



THE MAHARSHI
Produced & Edited by Dennis Hartel Dr. Anil K. Sharma

- 1. Eternal Bhagavan, part 1
2. 122nd Advent At Arunachala
3. Ellam Ondre, All is One, part 1
4. Preordained?, Letters and Comments

Eternal Bhagavan Part 1

At the instance of Sri Muruganar, Shantamma came to the Ashram from Ramnad in 1927. She worked in the kitchen and her devotion to Sri Bhagavan was total. Since she served all with love, everyone at the Ashram loved her, and wherever she stayed people surrounded her to listen to her expositions describing her life with Sri Bhagavan.



When my brother's brother-in-law was transferred from Ramnad to a neighboring village, his wife could not go with him, so he sent for me to cook for him. I was then a widow 40 years old. One morning I sat in front of the fire and looked at the rice boiling and various thoughts came to my mind: "Shantamma, what is the matter with you? Why are you doing all this? You already lost your husband and your three sons. Your daughter you loved dearly and served her, along with her husband. You spent all your money on them. Then your daughter died and so did her child. Then you gave your love to your brother's daughter and her husband and all your money too, and now you are here cooking for your brother's wife's brother. Is it for this that you were born? Must you always entangle yourself with somebody or other? Who is this man to you? Why should you cook for him? What is the meaning of all this endless cooking? If you go on wasting your life like this, what will become of you in the end?"

It was as if a light had flooded my entire being. I went to my brother's son-in-law, told him that I was leaving on pilgrimage for Rameshwaram and got into the train.

During the journey in the train and at Rameshwaram one question was all the time in my mind: "Where can I find the one who will lead me to salvation, who will show me the way to God?"

At Rameshwaram I stayed with a lady who was reading scriptures to pilgrims in the temple and helped her in the household work. She advised me to read the book Kaivalyam. That book was available with one Nagaswami, whom I knew well. I found him and asked him to lend me the book.

"Why do you need Kaivalyam?" he asked. "To know the path to liberation." "Will books lead you to salvation?" "What else can I do?" "Do you really want to know the way?"

"Yes, I do." "Have you no other desire than that?" "None."

"Is that the truth, the very truth?" Thrice he asked. "Yes, yes."

He carefully searched my face. "All right, come on the full-moon day." On that day he taught me the Mahamantra and gave me instructions on how to use it. For months on end I was engrossed in my spiritual practices and forgot my very existence. When I became somewhat conscious of my surroundings, I would serve Nagaswami. But he died within a year and I returned to Ramnad. I was reading holy books, explaining them to other ladies and practicing my mantra. Thus nine years passed and I was already fifty years old.

Muruganar, a native of Ramnad, gave up worldly life at an early age and was known to me to be a disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Once I saw Bhagavan's photo with him and felt a very strong urge to go and see him. I was very poor and it took me a year to collect the money needed.

In 1927, three other ladies and I went to Tiruvannamalai. By that time Bhagavan had come down from the hill and was living in a hut near his mother's samadhi. We rented a place in the town, had a bath and went to see him. He was seated on a cot in a grass-thatched shed. Muruganar was by his side. As soon as I saw him I knew he was God in human form. I bowed to him and said, "The dream of my life has come true. Today I am blessed. Grant that my mind does not trouble me anymore."

Bhagavan turned to Muruganar and said: "Ask her to find out whether there is such a thing as mind. If there is, ask her to describe it."

I stood still, not knowing what to say. Muruganar explained to me, "Don't you see? You have been initiated in the search for the Self."

Although I was all mixed up, I remembered to honor Bhagavan by singing a poem from "Ramanastuthi Panchakam." It says: "Your spiritual splendor fills the universe with its perfume. Attracted by it numberless beings turn their face to you. I too grew restless and sought you eagerly. Where is He? Where is He? I enquired, and now I have come to you." Bhagavan asked me how I had come to know the song. Muruganar explained that he had given me a copy of the book.

