

peace, peace, peace. Now you have lost your individuality in him; he absorbs you, is your all, is the All. I remember (how well!) the first song I sang before him at that time: it was the famous *Namasivayapadikam* commencing "Matruparenakanni", the gift of the great Saint Sri Sundaramurti Swamikal. From then on he had me linked inseparably to himself. I know one and only one thing, and that is that he alone exists as the Divine and all else has only the appearance of existence, but in reality is not.

I never had to leave Tiruvannamalai after my nineteenth year. *Sri Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni* was at that time in Tiruvannamalai; his *Vaidika Sabha Society* was very active and he gave a series of discourses on the *Vedas*. His magnetic personality and exposition of the greatness of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi so deeply impressed me that I decided to study the *Vedas* at his feet and was gladly accepted as a student. He was then living in the Mango Tree Cave below the Virupaksha Cave on the hill. For eight years I studied the

After the Maharshi's mother, Alagammal, passed away, Sri Maharshi came down the hill and the present Ashrama came into being. *Sri Kavyakanta* and his pupils would come down to the Maharshi's abode, where there would be memorable and scintillating discussions. When the Muni was in the hall, Sri Maharshi could be seen in the full bloom of his being. The discussion ranged across various schools of thought and philosophy and it was a period of great literary activity at the Ashrama. Besides Kavyakanta, a host of others used to be in the hall which was open all hours of the day and night. Amongst them were *Kanali Sastri, Muvvaanur*, Lakshmana Sarma, Arunachala Sastriar of the *Madras Gita* fame.

On May 1933 on my 36th birthday, after the usual bath and prayers, I sat in Sri Bhagavan's presence in a pensive mood. I addressed a prayer in the Tamil *viruttam* style to Sri Bhagavan complaining, "O Bhagavan, I have completed three-and-a-half decades and yet have not had the experience of the real you. Pray let me have this day the touch of your grace." Handing over this slip of paper I prostrated before him. Bhagavan bade me sit down and gazed steadily at me; I was still in a pensive and meditative mood. All of a sudden I lost body-consciousness and was absorbed in Sri Mahashri. I was turned inward and the voice of Bhagavan bade me see whatever I desired. I felt that if I could have the *darshan* of Sri Rama my life would be fulfilled, as it was very much devoted to Sri Rama. I had then immediately a *darshan* of Sri Rama, with Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Satruguna and Hanuman. The ecstasy of the vision defied description; I simply sat on with Mahashri perhaps gazing on me without my being aware of his gaze. Two hours may thus have passed in pin-drop silence, lost in the vision, until it vanished. I prostrated at the feet of Sri Mahashri, with tears of ecstasy in my eyes and my hair standing on end. To Bhagavan's enquiry I replied that I, of course, had seen my dear Rama.

Bhagavan asked me to fetch the book *Dakshinamurti Astotra*, which I had not read, and opening a page therein he gave it to me to read. The fifth name from the last read "*Om Sri Yoga Pattabhirama nama*." Bhagavan then said, "Sri Rama is Dakshinamurti, and Dakshinamurti is Sri Rama. Do you know where Ayodhya is? The *Vedas* say it is in the sun, and describe it is as *ashtachakra navadwara devanam purayodhya* (the gods' city is Ayodhya with eight corners and nine gates). Arunachala is also *ashtachakra puri* (eight-cornered city), and Lord Arunachala is Sri Rama as well as Dakshinamurti. One has no need to go to the sun to see Ayodhya or Sri Rama, but one may see them here and now."

Thus did Sri Ramana once appear to me as Sri Rama, proving once again the age-old adage that *Mahatmas* can give *darshan* as any beloved form (see *Sri Ramana Gita, Ch. 18, v. 26*). In the *Sri Krishna Avatara*, did not Bhagavan grant Hanuman the vision of Sri Rama? Later I realised that the vision was given to me as painted in *Sri Tyagabrahman's* picture of Sri Rama, though not for a moment can I equate myself with *Sri Tyagaraja*.

