

Sep / Oct 1992	THE MAHARSHI	Jan / Feb 1993
Nov / Dec 1992 Vol.2 No.6		Produced & Edited by Dennis Hartel Dr. Anil K. Sharma

1. As I Saw Him, No. 11, Krishna Bhikshu
2. Sri Kunju Swami, part I
3. 36th Advent Day Celebrations
4. 36th Advent Celebration in New York City

As I Saw Him, No.11

by Krishna Bhikshu

MP3

Krishna Bhikshu was a man of insatiable curiosity, keen intellect, enthusiasm and energy. He was a precocious youth whose early studies created a distaste for religious literature. This lasted until he came under the powerful influence of Ganapati Muni, who brought him to the Maharshi in 1929. He was enchanted by the holy presence of the sage, but still wandered about for some years exploring the different spiritual traditions and teachers of the time. As the result of his wide study and long practice, Krishna Bhikshu became convinced of the truths taught and lived by Sri Ramana Maharshi and surrendered to him whole-heartedly.

He authored several important works in Telugu, one being Sri Ramana Leela, the most comprehensive biography of the Maharshi. Amidst the chanting of Arunachala Siva, Krishna Bhikshu breathed his last on December 30, 1981.

OUR FAMILY was in some way or other always associated with religion and spiritual searching. Brahmarshi Chivukula Venkata Sastri, the husband of my paternal aunt, had asked some of the questions recorded in the *Ramana Gita*. When I was a child I often used to go to his house and there I saw for the first time the photo of Bhagavan Ramana and read *Ramana Gita* and other early brochures.



I stayed with him for three days. He made a great impression on me. I considered him to be a real *Mahatma*, although his ways were very simple. Most of the cooking was done by him in those days. The Ashrama lived from hand to mouth and usually only rice and vegetable soup were prepared. When I was about to leave, I asked Bhagavan: "Bhagavan, kindly show me a good path." "What are you doing now?" he asked. "When I am in the right mood, I sing the songs of *Tyagaraja* and I recite the holy *Gayatri*. I was also doing some *pranayama* but these breathing exercises have upset my health." "You had better stop them. But never give up the *Advaita Dristhi* (non dual vision)." At that time I could not understand his words.

I went to Benares for a month, returned to Pondicherry and spent five months there. Wherever I would go people would find some fault or other with me: "You are too weak, not fit for yoga, you do not know how to concentrate, you cannot hold your breath, you are unable to fast, you need too much sleep, you cannot keep vigils, you must surrender all your property . . ." Only Bhagavan asked for nothing, found fault with nothing. As a matter of truth, there was nothing in me that entitled me to his grace. But it did not matter with Bhagavan. He wanted me, not my goodness. It was enough to tell him "I am yours", and for him to do the rest. In that way he was unsurpassed. The strange people he gathered around him! But those who gave themselves to him and trusted him and did his bidding were overwhelmed by his immense solicitude and kindness.

In 1930 I visited Ramanasramam for the second time, and stayed a month. Our life was very simple at that time. I would get up early each morning, have my bath near the well at *Palitirtham*, prepare sacramental food on a small stove and start worshipping the *Lingam* over Bhagavan's mother's samadhi. Chinnaaswami helped in the chanting. Bhagavan would make himself generally useful. He would talk quite freely with us every night after food. They would ply him with questions on philosophy and metaphysics. In the evening he would sit on a wooden cot near the well and gaze at Arunachala in deep silence. His face would glow with an inner radiance which would appear to increase with the deepening darkness. We were sitting all around him, either silently, or singing some song. Alamelamma would sometimes sing from *Tiruppughazh*. The silence and peace at those hours was quite remarkable.

At night after dinner all the inmates of the Ashrama would collect around Bhagavan, and then he was our own, telling stories, answering questions, dispelling doubts, laughing and joking. We never knew how late it was until Madhavaswami would go behind Bhagavan's back and give us signs that it was time to allow Bhagavan some rest.

