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## Living with the Master - Part V

by *Chhaganlal Yogi*  
continued from the *May/June* issue

*This is the fifth and final chapter of Chhaganlal Yogi's remarkable reminiscences of Sri Ramana Maharshi. They were originally written and published in Gujarati. We express our appreciation to David Godman who skillfully edited the English translation.*

Jagadisha Sastri

Jagadisha Sastri was a distinguished Sanskrit scholar whose association with Sri Bhagavan went back to the days when the latter lived in Virupaksha Cave. He told me the following two stories - neither of which has been recorded before - when I met him years later in Bombay.

In the early years of this Century, Jagadisha Sastri went to see Sri Bhagavan in Virupaksha Cave to listen to him giving a spiritual talk. Everyone was so engrossed in listening that no one was aware of the passage of time. As the talk did not end till well after midnight, Jagadisha decided to sleep in front of the cave instead of returning to town. This was considered a brave act because in those days there were still wild animals on the hill.

Around 2 a.m. Sri Bhagavan began to feel concerned about his safety. He went out of the cave and put a pinch of snuff up the nose of Jagadisha Sastri, who was snoring in deep sleep. Jagadisha woke up startled and began to sneeze uncontrollably. Sri Bhagavan laughed heartily and Jagadisha said the mountain reverberated with the noise of his laugh.

Once he had managed to stop laughing, Sri Bhagavan affectionately told Jagadisha, "You were sleeping so soundly. Don't you know that this is not a house but a hill? It is the home of wild animals and here their kingdom prevails. Suppose some tiger were to come here? What would happen to you? Go and sleep inside the cave."

Jagadisha told me that he was so sleepy at the time that he stumbled inside the cave and immediately fell asleep again. On hearing this story it did not surprise me that Sri Bhagavan had shown such concern towards one of his devotees. However, though I knew that he had laughed and joked and enjoyed playing games with devotees' children, I was astonished to hear that his humour had erupted in such a mischievous and childlike way in the middle of the night.

Many years later, when Jagadisha Sastri and I were walking down a street together in Bombay, it occurred to me that I had never seen him wear any kind of footwear. The black tar roads of the city got very hot in the summer and I found it hard to believe that anyone could walk comfortably without wearing sandals or shoes.

I turned to him and asked, "Sastriji, your feet must have got burned a lot walking on these roads, isn't that so?"

"No, no," he answered, "I have already got *ravi raksha* (protection from the sun) from Bhagavan. I may walk in any amount of heat but nothing ever happens to me."

I naturally asked, "How did you get this *ravi raksha*?"

By way of an answer, Sastriji told me a long story. "One day, right in the middle of the afternoon, Bhagavan took his *kamandalu*, got up and told me, 'Jagadisha, come with me to walk about on the mountain.'

"But it's so hot," I protested. "How can we move about in such weather?" I argued like this because I wanted to escape from the trip. Bhagavan found my excuse unsatisfactory. "You can move about in just the same way that I move about," he said.

"But my feet will burn!" I exclaimed. I didn't have any footwear with me and I didn't relish the idea of walking about over the burning rocks.

"Will my feet not burn as well?" replied Bhagavan, obviously feeling that this was not a serious obstacle. Bhagavan never wore any kind of footwear. He could walk on the toughest terrain in any weather without feeling the least discomfort.

"But yours is a different case," I answered, alluding to the fact that Bhagavan never needed footwear.

"Why? Am I not a man with two feet, just like you?" asked Bhagavan. "Why are you unnecessarily scared? Come on! Get up!"

Having realised that it was useless to argue any more, I got up and started walking with Bhagavan. The exposed stones had become so hot because of the severe heat of the sun that walking on them made my feet burn. For some time I bore the suffering, but when it became unbearable I cried out, "Bhagavan, my feet are burning so much! I cannot walk one more step. Even standing here is difficult. On all sides it is raining fire!"

Bhagavan was not impressed. "Why are you so scared?" he asked.

"If I remain in this terrible heat for any more time," I replied, "my head will crack open because of the heat and I will definitely die!" I was not joking. I really was afraid of dying.

Bhagavan smiled and said in a very quiet and deep voice, "Jagadisha, give up your fear and listen. You must have the *bhavana* (mental conviction and attitude) that you are the sun. Start doing *japa* of the *mantra suryosmi* (I am the sun) with the conviction that it is really true. You will soon see the effect of it. You yourself will become *surya swarupa*, that is, you will have the characteristics of the sun. Can the sun feel the heat of the sun?"

