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## Sri Ramana Bestows His Grace

part 2, continued from the Nov/Dec 1994 issue

In 1937, T.S.Anantha Murthy visited Sri Ramanasramam for ten days. He gave a detailed account of this visit in his book *The Life and Teachings of Sree Ramana Maharshi*. With this issue we conclude his story related in chapter sixteen, titled "*Sree Ramana Bestows His Grace on the Present Biographer in 1937.*"

AT ABOUT NOON, devotees began to disperse one after another. Only visitors like me and my wife remained in the hall. At about 12 o'clock the dinner bell was heard. Sri Ramana got up from his seat, picked up his stick and walked into the dining room. My wife and I and some other guests followed him and sat in front of plantain leaves spread on the floor by the attendants.

There were more guests than on the previous night. Some were women. Among men, some were Christians. One Mussalman guest was also sitting along with us. Some were foreigners. All castes of Hindus were represented in that dining room. Sri Ramana's habits were cosmopolitan. Cooks and servers were, however, all brahmins. Among cooks, there was a woman cook also. All were old devotees of the sage and they had volunteered to serve in the ashram by way of spiritual *sadhana*. Sri Ramana was seated on the raised platform and a leaf was spread in front of him.

During morning hours, there was no restriction of women's movements in the ashram. When all the guests were seated, the servers began to serve the midday meal. *Echammal*, a woman devotee of the sage, had brought cooked rice from her house in a vessel. She served a handful of it on Sri Ramana's leaf. She then served small quantities of it to the other guests of the day. She had been permitted to perform this kind of service, and I learnt that she had been doing so for many years. Her ancient story was ascertained by questioning some of the attendants of the ashram. She was old in years. She was dignified and quiet and did not speak with anyone. After rendering this kind of service, she went back to the town to take her own meal.

Though there was complete informality in the dining room, every guest ate food respectfully, looking at Sri Ramana at frequent intervals. Some of the guests were orthodox brahmins. They did not like to mingle with the non-brahmin guests. So they were made to sit in an adjacent room and the same articles of food were served to them by the same servers. The midday meal too was simple. It consisted of rice, pickles, vegetable curry, chutney, sambar, and buttermilk. The meal was finished in fifteen minutes. Sri Ramana stood up after he had finished the meal and walked out into the courtyard and washed his hands and feet and then went into the hall and reclined on the sofa for rest. His attendants closed the doors and asked visitors not to cause any disturbance.

My wife and I then went to the guests' room and rested there till about 4 p.m. Then we walked into the hall, which had been opened for visitors a little earlier. We humbly prostrated before the sage, who was seated on the sofa. He was looking around and he was in *jagrat* (waking) state. Devotees began to arrive and the hall was filled up within a short time. Then three or four brahmin pundits arrived. They first prostrated to Sri Ramana and sat down on the floor and began to recite or chant sacred verses just as they had done on the previous evening. As soon as they started to chant, Sri Ramana changed his posture and sat motionless. His lustrous eyes were open and he appeared as though he was staring at infinity. To borrow *Paul Brunton's* metaphor, Sri Ramana's bright eyes looked like two stars. Every one in the hall heard this *Veda Parayana* in strict silence. The chanting ended, as on the previous evening, with the recital of the following *shanti mantra* namely, *Aum sam no mitrah sam varunah . . . Aum shanthi, shanthi, shanthi*.

Then, the pundits, who had chanted the *mantrams*, stood up and prostrated to Sri Ramana and walked out of the hall. It was his usual hour for the evening stroll on the slopes of the hill. He picked up his stick and walked away in the northern direction, attended by the same devotee, whom I had seen on the previous evening. All the ladies came out of the hall and most of them went away to their houses. My wife and other women visitors like her were sent away, as on 31-3-1937, in the ashram bullock cart into the town for spending the night in the town lodge referred to earlier. At about 7 p.m., a frugal evening meal was served in the dining room. After Sri Ramana sat down in front of his leaf, which was spread on the brick platform, I sat down along with ten or twelve guests and ate the same kind of meal as on the previous night. Strict silence was observed by all the guests and by the servers too during the meal. Sri Ramana looked at us now and then, but he did not talk with anyone. Talking with him in the dining room was not allowed. After the supper was finished, Sri Ramana walked back to his seat in the hall and sat down at ease.