B.V.Narasimha Swami took up in those days the task of writing a book on Bhagavan's life and was collecting materials for his work from devotees. The first draft of the book was ready and the author gave it to me to read. The idea came to me that a similar book should be written in Telugu. I got Bhagavan's permission and, using Narasimha Swami's manuscript for an outline, got the Telugu version written within a month.

After that, whenever there was some court holiday and I had enough money for a railway ticket, I would come down to Ramanasramam. Everybody, including Bhagavan, used to say: "Krishnayya has come," and there was always a warm welcome for me.

I asked him once: "You told me to repeat the *Gayatri*. It is too long. Also, I am expected to know its meaning and to meditate on it." "Who asked you to bother about the meaning and all that? I have only asked you to see who is repeating the *Gayatri*, or who is the *japi*," was his kind reply.

On the other hand he did not limit his teaching to the one question "Who am I ?" He invariably adjusted his advice to the needs of the devotee. He would say: "Sooner or later the question 'Who am I?' will have to be faced. All that leads to this question is good. By itself nothing else is fully effective, for Self-knowledge comes only through self-enquiry. But other methods purify the mind and help it to see its own limits. When the mind comes to the end of its resources and stands baffled before the unanswerable question, then a Higher Power takes charge of the mind and the Self stands revealed, the Real, the Wonderful."

Once an old woman came to the Ashrama. She always carried with her a framed picture of Bhagavan Narayana and she would worship it on every occasion.

She asked Bhagavan whether she was right in doing so. Bhagavan replied:

"Without name and form, on what is one to concentrate? What you are doing with your heart and soul is just right for you."

One night there were only one or two persons in the hall. Madhavaswami was massaging Bhagavan's legs. A gentleman from Kakinada asked Bhagavan's permission to massage his legs. Bhagavan did not reply. The man repeated his request, saying: "At home I am daily praying to Bhagavan and now I have a chance to serve him." Suddenly Bhagavan thundered: "You had all the chances of serving me at home. Why did you come here?" The man became quite frightened and could not speak. Thus Bhagavan taught us not to make a show of our devotion.

Nobody could guess about the way Bhagavan would meet people. The high and mighty of the land would not get even a blank look, while some insignificant looking wanderer would become the object of his concentrated attention for hours and days. On the other hand eminent people would sometimes be taken up by him and given the immense blessing of being the centre of his interest. Once Pranavananda Swami came to the Ashrama. He was utterly exhausted. He sat on the steps of the temple and could not move any further. Bhagavan was told about it. He came out at once, sat at the feet of Pranavananda Swami and started rubbing his legs, saying: "You had a long way to walk, Grandpa. Your legs must be paining you very much." The old *swami* protested in vain; Bhagavan had his way and massaged the *swami*'s feet.

At food time Bhagavan would ask to be served very little and he would carefully clear the plate of the last grain of food before getting up. Although he never asked us to do the same, I asked him: "If we clear our dining leaves so scrupulously, the dogs, cats, monkeys, rats and the ants will starve." Bhagavan answered: "Well, if you are so compassionate, why not feed the animals before taking food yourselves? Do you think they relish your scrappings?"

Once a visitor said: "I have been coming to you, Swami, many times, hoping that something will happen and I shall be changed. So far I do not see any change in me. I am as I was: a weakening of a man, an inveterate sinner." And he started weeping piteously. "On this road there are no milestones," replied Bhagavan. "How can you know which direction you are going ? Why don't you do what the first-class railway passenger does? He tells the guard his destination, locks the doors and goes to sleep. The rest is done by the guard. If you could trust your *guru* as much as you trust the railway guard, it would be quite enough to make you reach your destination. Your business is to shut the door and windows and sleep. The guard will wake you up at your destination."