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## How the Mantra Came

The mantra "*Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya*" fascinated me greatly in my early days. It so delighted me that I had always a vision of Sri Krishna in my mind. I had a premonition that this body would pass away in its fortieth year and I wanted to have a *darshan* of the Lord before that time. I fasted and practised devotion to Vasudeva incessantly. I read *Sri Bhagavad Gita* and *Srimad Bhagavatam* with great delight. Then when I read in the *Gita*, "*Jnani tvamāiva me matam*" ("In my view, the *Jnani* is my own Self") I was greatly delighted. This line of thought came to me: "While I have at hand Bhagavan Sri Ramana, who is himself *Vasudeva*, why should I worship Vasudeva separately?" Be it noted that all this was in my early days before settling with Bhagavan at his Ashrama. So I wanted one single *mantra*, a single deity (*devata*), and a single scripture, so that there might be no conflict of loyalties.

Sri Ramana Paramatman became easily the God to worship. His *Collected Works* the gospel; as for the *mantra*, it struck me intuitively that "*om namo bhagavate śrī ramauḍya*" (Obeisance to Bhagavan Sri Ramana) might be an exact parallel to "*Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya*." I counted the letters in this new *mantra*, and was very happy to find it also contained twelve letters (in Sanskrit); I told this all to Sri Bhagavan, and he gave the *mantra* his approval.

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Advanced practitioners (*sadhakas*) may laugh at this and say, "Why do you need a *mantra* while the Ocean of Bliss is there to be immersed in directly?" I confess that in this I was trying to conform to the traditional method of practice (*upasana*) which forms one of the main elements in *bhakti* (devotion). Sri Bhagavan has revealed his true nature as the All-Witness, yet there is the explicit injunction that *Advaita* must be only in the attitude and never be interpreted in outer action. This is how the *mantra* first came out.

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– *The Mountain Path*, July 1973

### Where is the Divine World?

MP3

When studying the *Upanishads* in my early days, I always visualised the divine abode in the sun god and was performing the practices enjoined in certain texts. Even later, after settling at the abode of Sri Maharshi, I continued this practice (*upasana*). It proved very hard to succeed in this process and I had to undergo very trying experiences, so I referred the whole matter to Bhagavan. "So you want to go to the divine world?" asked he. "That is what I am trying to obtain; that is what the scriptures prescribe," I answered. "But where are you now?" the Master asked. I replied, "I am in your presence." "Poor thing! You are here and now in the divine world, and you want to obtain it elsewhere! Know that to be the divine world where one is firmly established in the Divine. Such a one is full (*purna*); he encompasses and transcends all that is manifest. He is the substratum of the screen on which the whole manifestation runs like the picture film. Whether moving pictures run or not, the screen is always there and is never affected by the action of the pictures. You are here and now in the divine world

You are like a thirsty man wanting to drink, while he is all the time standing neck deep in the Ganga. Give up all efforts and surrender. Let the 'I' that wants the divine world die, and the Divine in you will be realised here and now. For it is already in you as the Self, not different from the Divine (*Brahman*), nameless and formless. It is already in you, and how are you to obtain that which ever remains obtained? The Self (*atman*) in you is surely not different from US." Thus spoke Bhagavan.

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"So then, Bhagavan says that he is the Self, (*kutastha*) in this, the field of this soul (*jiva*), that this is already established in Bhagavan as such, so this soul need do nothing but give up the sense of being a separate soul?" I asked, prostrating before Bhagavan.

"Yes, yes," he replied, "that is what one must do to drop the ego-sense. If that is done the Self will be experienced as 'I'-I here and now and at all times. There will be no going into the divine world or coming out of it. You will be as you really are. This is the practice (*sadhana*) and this is the perfection (*siddhi*) too."

This teaching of Sri Bhagavan, himself being the divine world, is recorded for the benefit of all who are ever in Him. Our hearts were kindled to deep affection while he taught us by word and example, while he silently showered the nectar dew of grace upon us all. Today they turn to Him within, by day and night, no less of old; and they rejoice to find that grace wells up from the fountain of the one Self who alone is all wisdom, love and power.

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**Letter From A Friend**

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**MP3**

*The following letter was sent recently by Yolanda Levi to Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagwat of the New York Arunachala Ashrama. It describes how Sri Bhagavan's influence is not limited by time and space, and how his grace is readily available to all sincere seekers.*

Dear Bhagawat,

Thank you so much for your beautiful letter which touched me profoundly. I am sorry my reply is so late, but right now we are very busy travelling back and forth from Italy. Giovanni is setting up his own new laboratory in Italy.