I followed this instruction of Bhagavan and started doing *japa* of this *sun mantra* because there was no other way to be saved from the burning heat. In a short time I began to feel the effect of the *japa*. The severity of the heat lessened and eventually I began to experience, instead of the severe heat, a pleasing coolness. As the burning sensation diminished I found that I was able to walk quickly alongside Bhagavan. By the time we had both reached Skandashram I found that my feet were not at all burnt as I had continued the *mantra japa* right up till the end of the walk.

Later, I was astonished to discover that the effect of chanting this *mantra* was permanent. Though I no longer chant it, I have never again suffered from the heat of the sun. I can now walk in the summer on the tar roads of a city like Bombay with bare feet."

One day an old lady came into the hall at Sri Ramanasramam. After prostrating to Sri Bhagavan she placed a slip of paper in his hands. I guessed that it contained a prayer or doubt of some kind because it was the custom of many devotees to offer their prayers or place their doubts before Sri Bhagavan in this manner. However, in this particular case, it turned out to be quite a different matter.

This old woman lived in town in a dilapidated temple and she needed money to repair it. With this purpose in mind she had got someone to prepare a draft of an appeal for funds. In order to collect the required amount more easily, she had hit upon the idea of having the appeal signed by eminent persons of the town. She had come to the ashram because she wanted Sri Bhagavan's signature at the top of the appeal. This was the piece of paper which she had presented to him. Sri Bhagavan read it and then returned it to her without uttering a single word.

"My work will be done if you will only put your signature on this appeal," the old lady said, urging him to sign.

Sri Bhagavan replied by saying, "It is well known that I never sign anything." She would not accept his refusal. Repeatedly she pressed him to sign, but she could not make him change his decision.

Finally Sri Bhagavan told her, "Yes, yes, you want me to sign your appeal, but how can one sign who has no name? What name will one sign?"

The old woman was puzzled. What did Sri Bhagavan mean by saying that he had no name? Was not his name Sri Ramana Maharshi? Since everyone knew him by that name, why could he not write these three words on her paper? Because she could not understand the significance of Sri Bhagavan's reply, she persisted in pleading with him to sign. Sri Bhagavan remained unmoved and kept silent. After some time the old woman gave up her attempts and left the hall, without, of course, having obtained Sri Bhagavan's signature.

Sri Bhagavan's language was that of silence. The speech delivered through this medium was full of miraculous potency, as the following anecdote reveals.

When he was staying in Virupaksha Cave, a District Collector and a Deputy Collector came there for his *darshan*. After prostrating to Sri Bhagavan, the District Collector began to speak, narrating at length all the *sadhanas* he had done and all the spiritual literature he had read. At the end of his speech he confessed that in spite of all these activities peace was as far from him now as it had ever been.

As soon as he had finished, the Deputy Collector began to tell his own story, which was equally long. These two speeches took quite a long time to deliver, but Sri Bhagavan did not interrupt them even once. He continued to remain in silence even after the speeches had ended.

The senior Collector gave up waiting for a reply and delivered yet another long speech. Sri Bhagavan listened in silence and continued to remain in silence when the speech was over.

The officer, not surprisingly, was a little put out by Sri Bhagavan's unresponsiveness. He said in an aggrieved tone of voice, "We have been speaking to you for a long time, but you don't open your mouth at all. Please tell us something. Anything, however brief, will do."

Sri Bhagavan finally spoke to them saying, "All this time I have been speaking in my own language. What can I do if you won't listen to it?"

The Collector was an intelligent man, well versed in spiritual matters. He caught the meaning of Sri Bhagavan's cryptic reply. Suddenly overpowered with devotion, he fell down at the feet of Sri Bhagavan and chanted a Sanskrit verse from Sankaracharya's *Sri Dakshinamurti Stotra*:

"Look at the wonder under the banyan tree! While the disciples are old and grey-haired, the teacher is a blooming youth. And though the Master's speech is simple silence, the doubts of the disciples are all resolved!"

Both of the visitors then abandoned their speeches and questions, preferring instead to sit before Sri Bhagavan in silent meditation. They got the peace they had come looking for and departed fully satisfied.

The greatness of silence as a medium of instruction can be further illustrated by another dialogue on this subject which took place between Sri Bhagavan and a devotee. Though it took place on a different occasion, it can serve as a commentary on the encounter between Bhagavan and the two officials.

Q: What is the fruit obtained by *mouna* (silence)?

B: Anti *mouna* is self-surrender only. That means living without the ego sense.

Q: What is the meaning of *mouna*?

B: The state which is beyond speech and thought is called *mouna*. This is *dhyana* (meditation) without mental activity. *Dhyana* means controlling the mind; deep *dhyana* means permanent speech.