A few minutes afterwards, some devotees and I entered the hall and sat for practising meditation. One big petromax light was brightly illuminating the hall as on the previous night. After some time had been spent in silent meditation, I felt the need to put a question to the sage. I stood up and noticed that Sri Ramana was sitting with his eyes closed. His benevolence gave me the necessary courage to go near him. When I went near the sofa with my hands folded in reverence, he looked up. I assumed that he had accorded permission to me for putting a question. I then said, "Sir, may I know what is meant by saying that *Atman* is light? May I know if *Atman* looks like the petromax light which is burning in this hall?" Sri Ramana was pleased to give me the following reply in English. He said, "*Atman* is not a light like the petromax light. It is called light because everything else becomes known through it."

These simple words in English, employed by the gracious sage, cleared the doubt which had arisen in my mind. Sri Ramana became silent after instructing me in this manner. I then walked out of the hall and retired to the guests' room for the night.

At about 9.00 a.m. on the next morning, I was sitting in the hall of the ashram a few yards in front of Sri Ramana, who was seated in *samadhi* state on the sofa. Many men and women devotees were also sitting on the floor with their eyes closed. Perfect silence prevailed. We were all watching the sage, who was effortlessly sitting absorbed in the Self. To watch him was itself a great inspiration. An old brahmin pundit, who was till then sitting with his eyes shut, stood up and walked one or two steps forward and stood near Sri Ramana's sofa. This pundit was clad in silk upper *anga-vastram* and a *dhoti* beneath his waist. He wore two diamond rings on two of his fingers of the left hand. He had diamond-set earrings also. His tall forehead was marked by *vibhuti* stripes. There was also a big *kumkum* mark between his two eyebrows. He was a well built old man. He loudly addressed Sri Ramana in Telugu and spoke with a stentorian voice. He said, "Swamiji, many men and women are now sitting before you in order to get some instruction. You do not speak even one word. They too do not put any questions to you. They are all silently sitting to learn something. What are you teaching them? What are they learning from you? Please explain this secret to me."

Sri Ramana did not stir. He did not open his eyes or make any gesture to indicate that he had heard the loud words uttered by the old pundit. All of us were eager to listen to any answer that the great sage might give. The questioner stood for five minutes hoping that the sage would give a reply. However, the sage continued to sit with his eyes closed as before. The old pundit started to speak again and said in Telugu as follows: "My two questions have not been answered by you, Swamiji. I too cannot discover the answers. Please explain the matter by word of mouth." After having thus spoken, he continued to stand. Sri Ramana then opened his bright eyes and looked at the old pundit and replied in Telugu as follows: "What are you asking me? Is there any one here to teach others?" Unable to give an answer to the questions put by the sage himself, the Telugu pundit said again as follows: "If it is so, why are all so many men and women sitting patiently in front of you? What profit do they derive by sitting in this hall?"

Sri Ramana, with a slight smile on his serene face, gave the following instructive reply. He said in Telugu, "The question must be put *there*. Why are you putting that question *here*?" When he used the adverb *there*, the sage stretched his hand towards the assembled devotees. When he used the other adverb *here*, he turned his hand towards himself. Such were his suggestive gestures and answers. From the words and gestures of Sri Ramana, I realized a profound secret. Other devotees assembled in the hall must have also realized the same thing. That was this: Sri Ramana had no notion or idea that he was a teacher or a *Guru*. Likewise, he had no notion or idea that the men and women sitting in the hall were ignorant and that they needed enlightenment. From the great sage's point of view, every one in the hall was *Brahman* or *Atman*. His *drishti* was that of a knower of *Brahman*.

Knowers of *Brahman* have *Brahman drishti*.

On another day, I approached Sri Ramana and begged him to explain the following verse of the *Kathopanishad*, namely:

yame vaisha vrunute tena labhyay.

tasyaisha atma vivrunute tanum svam.

"It can be known through the Self alone that the aspirant prays to; this Self of that seeker reveals its true nature."