We stayed for forty days. We would cook some food, sharing the expenses, and take it to the Ashram. Bhagavan would taste it and the rest was given to the devotees. In those days, Bhagavan's brother, Chinmaswami, was cooking for the Ashram. Some provisions were sent from the town by various devotees and the supply was very precarious. Often there were no curries or sambar, only plain rice and a piece of pickle. The Kartikai festival, for which Arunachala is famous, was going on. From three in the morning until twelve at night there were people coming and going. Bhagavan had to be protected by a bamboo fence.

I wanted to stay on until Bhagavan's birthday, but the other three ladies had to return, so I went to Bhagavan to take his leave. He asked me to wait a day longer, for the newly-printed Upadesa Saram was to be released. The next day he gave me a copy with his own hands. The thought of leaving him broke my heart and I wept bitterly. Very kindly he said, "No, don't cry. You are going to Ramnad, but you are not leaving Arunachala. Go and come soon."

I spent a year at Ramnad the way I did before. Bhagavan's birthday was nearing and I felt eager to go back. I had not even the money to buy a ticket, yet I resolved to start on Saturday, come what may. On Friday the invitation arrived. Later I came to know that Bhagavan had mentioned my name to the dispatchers. Bhagavan's picture was on the invitation and I took it to the ladies in the Ramnad Palace. They gave me thirty rupees to attend the Jayanti. It was the experience of every devotee that if they were determined to visit him, all obstacles would somehow vanish.

This time Bhagavan was on a sofa in a newly- built hall. He was explaining something from >Ulladu Narpadu to Dandapani Swami. When he saw me his first question was: "Have you a copy of this book? I asked them to post one to you." How my Lord remembers me by name and how loving is his personal attention to my needs! What have I, an ignorant woman, done to deserve such kindness? How can I afford to keep away from him?

I stayed at the Ashram as if it were my own home. At night I would sleep in some devotee's house, but from dawn to dusk I would help in the Ashram chores. The birthday celebrations were over, the guests were leaving, and naturally I felt that I too would have to go. But how could I leave Bhagavan? One day I gathered courage and told Bhagavan about my deep urge to stay on: "As long as I am with you, Bhagavan, my mind is at peace. Away from you I am restless. What am I to do?"

He said, "Stay here until your mind gets settled. After that you can go anywhere and nothing will disturb you."

How could I remain? I was too poor to stay in the town. The Ashram was poor too. Often there was not enough food for all. How could I ask them to take me in? Why should they? Anyway, I had decided not to return to Ramnad. I would not leave the feet of my Guru. If only by some miracle I could stay in the Ashram. And the miracle happened that very minute! When I was going towards the dining hall, I overheard Chinmaswami and Ramakrishnaswami talking to each other. Chinmaswami, then our cook, was not well and had to leave for Madras for treatment. "Would Shantamma kindly agree to stay and cook, if asked?" I heard him say. Kindly agree when I was dreaming of it! How merciful was Bhagavan! I was to stay for two months...and stayed forever.

I was put in charge of the cooking and Bhagavan would come often to help. Could I dream of greater happiness? He would get everything ready and tell me what to cook and how. With him near me I was tireless. No amount of work was too much for me. I did not even feel I was working. I worked with God! I was silently wondering at my great good fortune of being allowed to live and work in such a Great Presence!

At that period of the Ashram's life, Bhagavan used to be unusually active, working both in the kitchen and outside. He would clean grain, shell nuts, grind seeds, stick together the leaf plates we ate from, and so on. We would join him in every task and listen to his stories, jokes, reminiscences and spiritual teachings. Occasionally he would scold us lovingly like a mother. All Vedanta I learned from him in easy and happy lessons. At every hour and place, at each task, the work was from him or for him and thus between us an unending link was forged. He was always in the center. It was easy for us to keep our minds on him. It was impossible to do anything else, for we had to refer to him all the time. All initiative and responsibility were his. He would attend to everything. Whatever trouble cropped up during cooking or in daily life, we had only to mention it to him and he would set it right. Everything we did, every problem we faced, was made use of in teaching the art of total reliance on him.