Silence is eternal speech; that is, the perpetual flow of language. By speaking, this flow is broken because the words create an obstacle to that silent language.

People may listen to discourses for hours, and may feel happy doing so, but still not improve. But silence, the eternal speech, enhances the welfare of all humanity. *Mouna* only means 'proficiency in speech'. Oral discourses do not have the 'proficiency of silence'. Silence is the eternal, unobstructed flow of speech. That is the supreme language.

— Concluded

## A Long Life with the Maharshi

by *Sri K.Natesan*

I was born into a very orthodox Brahmin family on November 26, 1913 in the village of Mondakurathur, near Polur, North Arcot District. That was also the birthplace of the Maharshi's renowned devotee, *Echammal*, who was related to me on my mother's side of the family. My father, Brahmasri Krishna Ganapati, was a great *Vedic* scholar who taught *Krishna Yajur Veda* for thirty years in the local *Vedapatasala*.

I had my first *darshan* of Bhagavan Maharshi at Skandashram in 1921 when I was eight years old. Sri Vasudeva Sastry, one of the earliest devotees of Bhagavan, took me to see him. Vasudeva Sastry was at that time teaching me Sanskrit in the *Patasala* of the Arunachaleshwara Temple.

Later in 1923, when Bhagavan came down to the present ashram, I used to visit the ashram often and sit in front of the Maharshi. At that time I was studying in the Municipal High School where Sri T.K.Sundaresa Iyer was a teacher. After completing high school in 1930, I waited two years before joining an engineering college in Madras. During those two intervening years I was at the ashram almost daily, along with T.K.S. I used to spend time there even at odd hours of the day or night.

In 1936, after earning a diploma in civil engineering in Madras, I worked for six months under Sri K.K.Nambiar. K.K.Nambiar, already a staunch devotee of Bhagavan, had at that time the good fortune of being posted as the District Board Engineer right in Tiruvannamalai itself. By Bhagavan's grace, I was asked constantly at the ashram between 1935 and 1945, though I was employed off and on in various places. I often quit jobs to come to Sri Ramanasramam and be near Sri Maharshi. My attachment to Bhagavan was such that I could not remain employed continuously until, by Bhagavan's grace, Sri K.K.Nambiar, who was then the Chief Engineer of the Madras Corporation in 1945, got me employed by that Corporation. That ended the rolling-stone phase of my life, as I retained this job until my retirement in January of 1969. Throughout all these years I would never miss an opportunity to come to Bhagavan's ashram.

After *Ganapati Muni* became the recipient of the Maharshi's grace, all his doubts were dispelled at one stroke by the vision of Central Reality. The Muni surrendered to the Maharshi on Monday, November 18, 1907. This event has been described in detail by various writers. What is not very well known is that on the afternoon of that November day in 1907 at the Virupaksha Cave, *Nayana* wrote five verses in Sanskrit lauding the Maharshi, proclaiming him as Ramana. He gave the paper containing the verses to the Malayalee attendant Palaniswami. It is our bad luck that these verses were lost due to the negligence of the attendant.

In the beginning, the Maharshi used to address *Kanyakantha Ganapati Muni* as Ganapati Sastrigram, which the Muni did not like because it was a respectful form used to address elders. The Maharshi was his chosen guru and he felt uncomfortable being addressed by the sage in this manner. Understanding the Muni's objection, the Maharshi compromised and thereafter called him '*Nayana*', the same name by which his disciples endearingly addressed him. In Telugu, the word '*Nayana*' means both child and father.

In 1908, from January to March, *Nayana* lived with the Maharshi at the *Pachai Amman Temple*<sup>[1]</sup>. One early morning Nayana and other disciples were all sitting in front of the Maharshi who was, as usual, withdrawn. The Muni saw a sparkling light come down from the sky and touch the forehead of the Maharshi six times. The Maharshi also was aware of what was happening. Immediately the Muni had the intuitive realization that the Maharshi was none other than an incarnation of Lord Skanda. The seer-poet, Nayana, gave expression to this revelation through his famous eight verses, *Ramana Asthakam*, beginning with "*Yanayatra*. . . ." This was later included in the *>Forty Verses in Praise of Ramana* that were compiled by Bhagavan himself after Nayana's passing in 1936.