In particular, I asked him to explain the significance of the verbs *vivrunute* and *vrunute* used in this verse. These verbs have been commented upon at great length by the ancient commentators. Sri Ramana was pleased to explain the matter in the following manner. He said, "This verse means that God will disclose his form to the devotee who surrenders himself completely. God is not partial to anyone. God confers His grace on all who surrender themselves to Him. God is the *Atman* in everyone." Sri Ramana's succinct exposition of this complex verse solved my doubts, which I had entertained till then. Scholars are aware that this verse is the second half of the twenty-third verse of the second *valli* of the first chapter of *Kathopanishad*.

I stayed for ten days at Ramanasramam, even though I had gone there on the idea of staying only for three days. My wife could not stay for so long a period because our children had to be looked after in Bangalore. They were all young boys in 1937. So, she returned to Bangalore after three days. The *Sarvadhikari* generously permitted me to be the guest of the ashram during that period. One morning I was sitting in the hall and meditating in the presence of the sage, just like other devotees. One verse of *Kenopanishad* had long been baffling my understanding. That verse runs thus:

Pratibodha viditam matam anrutatvam hi vindate,

atmana vindate veeryam vidyaya vindate amrtam.

"It is really known when it is known in and through every modification of the mind, for by such knowledge one attains immortality. By *Atman* one attains real strength, and by Knowledge, Immortality." - - - - Kenopanishad (2-4)

I stood up and walked towards the sofa and drew the attention of the sage, who was sitting in the normal waking condition at that time. When he was pleased to look at me, I told him in English that I had difficulty in comprehending this verse of *Kenopanishad* and that I needed his help understanding it. Since I knew the verse by heart, I recited it. Sri Ramana heard the verse with attention when I recited it slowly. Then he desired to read the verse in the book itself. I did not have that book with me at that time. He asked his attendant to go to the library of the ashram and get a copy of the book. The attendant, who knew Sanskrit, went to the library and brought a copy of the said *Upanishad*. Sri Ramana took it in his own hands and then gave it to me and directed me to show the page on which it was found printed. I looked into the book and found the verse and showed it to him. The great sage read the verse silently and looked at me. I said that I had two difficulties in relation to that verse. The first question was if every *vritti* of the mind was *Brahman*, as indicated in the first half of the verse. The second question was if physical strength was attainable by a person who realizes the *Atman*, as indicated in the second half of the verse. I expressed these two doubts to him in simple English.

Sri Ramana then replied as follows: "Yes, everything is *Brahman*. Every *vritti* of the mind including grief or sorrow is *Brahman*. Every kind of strength, including physical strength, will be obtained by a person when he realizes his *Atman*." In this clear-cut manner, the merciful sage set at rest my doubts and answered my two questions.

## Personal Touch

MP3

D.: Is the study of science, psychology, physiology, philosophy, etc. helpful for this art of yoga-liberation and the intuitive grasp of the unity of the Real?

M.: Very little. Some knowledge is needed for yoga and it may be found in books. But practical application is the thing needed, and personal example, personal touch and personal instructions are the most helpful aids. As for the other, a person may laboriously convince himself of the truth to be intuited, i.e., its function and nature, but the actual intuition is akin to feeling and requires practice and personal contact. Mere book learning is not of any great use. After realization all intellectual loads are useless burdens and are thrown onboard as jetsam. Jettisoning the ego is necessary and natural.

— Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi, No. 28.

I recall one or two more conversations I had with Sri Ramana. One day when practising meditation in the hall along with many other devotees of the sage, I could not concentrate my mind and I discovered that unwanted thoughts were disturbing my serenity. I desired to bring it to the notice of the sage and to learn how to surmount the difficulty. So, I went near the sofa and said in English, "Bhagavan, my mind is not steady today. What is to be done?" The great sage raised his head and recited the following verses of the *Bhagavad Gita*:

"One should raise oneself by one's Self alone; let not one lower oneself; for the Self alone is the friend of oneself, and the Self alone is the enemy of oneself." Chapter 6, Verse 5

"From whatever cause the restless and unsteady mind wanders away, from that let him restrain it and bring it under the control of the Self alone." Chapter 6, Verse 26

After quoting these two verses for my guidance, the benevolent sage, in his infinite mercy, added the following English words: "These two verses contain all the necessary instructions for gaining serenity of mind. All efforts must be made to become effortless." He then closed his eyes.