As soon as Chinmaswami became the Sarvadhikari (general manager) of the Ashram, he was full of zest and declared that henceforth adequate meals were to be served in the Ashram, even if it meant buying and storing foodstuffs. Bhagavan used to make fun of him: "Well, store up, go on storing. Have rice from Nellore, dhal from Virudupatti, all the best and the costliest." The Ashram was growing, the number of visitors increasing, and prepared food was needed at all hours, so the Sarvadhikari was allowed to have his way.

— from Ramana Smriti Souvenir, part 2, Ch.2 continued in the Nov/Dec issue.

Please Join us in celebrating 122nd Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala. In the Nova Scotia Ashrama At the New York Ashrama 11:00 a.m. Sun 31 Aug 11:00 a.m. Sun 06 Sep. 1451 Clarence Road 86-06 Edgerton Boulevard. Bridgetown, Nova Scotia B0S 1C0 Jamaica Estates, New York 11432. Tel: 902 665-2090 Tel: 718 560-3196

Ellam Ondre — All is One, part 1 A Letter From Eurico M.S.Saraiva, Lisbon, Portugal

A French devotee who could not speak English and was living in Sri Ramanasramam during my last visit asked me to go with him to the Annamalai Ashram for a visit on some personal matter. While I was there translating for this devotee I noticed Annamalai Swami's book, "Living by the Words of Bhagavan," for sale. I immediately purchased it and while reading through it found the reference to "All is One." I somehow became keen on knowing more about this book and asked in the Sri Ramanasramam Book Depot if an English translation of this Tamil book was available. Even though it was also noted to be recommended by Sri Bhagavan in "Day by Day with Bhagavan," no one could give me any information about it.

Four or five days before my departure something made me remember that probably in the Annamalai Ashram I could find out some information about the book. The Ashram manager told me it was only available in Tamil and that the last English translation had been printed privately some time around 1950. However, he had a photo copy of that translation and allowed me to copy it for myself.

Around the same time, a French devotee with whom I had earlier discussions about the book came to me and showed me the French translation. In spite of it being printed in Pondicherry, she had purchased it in Paris.

I am now sending it to you because I think that we should make an effort to publish it for the benefit of devotees and Advaita students, even if it is in the form of a small inexpensive brochure. It appears that this 19th Century, anonymous composition was highly valued by Sri Bhagavan and, for this reason alone, I am sure many will be interested in studying it.

Preface

MEN of god happiness and shun misery. It is the same with other beings also. This holds good for the common run of mankind. But the higher order is bent upon right conduct, enduring patiently the good or evil that it may bring. Fellowship with these will be lasting, whereas fellowship with ordinary people will not be. Good will result to the world through fellowship with the higher order only.

The question then arises: "What is right?" The point is important, but the answer has not been found. Why? Because what is right is determined by circumstances. However comprehensive a work may be written on the subject, there will always be circumstances not envisaged by the author. Therefore it becomes necessary to realize that state which will enable us to assess the various conditions and determine what is right.

That state is one only. There are no states like it. Although it is single, it is extraordinary that the worldly wise consider it exceedingly rare. Nothing can be more extraordinary than this. That unique state is very clearly taught in the Upanishads. In this book I have put down the same truth according to my understanding. I have considered it my duty. I do not claim originality. The six chapters of this book are so closely interrelated that some point which may be expected in one chapter may be found in another. Again a few points which may not be clear on a superficial reading will become clear upon closer study. More may be gathered from major works or Sages. Universal Mother, Master true, save us!

— The Author

The Text

Chapter I - Unity 1. All including the world seen by you and yourself, the seer of the world, is one only. 2. All that you consider as I, you, he, she and it, is one only. 3. What you consider to be sentient beings and what you consider to be insentient, such as earth, air, fire and water is all one. 4. The good which is derived by your considering all as one cannot be had by considering each as separate from the other. Therefore all is one. 5. The knowledge of the unity of all, is good for you and good for others as well. Therefore all is one. 6. He who sees "I am separate," "you are separate," "he is separate" and so on, acts one way to himself and another way to others. He cannot help doing so. The thought "I am separate, others are separate" is the seed from which grows the tree of differing actions in relation to different persons. How can there be any lapse from righteousness for a person who knows the unity of himself with others? As long as the germ of differentiation is there, the tree of differing actions will flourish, even unawares. Therefore give up differentiation. All is one only.