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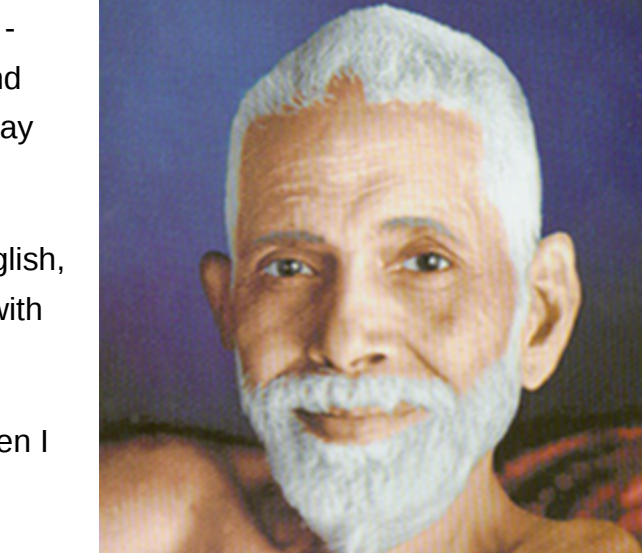
First, I would like to tell you a little story which made me wonder how life can be sometimes unpredictable and yet so beautiful. There is a friend of mine in Romania who is a fully qualified medical doctor. She earns about \$50

a month, which is almost less than what a person needs to live on in Romania. She is working about two hundred miles from Bucharest in the only office which services a group of villages. Every day she wakes up at 5 a.m., takes an unheated train, changes two buses, or hitch-hikes on trucks to travel to those remote villages. Her husband left her and went to France four years ago. Lately, she had been suffering with headaches, anxiety and increasing moments of depression. One day she happened to read a book wherein something about Bhagavan was mentioned. Other names were also mentioned in that book, but somehow only Ramana Maharshi's name kept coming back to her. When she told me briefly about this experience I had the sudden idea to send her my photo of Sri Ramana.

And one day (this was when she had just started to take some anti-depressant medicine), exhausted, she felt like sitting on the floor. She then shifted into the *padmasana* position - without really knowing what she was doing - and gazed at that photo of Ramana, which she had come to love dearly. She then gave over all her pain and suffering to Bhagavan and was immediately filled with so much peace and love that she at once quit the medicine and felt at peace and at ease. She now gathers the necessary courage and strength each day by simply gazing into the eyes of Bhagavan.

I wanted to write this to you and share my wonderment at how a sincere call of the heart can be responded to even when the person lives far away in a remote area, knows no English, knows nothing of the spiritual teachings which have been, in fact, forbidden in her country for almost fifty years. She didn't really talk much about what she experienced. She said with these things it is better to remain silent, with which I totally agree.

As for the tapes, it is kind of you to say you can send them. Please send them to my address, for the Romanian post delivery is not yet safe. I will give them to my friends there when I visit in the summer. Thank you also for sending three more photos. Please take good care of your health.



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The fondest memories from the three of us,  
*Yolanda Levi,*  
 Viroflay, France

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**Triumphs Of The Spirit**  
 Part 2  
 continued from the *Jul/Aug issue*

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After Christ, the single most divine personality to shine out through two thousand years of Christianity was the "Little Poor Man of Assisi", St. Francis. His brief, inspired life transformed thousands during his time and remains an unshakable example to all those who wish to "... seek first the kingdom of God, ..."

Great personalities have the power to manifest the potential greatness in others. In the fertile company of St. Francis, his first twelve intimate companions blossomed into spiritually fragrant flowers. Their intense aspiration, perfect renunciation and ecstatic love of God has been a source of inspiration to the faithful down through the centuries.

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Tales from the lives of these first exalted followers were compiled into a book by a devout Franciscan monk who lived during the early years of the Order. In this great Christian classic, the *Fioretti*, or *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* (translated by Raphael Brown New York: Image Books, 1958), one of the most unforgettable characters is the guileless child of God, Brother Juniper. His utter simplicity, complete self-effacement, compassion and sincerity are delightfully portrayed in about a dozen stories and anecdotes. His life unfolds a picture of a liberated soul playing about the world for the glory of God.