The last day of my sojourn at Ramanasramam arrived. On that morning, I took my breakfast sitting in front of Sri Ramana in the same dining room. Many other guests were also present. Some of them were newcomers. The usual breakfast of *idli* and *sambar* and hot coffee was finished in ten minutes. Sri Ramana sipped the coffee slowly after reducing its temperature. On that morning, one or two fried *vadais* were also served by the attendants. I imagined that fried *vadais* were inedible and so I told Sri Ramana that I was afraid to eat *vadais*. That was the first occasion when I had the courage to talk to him in the dining room. The sage looked at me with his delightfully pleasing eyes and said, "You will digest it. You may eat." Then my fears fled away and I ate the *vadais* without suffering any indigestion.

After the breakfast was finished, I purchased a photo of Sri Ramana from the bookstall of the ashram. I desired to get it from the hands of the sage himself. Carrying it in my hands I went into the hall and prostrated to Sri Ramana, who was seated in *jagrat* state. There was no one else in the hall on that occasion. That was a surprise to me. I told him that I had purchased his photo and that I desired to receive it from his hands. Having said so, I gave the photo to him. He graciously stretched his hands and took it from me and looked at it for half a minute without saying any word by word of mouth. He was pleased to give it back to me. I received it with great satisfaction.

Then, I wanted to obtain his blessings before I left the ashram. So, I went near him once again and stood for a minute looking at him. I addressed him and said in English, "Bhagavan, I have enjoyed great peace in your presence. Permit me to return to Bangalore. May I know if I can receive your help when I reach Bangalore? I pray for your benediction." The benevolent sage was till then reclining on the sofa. He dramatised the parting scene. He sat up vertically on the sofa and with a kind but loud tone he said in English as follows: "What? Is there time, place or distance for me?" After putting this question to me, he reclined on the pillows of the sofa and closed his eyes. His words and gestures were charming, instructive and benevolent. They indicated perpetual compassion and love of all who pray for his aid. His gracious words are ringing in my ears, even after thirty-four years.

## 'The Maharshi' on the Internet

This issue, the last issue, and eventually all the existing twenty-three past issues of 'The Maharshi' will be available for downloading from a 'gopher server' available on the Internet. A 'gopher server' may be compared to a library where articles, files and other data are stored. To visit this library you need a computer connected to your telephone line using a modem. The computer calls up another larger computer that is linked through a variety of communication equipment to a whole world-wide network of computers. University researchers have been the primary users of these facilities for some years, but now many private companies provide access to the Internet system and through it offer a multitude of information services.

Dr. Peter Reece of British Columbia has kindly offered this service. He writes: "The electronic version of 'The Maharshi' (text only) resides on a computer located in my office in Victoria, British Columbia where I teach and do research. It is accessed via a 'gopher server' – an easy to use system accessible to the several million people daily who use the world-wide Internet system. The small part of the Internet which my office machine represents is accessed about 5,000 times a month by people from all over the world. When I originally built this system, I scanned the Internet for any references to Ramana Maharshi. Finding none I included some references to Maharshi and others on my office gopher server. Dennis was kind enough to allow me to add 'The Maharshi' newsletter. As for myself, Ramana's grace has transformed what was a painful life into joy and beauty, by simply pointing out that life IS This. Astonishing!

— — — the following is no longer extant as of 2019 — — —

For those with access to the Internet, this issue and back issues of 'The Maharshi', Arunachala Ashrama addresses, and other information may be found by typing 'gopher *dragon*:camosun.bc.ca'. Once connected, choose 'humanities', then 'religion/philosophy', then 'silence', and finally, 'Maharshi'.

## A Tribute to K.Venkataraman

K.VENKATARAMAN, endearingly addressed as K.V.Mama by those in Sri Ramanasramam, suddenly expired at 2:45 a.m. on November 23. He was 70-years-old and the only child of Chellamma, who was the adopted daughter of *Echammal*.