One Rama Rao, an advocate in Nellore, was requested many times by his friends to come with them to Ramanasramam. Invariably he would answer: "I shall go when Bhagavan calls me." Once when he was praying Bhagavan appeared to him and asked: "Why have you not come?" Rama Rao immediately left for Tiruvannamalai. Before reaching the Ashrama he had a dream in which a unique *Chakra* (symbolic drawing) appeared before him. He told the dream to Bhagavan, described the *Chakra* and asked who could help him in having one drawn correctly. Bhagavan gave him all the necessary information. When the *Chakra* was ready, Bhagavan examined it carefully and gave it to Rama Rao, telling him to use it in his worship.

A widow arrived one day, entered the Hall and bowed to Bhagavan. He looked at her closely and started laughing. "Oh, it is you," he said. The woman got confused, covered her face with her white widow's sari and hid herself in a corner. Bhagavan continued with a broad smile: "When I was a boy her people were our neighbours and she was their little girl. It was agreed between our parents that she would be my wife in due course. I was very fond of helping my mother in the kitchen and her mother used to grumble that she would never marry her daughter to a fellow who likes to spend his day near the stove, like a woman. Anyhow I was not fated to marry. But had I married her, what would have been my fate! Everybody had a good laugh at Bhagavan's narrow escape.

Once I said to Bhagavan: "Bhagavan, formerly, whenever I thought of you, your form would appear before my eyes. But now it does not happen. What am I to do?" "You can remember my name and repeat it. Name is superior to form. But in the course of time even the name will disappear. Till then repeat the name," advised Bhagavan.

An inmate of the Ashrama who had been serving Bhagavan for many years started visiting a certain woman in the town. Her relatives came to know of it and decided to catch and kill the man. One night they caught him at her house, bound him hand and foot and locked him up in a room, postponing the cutting of his throat until they had found a safe way of disposing of the body. Our man managed to escape and came running to the Ashrama, pursued by his enemies. When he entered the gate they gave up the chase. He entered the Hall trembling and fell on the ground shouting: "Save me, save me." Bhagavan ordered the doors to be shut and said: "Don't fear, tell me what happened." After having been told everything, he looked at the culprit with understanding and pity and said reassuringly: "Don't fear any more. Go and sleep." From the next day the man was at his work and Bhagavan would not mention the matter at all. Everybody in the town came to know what happened. The Ashrama people requested Bhagavan to send the man away, for his presence would tarnish the good name of the Ashrama. Bhagavan called the man and told him in front of everybody: "You have done some wrong, but you were too foolish to keep it secret. Others do worse things, but they take care not to be caught. Now, the people who were not caught want you to leave the Ashrama because you were caught. They will make your life miserable. You had better stay outside for some time, until things settle down." The man stayed with some devotees outside the Ashrama and came back after a few months.

When people would complain to Bhagavan about some mischief or other done in the Ashrama, Bhagavan would say: "I have not come here to punish people. If I start punishing people, even a black crow would not remain in this place. People come here, each with his own purpose, and each may find his purpose fulfilled. Why don't you take care of your own purpose? Why do you pay attention to what others do?"

On some other occasion Bhagavan remarked about some of the visitors: "On their first visit to the Ashrama they seem to be all right; on their second visit they discover that the Ashrama is not properly run; on their third visit they start giving advice; on the fourth they know best how to run the place; on the fifth they discover that the management is not responsive and they are very displeased; on the sixth they suggest that the present staff should walk out, leaving the Ashrama to them. Finally they become disheartened and blame me for what I have never done." After all it is perfectly true that Bhagavan neither started nor organized the Ashrama. It was all done by others who just did what they thought right.