When *Nayana* had known Bhagavan for some years he questioned him one evening as to whether he was correct in recognising him as Skanda and extolling him in the *Ramana Gita* as Lord Subramanya. Though the Maharshi heard the question he remained silent. Nayana then mentally prayed to Bhagavan to answer his question at least by the next day. Consequently, when Nayana went to him the following day, the Maharshi looked at him and said, "Ishwara Swami (a devotee of the Maharshi) wrote a verse in praise of this Vinayaka (Ganesha) image sitting in a niche in the Virupaksha Cave. At his request I also wrote a *venba* verse on that Pillayar (Ganesha)." Then Bhagavan explained the meaning of that *venba* to Nayana. In the verse, Bhagavan entreats Lord Ganesha to look after him, because he is a younger brother who has come after him. Nayana was much gratified to hear this as he felt it was a confirmation that the Maharshi was an *avatar* of Skanda.

On April 16, 1922, when the Maharshi was still living in Skandashram, *Nayana* composed the following verse in praise of Bhagavan:

"May the ascetic wearing only a white loin-cloth, who once used to ride on the celestial peacock and has now come down as a man on earth, reign over the world as its unique Master!"

This shows that *Nayana* had foreseen as early as 1922 that the Maharshi would shine forth as the world teacher of the age. Many of Nayana's declarations were prophetic.

In 1923, on January 3, when the first Jayanti of Bhagavan was celebrated in Ramanasramam, *Nayana* composed this verse:

"There is the light of *Uma* in your eyes for dispelling your devotees' dark ignorance. Your face gleams lotus-like with the grace and brilliance of Lakshmi. Your words contain the secret lore of Saraswati. Preceptor of the worlds! *Ramana* the great! How can a mortal sing your glory?"

Again, in this verse, *Nayana* hailed Bhagavan as vishvacharya, world teacher. Once Bhagavan was engaging himself in collecting the Sanskrit verses written by devotees in praise of him. I happened to be present there at the time and mentioned to Bhagavan that Ganapati Muni had composed the following verse:

*vande sri ramanarser-ocarayasya padabjyam,  
yo me'darsayad-islam bhantam dhivantam atitya.*

Then Bhagavan asked me where I got the verse and where and when it was written by *Nayana*.

In 1936, after *Nayana*'s death, Bhagavan collected all the verses Nayana wrote on him and entitled it *Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana*. This was published by the ashram in the same year. Bhagavan had no knowledge of the above verse. I explained to him that *Kapali Sastry* and S.Doraswamy Iyer requested Nayana to translate into Sanskrit verse Sri Aurobindo's English poem titled *Mother*. After hearing the gist of the poem, Nayana started the translation on May 18, 1928, under the heading (*Matryvuhacatuskam* ). However, it was never completed. In this translation Nayana wrote the above verse as an invocation to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan requested to see the manuscript with the verse. The next day the notebook containing the verse in *Nayana*'s own handwriting was shown to him. He copied it and said that it should be added as the invocation to the next edition of *Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana*. In all the subsequent editions the verse can be seen.

Between 1935 and 1945, though employed off and on in various places, I often quit jobs and left for holy places without informing anyone. Eventually I would end up back at Ramanasramam. Once on my return Bhagavan asked me which places I visited. I replied that I had been to Tiruttani, Tirupati, and Padaiveedu (Renukamba Kshetram). Then the Maharshi pointedly asked me what was in my mind at that time. Straight away I gave a spontaneous answer in the form of the following verse from *Ramana Gita*:

"Lord, not on Swamimalai, nor on Tiruttani Hill, nor on top of Venkatachal (Tirupati) do you now dwell. In reality you are in Arunachalai!"

The Maharshi smiled.

On the occasion of my wedding on July 5, 1942, *T.N.Venkatacharam*, now the President of Sri Ramanasramam, came straight to Vellore from Karaikudi to attend the ceremony. The train passed through and stopped at the Tiruvannamalai station, but T.N.V., along with his eight-year-old son, stayed on the train and came straight to my marriage. When T.N.V.'s father, Chinnaswami, heard about it he began to scold his son and criticised him for going to Vellore to attend the wedding. Bhagavan overheard this from the Old Hall and said, "Why is he shouting? Ambi (T.N.V.) has gone to attend his friend's marriage. There is nothing wrong in this."

After I got married I came to the ashram with my new wife and did *pranams* to Bhagavan in the Old Hall. My wife, Jnanambal, was already deeply devoted to Bhagavan and had had his *darshan* even as a girl of eight.

That day, after leaving the Old Hall, my wife and I went and visited *Majara Chadwick* in his cottage. I had known Chadwick since his arrival in the ashram in 1935. He congratulated us on our marriage and remarked about the appropriateness of the bride's name, saying, "Jnana you wanted and *Jnana* you have gained."

Major Chadwick was one of the very few souls who moved closely with Bhagavan. One day he called me and requested me to show Sri Bhagavan a piece of paper in which he had given a definition for Self-realization. Sri Bhagavan read it and appreciated it very much. Chadwick wrote:

"Self-realization: It is the death while yet alive of that which lives after death."

