

1. The Recollections of N. Balarama Reddy, part 4
2. A Retreat with Sri V. Ganesan
3. Photo Catalog
4. The All-Important Science
5. The Restored Images of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi
6. 99th Advent Invitation
7. Arunachala Ashrama, New York & Nova Scotia

## The Recollections of N. Balarama Reddy Part IV

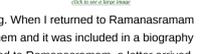
(continued from the Jul/Aug issue)

\*\*\*

About a year earlier I had left Tiruvannamalai for a month and visited Swami Ramdas at his Ananda Ashram in Kanhangad, Kerala. The Swami's brother-in-law was an officer in the revenue department and the land allocated by the government for Swami Ramdas to set up his ashram was acquired through his intervention. In fact, his brother-in-law's property bordered the ashram.

After Ramdas left his home and became a mendicant *sadhu*, his wife and daughter came to live here with his wife's brother (the same brother-in-law). Even at the time of my first visit to Ramdas in 1937, his wife had already passed away, but other relatives, including his daughter, would visit the ashram daily.

Amongst all these family members and devotees the Swami would cheerfully move about, never putting on the airs of a *sannyasi* or even that of a householder. He treated everyone as if they were all part of the same family, in a very natural, affectionate and, above all, detached manner. It was a delight to watch him. In all guilelessness and humility he would sit down with anyone and begin narrating one story after another, all from his personal life and experience. On my first visit in 1937 there was only Mother Krishnabai and two or three *sadhus* living in the ashram. Ramdas would be engrossed in telling me some story or reading from his manuscripts when Mother Krishnabai would appear with cooked food and feed us. In the course of one of these stories Ramdas told me how he came to Arunachala and saw Bhagavan. When he was a mendicant and was travelling to all the holy places, he heard of Arunachala. He had also heard of Ramana Maharshi, but to see him was not the main purpose of his visit to Tiruvannamalai.



N. Balarama Reddy  
© Anil K. Sharma

Soon after reaching there he came to Ramanasramam and stood before the Maharshi, who was then sitting on a raised platform. Ramdas said that he felt Bhagavan's grace pouring out through his eyes and filling him. After having Bhagavan's *darshan* he went up on the hill and resided in a cave and performed continuous round-the-clock *japa*. He said that by doing this constant *japa* he lost his mind and after two weeks the universal vision of God appeared to him. In other words, he saw everything as God. Since that day, he said, he has been living in Ram. Ramdas had received the *Ram Mantra* from his father and he was one of those few great souls who could execute his *sadhana* to completion without the help of a physical *guru*.

During my first visit, Ramdas was present for only two of the four weeks I stayed in his ashram. Devotees from Maharashtra were eager to see him and so he had travelled there. After he left, Mother Krishnabai was kind enough to tell me some stories from her life, describing how she came to Ramdas and other personal matters. It was all very interesting and elevating. When I returned to Ramanasramam I received a letter from Ananda Ashram wherein they requested me to write in English all I had heard from Mother Krishnabai relating to her personal life and experiences. I did this for them and it was included in a biography they published of her. Also, when I was in Ananda Ashram in 1937, I had written to my family in Andhra to send a certain quantity of rice to this ashram for their use. Later, when I returned to Ramanasramam, a letter arrived from Swami Ramdas in which he wrote they had received the rice and that it was much superior to the scented rice they were presently using. I showed the letter to the bhagavans.