How Brother Juniper used to give whatever he could to the poor for the Love of God

Brother Juniper had so much pity and compassion for the poor that when he saw anyone who was badly clothed or bare, he would immediately rip off his sleeve or cowl or some piece of his habit and give it to that poor man. And so the guardian ordered him under obedience not to give all or part of his habit to anyone.

A few days later it happened that he met a poor man who was almost naked and who begged Brother Juniper to give him something for the love of God. And Juniper said to him very compassionately, "My dear man, I have nothing to give you except my habit - and my superior has told me under obedience not to give it or part of it away to anyone. But if you pull it off my back, I certainly will not prevent you."

He was not speaking to a deaf man for he immediately pulled the habit off inside out and went away with it, leaving Brother Juniper naked.

When he went back to the place, the friars asked him where his habit was. And he answered, "Some good person pulled it off my back and went away with it."

And as the virtue of compassion grew in him, he was not satisfied with giving away only his habit, but to the poor he used to give books and ornaments from the altar and cloaks of the other friars and whatever he could lay his hands on. Consequently, when poor people came to Brother Juniper to beg, the friars used to take and hide the things they wanted to keep so that Brother Juniper should not find them, for he used to give everything away for the love of God and for His praise.

How Brother Juniper cut some ringlets from the Altar and gave them away

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How Brother Juniper cut some ringlets from the Altar and gave them away

Once when Brother Juniper was at the friary in Assisi for the Feast of the Lord's Nativity, he was in the church near the main altar which was very beautifully draped and decorated. At the request of the sacristan, he stayed to guard the altar while the sacristan went to get a bite to eat.

While he was devoutly meditating, a poor little woman begged him to give her something for the love of God. And he answered, "Wait a minute. I'll see if I can find anything to give you from this richly decorated altar."

Now there was on the altar a very costly frontal from which were hanging some silver ringlets. And when Brother Juniper looked at the ornate altar, he saw the silver ringlets and said, "These ringlets are superfluous." And taking a knife, he cut all of them off the frontal and gave them to the poor little woman out of compassion. Meanwhile the sacristan, after eating three or four mouthfuls, began to remember the ways of Brother Juniper and to fear that in his zeal for charity he might do some damage to the richly decorated altar which he had left in his guard. So he quickly rose from the table and went to the church. And when, on looking over the ornaments of the altar, he saw that the ringlets had been cut away and stripped from the frontal he became exceedingly angry and indignant.

Brother Juniper saw how excited he was and said, "Don't be upset about those ringlets because I have given them to a poor little woman who was in great need. They were good for nothing here except to make a display of

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Brother Juniper saw how excited he was and said, "Don't be upset about those ringlets because I have given them to a poor little woman who was in great need. They were good for nothing here except to make a display of worldly vanity."

On hearing this, the sacristan became furious and immediately ran through the church and the whole city anxiously trying to find the woman. But not only did he not find her, he could find no one who had seen her. So he returned to the friar and angrily took the frontal to the Minister General John Parenti who was then in Assisi and said, "Father General, I demand justice from you against Brother Juniper who has destroyed this frontal for me - and it was the finest one in the sacristy. Now look how he has ruined it and stripped away all the silver ringlets! And he says he has given them to a poor woman."

Brother John the General answered, "Brother Juniper did not do this, rather it was your foolishness because you assigned him to guard the altar! Don't you know his ways? I tell you I am surprised he did not give away the rest. However, I am going to correct him severely for this fault."

And after verses were chanted, he summoned all the friars in the chapter, and calling Brother Juniper before him, in the presence of the whole community, he rebuked him very strongly about the ringlets. And as his anger increased, he raised his voice until he became rather hoarse.

Now Brother Juniper did not particularly mind those words as he rejoiced in being blamed and humiliated, but he began to worry more about the General's hoarseness and to think of some remedy for it. So after receiving the

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Now Brother Juniper did not particularly mind those words as he rejoiced in being blamed and humiliated, but he began to worry more about the General's hoarseness and to think of some remedy for it. So after receiving the scolding he went into the city and had a bowl of porridge prepared with butter.