In the earlier days some people used to sleep in the Old Hall. Once I slept there near the southern door at the west side of the hall. I did not get up even after 5 a.m. Bhagavan came near me and touched me with his right toe saying, "Get up. Day has already broken." I immediately got up and had the *darshan* of Bhagavan. This is called *Visva-rupadarshanam*, the first *darshan* of the chosen deity in the morning.

There was *Veda Parayanam* every evening at the hall in the presence of Bhagavan. He would be standing at that time. Following the *Veda Parayanam*, from 7 to 7:30 p.m., recitations of the Maharshi's works in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, and Malayalam would take place. Devotees like *Ramaswami Pillai*, *Kunjuswami*, T.K.Sudaresa Iyer and some others used to take part in it. The Masters who were also participating. During Tamil *Parayanam* I noticed Bhagavan appeared quite unconcerned with things around him, though he remained fully attentive to the recitation. He wouldn't hesitate to correct our pronunciation of the verses, as he was particular to obey all the rules of prosody. Once I recited incorrectly the last verse in *Arunachala Pancaratnam* and Bhagavan pointed it out to me, demonstrating how it should be pronounced. He was satisfied only when I repeated it to him correctly.

Once when I was in Madras, T.P.Ramachandra Iyer's father was writing a letter to the ashram. In it he was including a certain Sanskrit verse. Because he was not familiar with the Sanskrit alphabet he asked me to write it for him. I did so, and when the letter reached the ashram Bhagavan saw the verse he looked up and told the devotees in the hall, "Oh, now *K.Natesan* has gone to Madras."

Bhagavan was so keen and alert that he could recognise even my Sanskrit handwriting. I felt blessed to be remembered by him, even though I was away from the ashram.

Another time I was sitting before Bhagavan and Vaidyanathan Stapati was showing Bhagavan the sculpture he was making of him. The Stapati asked Bhagavan for his opinion as to whether it was a good likeness of him. Bhagavan said, "I can't say. Only Natesan knows."

Vaidyanathan Stapati looked at me and Bhagavan said, "Not that Natesan, the barber Natesan." He considered the barber to be the best authority on artistic representations of his body.

After retirement from service I have come back to the ashram to serve the devotees. The ashram President, *Sri T.N.Venkatacharam*, being a close friend of mine since 1934, found me very useful to the new devotees since I could function as both a receptionist and an instructor. The president had entrusted me with the accounts of the *Mountain Path* magazine, etc. I served in the office until 1987. I ceased to work in the office due to glaucoma and cataract. Again, by the grace of Sri Bhagavan, I was completely cured of my eye trouble and normal sight has been restored. Since I am getting aged, the ashram president was kind enough to accommodate me as an old resident devotee in the ashram.


I realize that I do not have the power to relate in writing what the Maharshi is, or what he has done by living in our midst, or what he will be to future generations. Let all those who aspire for liberation and eternal happiness turn to him for guidance and grace, and then, I am sure, his unique mission to mankind will be known in the hearts of the seekers.

To try to introduce Sri Ramana Maharshi to the world at large is just like trying to introduce the sun to the solar system. Sri Maharshi is Self-effulgent like the sun. The Masters who appeared on earth before the advent of Sri Maharshi have shown several paths to get a vision of God or gods. But the Maharshi, by his unique, direct method of the *Self-Inquiry* 'Who am I?', has shown that realization of the Self alone is God-realization. And it is he that shines forth as the Self. Today the whole world has come to realize the greatness of the Maharshi on account of his direct path to realize the Self.

At one time the world was attracted like a magnet by the Atmic force of Gautama Buddha, and at another time the world was drawn by the pure, selfless life of Jesus Christ. At present the life and teachings of the Maharshi have spread widely to all the corners of the world as the Supreme Light of *Advaita Brahman*. It is my belief that the Maharshi has now become the Universal Master.

## An Invitation

We take pleasure in cordially inviting you, your family and friends to join us in celebrating



the 98th anniversary of  
Sri Ramana Maharshi's  
Advent at Arunachala  
Sunday 04 September 1994  
at  
11:00 a.m.

*The program will begin with puja,  
followed by devotional singing,  
meditation, arati and the serving of  
prasad (meals).*

**In New York City:**  
72-63 Yellowstone Blvd.  
Forest Hills  
Queens, NY 11375  
tel: 718 575-3215

**Arunachala Ashrama**  
Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi  
Center

**In Nova Scotia:**  
1451 Clarence Road  
R.R.1, Bridgetown  
Nova Scotia B0S 1C0  
tel. 902 665-2090

## 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.

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