When Bhagavan was still on the hill, a postcard came in which the sender wrote: "I am a poor elementary school teacher. My mother is old and my salary is so small that I cannot look after her properly. Kindly see that I get a raise." Bhagavan laughed and said: "Well, why not?" Another card came after some time in which he wrote: "By your grace my salary was increased. Now there is a vacancy in a higher grade. If I am given that grade, I shall earn more and make my mother very happy." Bhagavan had a good laugh and said: "Good." Again after some days, another card: "My mother is bedridden and there is nobody to nurse her. If I could get married, my wife would look after her. But I am a poor man. Who will give me his daughter in marriage? And where shall I get the money for expenses? Bhagavan may kindly arrange." Bhagavan laughed and said: "Well, let it be so." After some months another postcard came: "By your kindness I was married quite easily. My wife is already with me. My mother wants a grandchild before she dies. Please provide. "Why not?" said Bhagavan. After some months another card: "My wife gave birth to a child, but she has no milk for it. I cannot afford milk for the baby. Please get me a promotion." Then another card: "I got a promotion and an increment. The child is doing well. I owe everything to your kindness." Bhagavan remarked: "What have I done? It is his good *karma* that all goes well with him." After some days another card: "Mother died. She worshiped you before her death. "Well," said Bhagavan. After a month, another card: "Swami, my child has died." "Sorry," said Bhagavan. Another month had passed and a card came saying: "My wife is pregnant again." Then another card: "My wife gave birth to a child. Both died." "*Ram, Ram,*" said Bhagavan. "Everything seems to be over." Then another card: "Due to family trouble my work was very irregular and I was dismissed. I am completely destitute now." Bhagavan said, heaving a deep sigh: "All that came has gone; only his Self remained with him. It is always like this. When all goes, only the Self remains."

— The preceding was taken from
"The Bhagavan I Knew"
in the *Ramana Smriti Souvenir*.

Sri Kunju Swami

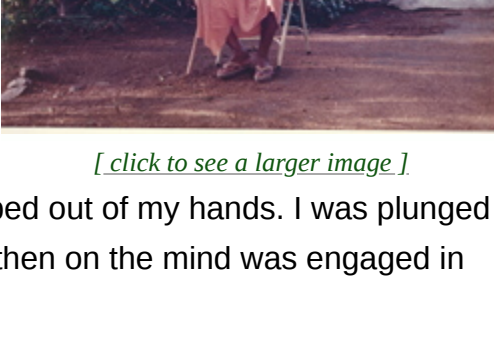
MP3

We are very sad to announce the passing of Sri Kunju Swami at 1:30 a.m. on August 7th. He was a living testimony to the efficacy of the Maharshi's teachings and a pure channel of the Master's Grace. None who met him can ever forget his solid, rock-like abidance in the Self, natural devotion, simplicity and humility. His presence at Sri Ramanasramam will be sorely missed.

From Kunju Swami's Tami I book, Enadu Ninaivugal, J.Jayaraman translates some of his reminiscences, beginning from his early life.

THE GRAND OPPORTUNITY of basking in, and delighting in the tremendous and liberating Grace of Sri Bhagavan who sported in the Self, drinking the nectar at the Feet of Arunachala, was vouchsafed to me.

I was born in January 1897, the third offspring, to a middle-class family in the village Serakkodu, which lies between Palakkadu and Chitroor in the state of Kerala. I reached the age of three without much event. I was given to quiet and seclusion and did not indulge either in play or in the tantrums usual to other children of my age. This abnormality prompted my father to show my horoscope to my maternal uncle. The latter, skilled in astrology, examining the data, exclaimed with obvious wonder and delight, "This is an unusual child to be born in our family. It has divine proclivities. Therefore great care should be taken towards his regimen and other matters." My father was thrilled to hear this - he had studied *>Kaivalya Navaneeta* and other scriptures of *Vedanta*, and had great devotion to matters of the spirit - hence his abundant joy. From then on I was brought up differently. When I completed five years, I was put in the small school of the village. I learnt, more or less, to read and write in Malayalam, using palm leaves which were in vogue then.