Not long after that, when I was alone with Bhagavan, he asked me about Swami Ramdas. He wanted to know his daily schedule and, in particular, what he did in the mornings. It was unusual for Bhagavan to inquire about others in this manner. I then told him that someone had suggested to Ramdas that he should daily practice a certain *pranayama* exercise, as it would be good for his health. I then returned to *Cohen's* cottage to eat. I didn't realize that while that devotee just arriving after a long absence were usually requested to take their first meal with Bhagavan, even though, as in my case, they may be living outside the ashram. When Bhagavan came to Palakothu on his walk after lunch, his attendant stopped and told me that Bhagavan, not seeing me in the dining hall, had inquired as to my whereabouts. The attendant stayed and talked to us as Bhagavan continued on alone. I was very touched by the Maharshi's solicitude. I met him as he was returning from his walk and told him about my North India trip. I began narrating my visit to *Krishnaprem* and told Bhagavan how keen he was to hear all about him and Ramanasramam. It was then the month of May, the hottest time of the year. I explained to Bhagavan how delightfully pleasant and cool the climate of Almora was, especially compared to the present weather in Tiruvannamalai. Bhagavan said, "The real coolness is within. If we have that coolness it will be cool wherever we go. Similarly, if you want to protect your feet from the rough ground, you don't try to cover the earth with a piece of leather. You simply put leather shoes on your own feet and the job is done."

One night, not too long after moving in with *S.S. Cohen* at Palakothu, some time after 9 p.m., I had an urge to go on *pradakshina* around Arunachala. I was then staying on the verandah of his cottage near the outside door, which enabled me to come and go without disturbing him. He probably didn't know I went out that night.

I was slowly walking around the hill when I came near the Kanji Road. This is just halfway around the hill and near what is now called "Sri Bhagavan's Bridge," named because Bhagavan would often stop there and rest on it. I was looking at the holy mountain, surcharged with peace and silence, when a strong feeling arose from within to take a vow of *mouna* (silence). On the spot I resolved to stop speaking to anyone, except those occasional exchanges I may have with Bhagavan. In the morning, when *Cohen* met me he began talking to me in his usual way, he soon discovered I was not responding. I wrote on a piece of paper about my decision to observe *mouna*, which took him by surprise. It was not long before everyone in the ashram knew.

Swami Viswanathan was at that time translating Swami Ramdas' book, *In the Vision of God*, into Tamil. He was corresponding regularly with Ananda Ashram, and in the course of this correspondence he had written about my observing *mouna*. Soon after this, he received a letter from Ramdas wherein the Swami wrote: "Balarama Reddy is observing *mouna*? That is very good. He is a pure soul."

A day or so after this letter arrived I was entering the ashram one afternoon at about 5 p.m. by way of the stairs on the north side. One has to ascend a few steps and then descend a similar number of steps which takes you down to the ashram level. These steps take you over the bund of a small canal bank where water would flow during the rainy season. When I had reached the top of the stairs I met Bhagavan and his attendant proceeding in the opposite direction. I stood aside to let them pass. Bhagavan looked at me and said, "Viswanathan received a letter from Swami Ramdas and Ramdas wrote: 'Balarama Reddy is observing *mouna* ? That is very good. He is a pure soul.'" Bhagavan repeated this quotation to me in English.

Bhagavan's mentioning this, provided me with the assurance that my decision to observe *mouna* was correct. It was sometimes difficult to tell if Bhagavan approved of a certain act or discipline, as he interfered very little in our outward lives. But if we kept alert, he would somehow let us know in one way or another - often in a subtle manner - that what we were doing was correct or incorrect.

Once Major Chadwick decided that he too would observe *mouna*, but Bhagavan made it clear to him that it wasn't necessary or advantageous in his case.

I continued observing silence from June 1938 to September 1939 when something Bhagavan said induced me to end it. In September of 1939, I was sitting near the end of Bhagavan's couch, where his feet rested. There wasn't a fence around the couch in those days and we could easily sit close to him. It was about 7 p.m. when I opened my eyes from meditation and saw sitting before me T. L. Vaswani and his nephew, J. P. Vaswani. T. L. Vaswani recognised me and I joined my palms and saluted him in greeting. As I was still observing *mouna*, I didn't say anything to him. The dinner bell rang, everyone got up and left and I returned to my residence. After breakfast the next morning, I told Bhagavan the identity of our guests and inquired about where they had gone. T. L. Vaswani was renowned all over India but, like many famous people back then, very few could recognise him by sight. I was surprised to hear from Bhagavan that he and his nephew had already departed. I was disappointed that I had no chance to communicate with them or inform anyone who they were before they left. When I had expressed all this to Bhagavan he told me that I could have said something to him on the previous evening. Bhagavan's mentioning that I could have said something, gave me an indication that my silence was now not necessary in his view and I should end it, which I did. I later wrote to T. L. Vaswani and expressed my disappointment at his early departure from the ashram, and explained how I had been then observing *mouna*. I also related to him my conversation with Bhagavan after his departure and how it resulted in my abandoning a vow of silence. He wrote back praising Bhagavan, expressing how blessed I was to be sitting at the feet of a sage like the Maharshi.