He returned late that night. And lighting a candle he took the bowl of porridge to the General's cell and knocked. On opening the door and seeing him holding the lighted candle and the dish, the General asked quietly, "What do you want at this hour? What is it?"

Brother Juniper answered, "Father, when you were scolding me in chapter for my faults, I noticed that your voice became hoarse from overstrain, I believe. So I thought of a remedy and had this porridge made for you with butter. Please eat it. I am sure it will relieve your throat and chest."

The General said, "What an hour for you to bother people!"

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The General said, "What an hour for you to bother people!"

Brother Juniper replied, "Come - it was made for you. Please eat it. It will do you good."

But the General was angered by the lateness of the hour and his insisting and said, "Go away, you brute! Do you think I am going to eat at this hour?"

As Brother Juniper realised that neither begging nor persuading would help, he said to him: "Father, since you do not want to eat - and this porridge was made for you - at least do this for me: hold the candle and I will eat."

Then the General, who was a very pious and devout man, was won over by Brother Juniper's great compassion and simplicity and charity - for he had done it out of devotion - and he answered, "Well now, Brother, since you want to, let's both eat it together!" And because of Brother Juniper's insistent charity they both ate the bowl of porridge. And they were refreshed far more by their devotion than by the food.

To the glory of Christ. Amen.

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**Films from Sri Ramanasramam**  
(continued from *Jul-Aug* issue)

The opening scene of this film shows the entrance to Sri Ramanasramam, the gate to the Ashrama holding centre screen, and a large crowd of people is seen both entering and exiting the compound. A quick scene change brings us directly in front of the Nirvana Hall and again shows a large number of people present. It is apparent that some organisation has taken place, as the crowd is cordoned off into different sections, making it easier to accommodate all those who are present. It is also readily apparent that a momentous event is taking place.

The young lady leans with her head on her hand, tears in her eyes. There is a close-up view of Sadhu Arunachala (major Channadik) sitting with knee bent, speaking some 'slow, deliberate words, perhaps of condolence, to the person next to him. A devoted woman is seen gazing at Bhagavan with a folded paper in her hand, with the concerned expression that a daughter has for her father, as Bhagavan was that, and more.

The following scene is, we believe, in front of the garlanded body of Sri Bhagavan after his *Mahasamadhi*. The camera angle is from the posterior left, so it is difficult to actually see Bhagavan's body. What we do see is a steady stream of devotees and pilgrims giving their sincere respect to and having their final *darshan* of the body of the great Sage. The priests are present, officiating at this solemn moment, and thick clouds of incense below.

forth. We see people from all walks of life - *sadhus*, businessmen, mothers with their children and other village folk - all paying their respects to one who looked upon them all as equals, as manifestations of the One Eternal. A frontal view shows a well-organized queue flanked, and to the far right of the scene a policeman keeps watch. An elderly woman is seen sitting on the ground, quietly wiping a tear from her right eye with her cloth.

The concluding scene shows Bhagavan's garlanded body seated upright in a nalanquin, being brought out of the Nilvana Hall. There is an immense crowd of people present - some were *sacred fans* while others carry *lighted*

the final view shows a well-organised queue filing past, and to the far right of the screen a policeman keeps watch. An elderly woman is seen sitting on the ground, quietly wiping a tear from her right eye with her cloth.

The concluding scene shows Bhagavan's garlanded body seated upright in a palanquin, being brought out of the Nirvana Hall. There is an immense crowd of people present; some wave sacred fans while others carry lighted torches in front of the procession. Many people are throwing flower petals onto the palanquin. The palanquin itself is covered by a large umbrella which is being carried by one of the attendants. The footage abruptly ends at this point.

So concludes the recorded film footage of Sri Bhagavan. These priceless films have been retrieved, restored and catalogued by Sri Ramanasramam and Arunachala Ashrama for the benefit of future generations. They enable us to see a *Jnani* in his natural environs, to view the divine form of Ramana Maharshi, and inspire us further to the goal of Self-Realisation.

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**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*

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