[click to see a larger image]

From my seventh year on, I used to go to the village pond for a swim with my father. Noticing the orthodox Brahmins standing in the water and muttering their *mantras*, my young mind too was seized with a longing to do the same. The longing grew intense and continuous. One night Lord Siva appeared before me in dream wearing matted hair and *rudraksha* beads, and whispered the sacred *panchakshari mantra* in my ear. Youngster that I was, I could not recollect the *mantra* properly upon waking. When fully awake, I felt as though a great fortune had slipped out of my hands. I was plunged into despair. I went to bed that night with my mind centered on this event. Once again the Lord appeared and initiated me. Being alert and one-pointed, I this time grasped the *mantra*. From then on the mind was engaged in chanting it ceaselessly.

Soon the desire to possess a *vibhuti* bag began to grow in me. In those days none other than Brahmins and some monks (*Pandarams*) kept this custom. So I was quite depressed, afraid to ask another for a bag and unable to give up this thought. Gangadhara, the Merciful Lord Siva, took pity on this tender child-mind and, appearing once more in my dream, told me to look for the necessary coins under a particular tree on the banks of the bathing pond. Upon waking the next morning, I secretly left for the said spot and searched. Lot! Hidden amidst the exposed roots were three quarter-anna coins. With glee I picked them up, washed them of the dirt, and returned home. Reluctant to move out during the day, I made my way to the shops at nightfall. When I found that the bag cost exactly three quarter-annas, I happily gave over the coins and took possession of the holy pouch and returned home. One day my father saw it and asked me about it. When I narrated the happenings, he was struck with awe and showered even more care and affection on me. Friends and others who came to know of this became wary of moving with me freely.

A year passed. Yet another wish took hold of me: the unspeakable desire to keep a *rudraksha* rosary! The omnipresent Lord fulfilled this in an unbelievable way. I used to go often to the pond for a swim with my friend. On the day of the incident we were both halfway to the pond when my friend said, "I just remembered something my father asked me to do. So I am returning home." I was left alone and went ahead a short distance when I noticed a large lotus on the road. I picked it up only to be struck with awe, for right in the middle of the flower, which was larger than any lotus I had seen thus far or likely to see in the future, was a *rudraksha* rosary strung on golden thread! Tears of joy filled my eyes as I looked around. There was no one to be seen. With great devotion and care I carried it home and showed it to my father, narrating all that had happened.

My relatives and others who came to hear of this were all awestruck. Since that day the rosary was continually around my neck. At present, it is kept for worship with my brothers. The remembrance of the Lord's compassion in such wondrous fulfillment, fills me with beatitude.

I was about ten years of age when my father took me to a neighbouring village where some Tami I pandits were reciting the *Tiruvilayadal Puranam* and expounding the meaning in Malayalam. I listened to it with full attention. Reaching home my father asked me to report whatever I had heard to my mother. I then related faithfully all that I had heard and in full. My mother was very pleased and proud of me! Attending the discourses and then returning home to repeat it all, became a daily feature. This was followed by my going to many places to attend such discourses. Impressed with such good memory in a young boy, people in the neighbouring villages used to invite me to hear me speak. Some years passed in this way.

Kodumudi Swami, of great fame, arrived in Kerala. A worshipper of Bhairava, a fearsome aspect of Siva, the Swami wore but a loin-cloth. He performed many miracles. My father wanted to take me to him. I did not go as I felt no need to see another when the Lord had, as Guru, Himself initiated me with a *mantra* and had even cleared my doubts now and then in dreams.

More years rolled by. I was eighteen years of age. A renunciate arrived at a village about three miles away from us and was teaching *Vedanta* to some elders. My father learnt of this while on a business trip there. He felt that my discoursing and *mantra* chanting were all a kind of *sidhi*, miracle-mongering, which would not last. He felt that lasting benefit would accrue only from a study of *Vedanta* and pondering over it and assimilating it in practice. My earlier refusal to approach Kodumudi Swami, prompted him to meet the renunciate by himself. He appraised the *sannyasi* about me, told him that he would bring me to him and begged him to talk to me and make me consent to a *Vedantic* training under him. I was then taken along with my father on a business trip and there, by the way, visited the *sannyasi* along with my father.