In this same year, 1939, I occupied another hut near *Cohen's* in Palakothu. This hut consisted of two small rooms, about six feet by eight feet each. I stayed in one of these and Swami Prajnananda, a westerner, was using the other. One night before I returned from the ashram, someone broke the lock on the door and made off with my suitcase and some other things. The next day I searched in the nearby woods and found the suitcase, which contained mostly books. The books were scattered around near the suitcase. I collected them and returned to my room. A short time later there was another robbery. Someone pounded a hole in the mud wall near the window frame. At this exact place I kept some money in a jar. Somebody must have seen me taking money from there and got the idea of stealing it. The next day when Bhagavan came to Palakothu on his walk I told him about the theft. He looked over the scene and explained to others how some of these local people keep an eye open for such opportunities, and how they must have seen me take money from that jar and decided to pound a hole in the wall to get at it. He then told me that I should not keep anything in this place that would be desired by others. I therefore shifted my belongings to town and gradually moved back there myself.

My Father's Death  
Not long after I ceased my *mouna* I received a letter from my mother asking me to come home for a visit, since she had not seen me for a long time and was missing me. I returned home and just four days after my return, on November 10, 1939, my father unexpectedly collapsed with a heart attack and died. It was about 9 p.m. on the night of *Deepavali* when someone came running to my garden cottage and told me to come immediately to the main house. By the time I arrived at the house it was all over: my father had expired. It seems he took his evening meal as usual and was relaxing when he experienced a sharp pain in his chest. As he lay there suffering he told my brother and mother that he felt his *prana* (life force) leaving his body. He first described to them how it was leaving his lower extremities and was slowly working its way upwards. When it had reached his chest he said he would now die and gave instructions as to where his body should be buried. All this happened within half an hour.

I wrote to the ashram and informed them of my father's demise. Viswanathan later told me that Bhagavan read the letter and commented to those around him "that it was all over in half an hour." Two years earlier my father had come to Sri Ramanasramam and had Bhagavan's *darshan*. The fact that I was able to return home just a few days before my father's end - and many other such incidents in my life - instilled in me faith in the guiding presence of the Maharshi. I also felt assured that surrendering to him as my *guru* and master was the best decision I had ever made.

Soon after my father's demise I left my village and returned to the ashram to attend Bhagavan's sixtieth birthday celebration, which fell on December 27, 1939. In our Indian tradition the sixtieth birthday is considered an important event in one's life. It is called *Shashthi Purni*, and many devotees attended the occasion.

(continued in the Nov/Dec issue)

## A Retreat with Sri V. Ganesan

You are cordially invited to retreat with Sri V. Ganesan at Arunachala Ashrama in Nova Scotia from October 5 to October 13, 1995. Sri V. Ganesan, a relative of Sri Ramana Maharshi, moved closely with the Sage in his youth and served in the administration of Sri Ramanasramam for thirty-five years before retiring. He affectionately served many of the old, intimate disciples of the Master and is a wellspring of anecdotes and teachings that continue to inspire and guide seekers.