V.Subramanian (Madi), Sri Ramanasramam's manager, told me on the phone that he died just as he wished: residing in the ashram, without the burden of a prolonged illness, and while repeating his God's name, Ramana. *Sri N.Balarama* recently wrote in a letter dated November 30: "You must have known by now that K.V. passed away in the ashram a few days ago due to a massive heart attack, which took him away within 10 minutes, or so." J.Jayaraman, the ashram librarian, wrote on November 26 giving more details: "K. V.Mama passed away after a heart attack on November 23 at 2:45 a.m. with "Ramana" audibly on his lips in an unbroken stream. He had visited my home in Madras on November 6 to join my mum and I in the taxi returning to the ashram. . . . K.V.Mama sat right next to me at lunch on November 21st with the first batch of liners. Something unusual: Sundaram [Sri Ramanasramam's president] remarked I was being honoured because he was sitting next to me. K.V.Mama told me then he had been having some pain in the chest area which he attributed to a gastric source. Now he is gone! I had a wild thought of calling you at 8 a.m. to inform you by telephone. Then comes your letter! K.V.Mama was a blessed child of Bhagavan."

While I was visiting Sri Ramanasramam in October of 1993 I had the good fortune of spending time with K.V.Mama. With unbounded enthusiasm he immediately agreed to take me to *Echamma's* house in Tiruvannamalai and also to her village, which was about thirty miles from the ashram (see *March/April 1994* issue). Bubbling with genuine warmth and devotion he poured out numerous stories of Echammal and her experiences with Bhagavan. "Echammal was one of the illuminaries that revolved around the sun that Ramana Maharshi was for the world," he told me. And about his mother Chellamma: "She was a ripe soul, recognised by Echammal, and completely surrendered to Bhagavan."

K.V.Mama was no less surrendered and no less blessed. His mother died when he was only an infant, and it was her dying wish that he should be raised by Echammal in Tiruvannamalai. Echammal, whose life in the world was a succession of tragedies, went and brought the motherless child directly to Bhagavan and placed the child in his hands. "On seeing the babe, tears trickled from my eyes," Bhagavan later said, recalling the occasion.

The Maharshi looked after that child and protected him from harm. To illustrate this we need only relate the following story told to us by K.V.Mama: "Once when I was a young boy, a friend and I were in the Arunachala Temple. As it was very hot we went to the tank in the temple and began splashing and playing in the water. I inadvertently went into the water over my head and began sinking. I came to the surface a few times but was unable to stay afloat. My friend got scared seeing me in distress and ran off. Just before I went under for the last time I remember distinctly seeing Bhagavan's face, and then everything went blank - I became unconscious.

When I later regained consciousness I found that I was lying on a step just near the tank. I asked someone nearby how I got out of the water. I was told that an old man had come and pulled me out, laid me down on the step and then went away. Somehow I survived the ordeal. After nearly drowning, I went to the ashram and sat in the hall without telling anyone what had just happened. Bhagavan turned in my direction and said with a gentle smile on his lips, "Did you have a nice swim?" I put my head down, as I felt extremely guilty and thought that everyone was watching me. Who else was it than Bhagavan who saved me?"

We will all miss seeing this exemplary devotee of the Master. To his family we express our deepest condolences. He, his mother and grandmother were three generations of flowers offered to the feet of their Guru. To future aspirants and devotees, their lives will ever remain a true example of whole-hearted devotion and surrender.

— Dennis Hartel

Mantha and Prakash Adishesan  
2750 Turbining Parkway  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105  
December 6, 1994

Dear Arunachala Ashrama Coordinator,

We write this letter to share with you the joy bestowed on us by the blessings and grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

On November 26 at 4:00 a.m. our daughter Tara Anjali was born. When my pains started the doctor suspected it would be a long and difficult labor. Since this was our first child my husband and I were extremely anxious. We had a photo of the Maharshi and as the labor progressed my husband kept instructing me to look at it and derive strength from Ramana's picture. He was my only refuge. And suddenly, much to everyone's amazement, the labor progressed so rapidly that very soon we had a beautiful daughter in our arms. I can only remember the smile on the Maharshi's face.

Right through my pregnancy I was anxious about the bringing up of our child, since never my husband or I have ever held a new born baby. Every moment after our daughter was born, we had only to pray earnestly to Sri Ramana and our anxieties would dissipate, with His grace guiding us through every step.

We are extremely grateful to Bhagavan and I pray that we will be able to follow His message by His Divine Guidance. We also hope that one day we would be able to visit the Ashrama with our daughter.

With love and gratitude,  
Mantha & Prakash



K.V.Mama in 1993 in Echammal's courtyard  
[click to see a close image](#)

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 *online*. 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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