshi and my eyes were locked together in a tight embrace. I lost all sense of body. Nothing existed except the eyes of the Maharshi.

I don't know how long I remained like that, but when I returned to my senses, I was terribly afraid of the man. "This is a dangerous man," I thought. In spite of myself, I prostrated and got away from his company.

— continued in the *Jul/Aug issue*

Twenty Years Ago

On April 14, 1971, a commemorative stamp of Sri Ramana was released by the Post and Telegraphs Department of the Government of India

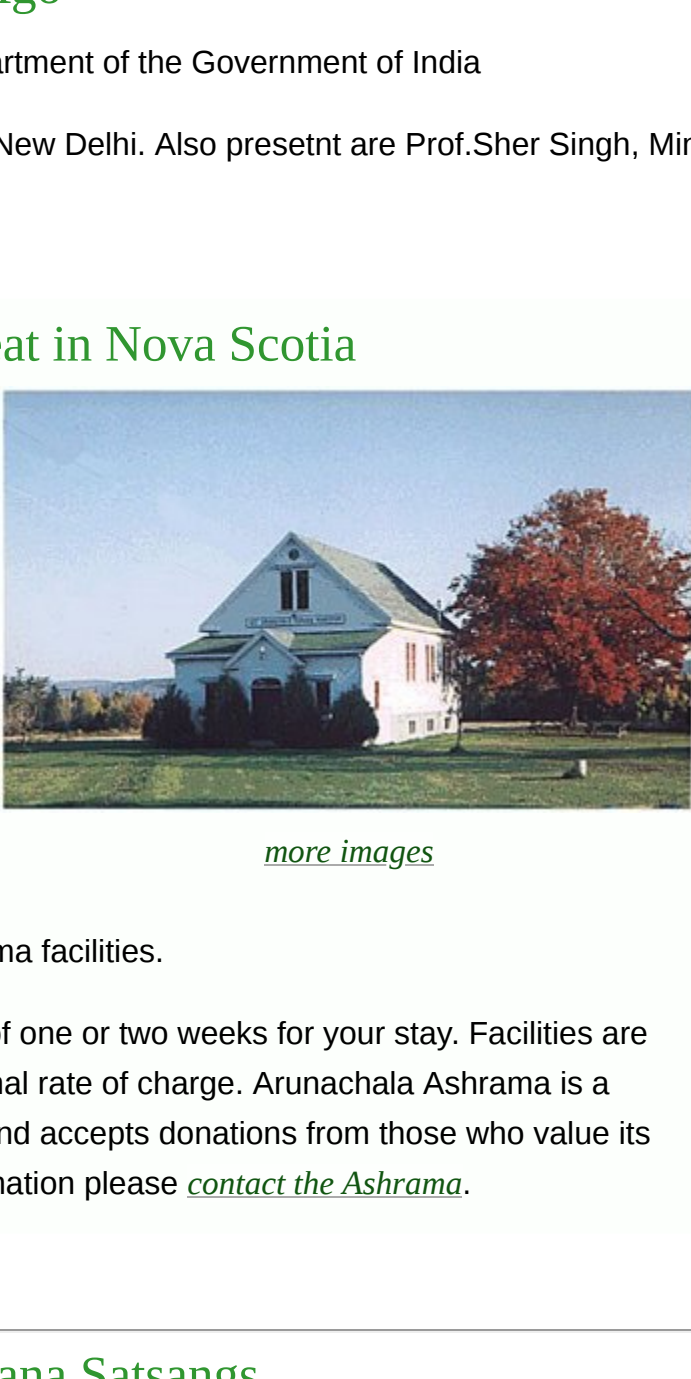
Pictured, is the President of India, Sri V.V.Giri releasing the stamp on behalf of the Government of India in New Delhi. Also present are Prof.Sher Singh, Ministor for Communications, Sri Moraji Desai, President of the Ramana Kendra, Delhi, and *Prof.K.Swaminathan*, Secretary.

A Retreat in Nova Scotia

On 130 acres, amidst the quiet, idyllic Annapolis Valley, a daily routine of worship, recitations and silent meditation is observed in the Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram (temple).

Those earnest seekers desirous of deepening their spiritual experience in a conducive environment ar invited to utilize the Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama facilities.

We suggest you allow a minimum of one or two weeks for your stay. Facilities are provided to guests without any formal rate of charge. Arunachala Ashrama is a registered non-profit organization and accepts donations from those who value its ideals and services. For more information please *contact the Ashrama*.



Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation have been going on in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please see the *Sri Ramana Satsang online* pages.

"*The Maharshi*" is a free bimonthly newsletter distributed in North America by *Arunachala Ashrama*, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. You can subscribe to this newsletter's announcements *by email*. All back issues are available as *html pages* and in *Acrobat PDF* format from 2000 to the present. *Books, images, videos and audio CDs* on Sri Ramana Maharshi can also be found in the *eLibrary*, the *On-line Bookstore* pages and the Ashrama's *YouTube* channel.