For more information please write or call:  
The Manager  
Arunachala Ashrama  
R.R.1, Bridgetown,  
Nova Scotia, Canada B0S 1C0  
Tel: (902) 665-2090

photo insert

## The All-Important Science

Sri Venkateswara Sarma, fondly known as Sastrigal Mama in Sri Ramanasramam - during Sri Bhagavan's lifetime he was called Adi Annamalai Sastrigal - was an exceptional and astounding astrologer. From childhood he exhibited a rare genius in this field. While still very young, his extraordinary intelligence enabled him to master the most abstruse and difficult branch of astrology. All, including his guru, declared him as the wisest student.

Prasna is an astrological science based on a perfect fruition between mathematics and intuition. With just some meagre information from the questioner, which includes only the first word of the question, a Prasna astrologer can, within seconds, draw up mentally a horoscope. This requires great mathematical precision and perfection. Having drawn the horoscope within his mind, and in a flash also having studied it, the astrologer will have to wait, prayerfully, then, from the depths of his inner intuition words gush forth, forming the astrological predictions for the questioner. As this Prasna process is not merely based on mathematical horoscopes, it culminates in intuitional revelation, and the predictions are said to be amazingly accurate and correct to the minutest detail. Sri Sastrigal Mama was highly proficient in this system of astrology. He once described it to me by citing this example: One day a merchant came to his house while he was engaged offering worship in his *puja* room. His wife informed him that one Nagappa Chettiar was waiting on the verandah and that he seemed worried about some urgent matter. Not willing to interrupt his worship, and by merely listening to the name and the few details given by his wife, Sri Sastrigal Mama, within a minute, began giving the following prediction:

"Tell Nagappa Chettiar that he has come to inquire about his lost, costly diamond ring. He suspects his servant. Assure him that no one has stolen it. In his garden, near the well, there are two rows of plantation trees. On one side there are only two trees; on the other there is a cluster of trees. Let him search under the two trees and the diamond ring will be found there. While he was cleaning his clothes on the washing stone the ring slipped off his finger and fell to the ground." Nagappa Chettiar returned home and found the ring exactly where Sri Sastrigal Mama had said, and because of this and similar astounding predictions Sri Sastrigal Mama became quite famous. He also became convinced that the Prasna branch of astrology was the most perfect science. At the height of his career he heard about Sri Ramana Maharshi. When he first saw Sri Bhagavan's picture he was immediately captivated and travelled to Arunachala to see the Sage. He climbed up to Skandashram, where Bhagavan then resided. On the very first look that the Maharshi gave him, Sri Sastrigal Mama became his slave. He had a strong desire to stay with the Maharshi permanently, renouncing everything he held dear. Yet, there was still his lifelong attraction to the science of astrology. He felt distracted by it and did not know how to proceed. One day, gathering courage, he approached Sri Maharshi in all humility and said, "Bhagavan, is not astrology the best and most accurate of all sciences?"

In silence Bhagavan looked at him deeply for some time. Then, slowly but firmly, he replied: "The science of the Self is superior to all other sciences."

It was the peak period in Sri Sastrigal Mama's life. For every prediction he was richly rewarded and was consequently acquiring immense wealth. Nevertheless, the words from the Master convinced him immediately to renounce his lucrative profession and pursue the science of the Self. His wife too fully supported him in this decision. The remainder of their life they lived in utter poverty at the holy feet of the *Sat-Guru*, under the protective shade of the Sacred Mountain, Arunachala. What is this all important science of the Self?

To know oneself as one really is, denuded of all that is artificial and impermanent, is as exact a science as physics, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry and all the rest. It solves all man's problems and allows him to abide in his true nature, which is peace, stillness and happiness.

— by V. Ganesan

## The Restored Images of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

From 1900 to 1950 hundreds of photos where taken of Sri Ramana Maharshi. It has recently become apparent that the damage to the original negatives and early prints is considerable and that these images must now be restored and preserved for future generations of seekers who will undoubtedly find solace, guidance and grace from the life and teachings of this world-renowned Sage of the 20th Century.