We were seated quietly for a while when my father left me, saying that he would come back soon. Not too happy, I remained seated. Some minutes passed. The *sannyasi* came to me gently and enquired of me. Then, by a sign, sending away the others present there, he told me, "There will be no gain for you in a life of discoursing and receiving adulation. Then quoting from *Kaivalya Navaneeta* to the effect that the *sidhis* of the sages merely afforded diversion but not deliverance, he said, "A study of *Vedanta* and clarity therefrom is alone conducive to Self-experience; so what do you wish to pursue?" I replied, "Please do as you deem fit." He replied, "It is not proper for me to decide this. I must instruct you only in that which commands your keenness. I can teach the *Puranas*, Astrology, Magic, Medicine and *Vedanta*. State your desire." I was unable to decide. The Swami therefore decided to cast lots. This was done and I picked up the slip of paper which bore "*Vedanta*". The Swami was happy and said that the day being auspicious, lessons could start right away. He then wrote out on the palm leaf the following six verses from *Kaivalya Navaneetam* in Malayalam, and asked me to go home and return at the same time the following day after reading it.

— continued in the *Jan/Feb 1993* issue

Advent Day Celebrations

MP3

The Ninety-sixth Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's arrival at Arunachala was celebrated on Sunday August 30th, 1992 at Arunachala Ashrama in *Bridgetown Nova Scotia*, Canada. Many devotees gathered from far and wide in the Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram to participate in the Advent celebrations and also to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Arunachala Ashrama in the Annapolis Valley.



click to see a larger image

The program was conducted by *Dr. J. S. S. Lakshminarayana* who also performed *Ganesha Puja*. Further praise to Ganesha was offered by Dennis Hartel who led the singing of "*Gayitri Ganapati Jaga Vandana*."

We were very fortunate to have with us this year Sri J. Jayaraman from *Sri Ramanasramam*, Tiruvannamalai. He gave an elucidating talk entitled *Living with those who lived with the Maharshi*. Jayaraman is eminently qualified on this subject, as he has delved deep into the life and teachings of the Maharshi, utilizing his close association with the senior devotees and disciples of the Master. He spoke at length of his experiences with *Sri Kunju Swami* (see above), *Prof. N.R. Krishnamoorthy* Ayier, *Sri Ramaswami Pillai*, and others, all of whom radiate the essence of Sri Maharshi's teachings. He followed this discourse with stirring renditions of *Arunachala Pancaratnam*, at which time he was joined by the enthusiastic and full-throated congregation, and the

Navamani Malai.

The final fifteen minutes of the Video documentary, *The Sage of Arunachala*, was shown, presenting the glorious last days of the sage, his dramatic demise and continued presence in his Ashrama today. This excerpt was followed by *Bhajans* and then *Prasad*, which was prepared by the Ashrama residents, guests and devoted ladies of the Halifax area, all of whom served it with enthusiasm and devotion. The remainder of the video documentary was then screened.

The continuing and guiding presence of Ramana Maharshi was felt by all present.

In New York City

At the New York Arunachala Ashrama devotees also gathered on Sunday, August 30th to celebrate Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala.

The well-known family of devotees joined in recitation of *Lalita Sahasranam*, *Upadesha Sarah*, and other works of Bhagavan. *Mr. Babubai Parekh* recited *slokas* and spoke on the spiritual life. Extracts from *Arthur Osborne's ibiography of the Maharshi* were read out and then *Prasad* was served in an atmosphere of warmth, friendship and devotion.

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 channel.

Sep / Oct 1992	Choose Web-page Issue top of page	Jan / Feb 1993
----------------	--------------------------------------	----------------