In response to this acute need, an *English devotee* has fully dedicated himself to the restoration and storage of the archival photographs of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

For the last two years, Sri Ramanasramam in India has been supplying him with archival photo images of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He uses the latest state-of-the-art computer software and hardware to restore the images to their original appearance. He has dedicated thousands of hours of labour and tens of thousands of dollars in purchasing the best technology available for computer image restoration and storage. All of his restored images are copied onto high-quality compact disks. The data on these CDs are estimated to remain intact, undamaged, for up to 200 years. The printed images from the collection of restored photos are the highest quality representations of Sri Ramana Maharshi now available. After careful research and consultations with the authorities at Sri Ramanasramam, he has meticulously coloured a few of his restored photos, using the best computer graphic software available. These images, printed at 2.54" x 11" per inch by 150 lines per inch, produce fresh, lifelike photographs of the Maharshi.

We are now releasing a special issue of five selected 8.5" x 11" restored images (3 colour, 2 black and white) for devotees and admirers of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Please see the enclosed photo and information sheet for more details.

The proceeds from the sale of these high-quality printed pictures will go directly to fund the image restoration and archival storage project. Whoever orders any of these photos will have the added satisfaction of knowing that their purchase will ensure the continuation of this noble undertaking. Any purchase is your personal contribution to this valuable work.

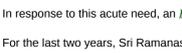
We are offering the pictures at \$8.00 (U.S.) each \*. But we highly encourage devotees and friends to purchase the complete set of five for only \$35.00. Those of you who order the complete set of five, one additional 5" X 7" coloured bust photo of the Maharshi will be included with your purchase at no extra cost.

Send orders to: *Arunachala Ashrama*

\*Price includes postage and handling. Overseas orders add \$5.00 for Air Mail delivery.

## An Invitation

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



the 99th anniversary of  
Sri Ramana Maharshi's  
Advent at Arunachala

Sunday 03 September 1995  
at  
11:00 a.m.

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

*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

## Arunachala Ashrama Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center

Arunachala Ashrama is a non-profit religious organization founded in New York City in 1965 by Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawata. In 1972, a retreat and residential ashrama was established in Nova Scotia, Canada, and in 1975 a temple, Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram, was consecrated at the Nova Scotia ashrama.

At the New York Ashrama, meditation is conducted every evening from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. Over eighty different books relating to the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi are available at the bookstore. Also, there are black and white photographs of the Maharshi and a documentary video on his life and teachings. A mail-order catalogue, providing a description of each publication, is available upon request.

IN NOVA SCOTIA, retreat facilities are offered for individuals and families. Those interested in short or long-term residence should write to the manager.

The daily services in the Nova Scotia temple are as follows:

**Morning**  
4:30 - 5:15 : Morning Veda Parayana  
5:30 - 6:00 : Reading  
6:00 - 6:30 : Sri Lalita, Sahasranam Stotram  
6:30 - 7:15 : Silence, followed by a short reading

**Evening**  
5:15 - 6:00 : Evening Veda Parayana

**Night**  
7:30 - 9:00 : Recitations, Chanting and Silence, followed by a short reading

**Sri Chakra Puja**

Under the direction of the President of Ramanasramam, a Sri Chakra was made and consecrated in the Matrubhuteshwara Temple in India.

It was then sent to the Nova Scotia temple in 1976 for installation.

Sri Chakra Puja is performed every Friday and Full Moon from 5:15 to 8:00 p.m.

For-more information please write or call:

**Arunachala Ashrama**  
72-63 Yellowstone Boulevard  
Forest Hills, Queens, New York 11375  
Tel: (718) 575-3215  
E-mail: [eric@phys.columbia.edu](mailto:eric@phys.columbia.edu)

**Arunachala Ashrama**  
Rural Route 1, Bridgetown  
Nova Scotia, Canada B0S 1C0  
Tel: (902) 665-2090  
E-mail: [ashram@fox.nstn.ns.ca](mailto:ashram@fox.nstn.ns.ca)

## 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 e-mail. 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.

Jul / Aug 1995

Choose Web-page Issue  
top of page

Nov / Dec 1995