7. Ask: "if in the world all things appear different, how can I consider all as one? Is there any way of gaining this knowledge?" The reply is: "In the same tree we see leaves, flowers, berries and branches, different from one another, yet they are all one because they are all included in the word 'tree'. Their root is the same; their sap is the same. Similarly, all things, all bodies, all organisms are from the same source and actuated by a single life principle." Therefore all is one.

8. Oh good man! Is the statement that "All is one," good or evil? Think for yourself. Just as the person will always be righteous who regards himself like others and others like himself, how can any evil attach itself to him who knows himself to be others and the others to be himself? Tell me if there is any better way for obtaining good than the knowledge of unity? Certainly other methods cannot be as good as this one. How can anyone love others more than when knowing them to be himself, to know them in unity-love as unity, for they are truly one.

9. Who can share the mental peace and freshness of the knower of unity? He has no cares. The Good of all is his own good. A mother considers her children's well-being to be her own well-being. Still, her love is not perfect because she thinks she is separate and her children are separate. The love of a Sage, who has realized the unity of all, far exceeds even the love of a mother. There is no other means of gaining such love than the knowledge of unity. Therefore all is one.

10. Know that the world as a whole is your undecaying body and that you are the everlasting life of the whole world. Tell me if there is any harm in doing so? Who fears to go the harmless way? Be courageous. The Vedas teach this very truth. There is nothing but yourself. All good will be yours. Yea, you become the good itself. All that others gain from you will be good only. Who will work evil to his own body and soul? A remedy is applied if there is an abscess in the body. Even if the remedy is painful, it is meant to do good only. Such will be some of your actions; they will also be for the good of the world. For that reason, you will not be involved in differentiation. I put it briefly: The knower of unity will act as one should. In fact, the knowledge of unity makes him act. He cannot err. In the world, he is God made visible. All is one.

Chapter II - You 1. Who are you? Are you this body? If so, why are you not aware of a serpent crawling on it when you are in deep sleep? So then can you be this body? No, certainly not. You must be other than this body. 2. Sometimes in sleep you dream. There you identify yourself with someone. Can you be that one? You cannot be. Otherwise, what becomes of that individual on your waking? You are not he. Furthermore, you are ashamed of having identified yourself with him. Clearly, you are not that particular person. You are the one that stands apart from him. 3. Recall the state of dreamless slumber. What is your state then? Can that be your true nature? Surely you will not subscribe to this belief. Why? Because you are not so foolish as to identify yourself with the massive darkness which obstructs you from knowing the state you are in. Discerned by the intellect from the things around, how can you admit yourself to be the same as ignorance or blank? Or, how can it truly be your real nature? It cannot be. You are the knower who knows that this state remains one of dense darkness veiling your true nature. How can you be that which you have experienced and condemned? Therefore you are not the dark ignorance of deep sleep. You stand apart from this too. 4. When it is said that even this gross body is not you, can you be any other thing which is yet farther away from you? In the same way that you are not this gross body, you are not anything farther from the body, nor the dream person, nor the ignorance of deep sleep. You are distinct from these three things and this world. 5. These three states can be reduced to two conditions only—namely, the one of the subject and object, and the other is the unawareness of the subject itself. The former includes the waking and dream states, whereas the latter represents deep slumber. All your experiences are comprised in these two conditions only. Both of them are foreign to you. Your true nature remains distinct from your experience. 6. If you ask what that is, it is called turiya, which means the fourth state. Why is this name used? This name is proper because it seems to say the three states of your experience—waking, dream and deep sleep—are foreign to you and your true state is the fourth, which is different from these three. Should the three states, waking, dream and deep sleep, be taken to form one long dream, the fourth state represents the waking from this dream. Thus it is more withdrawn than deep sleep, also more wakeful than the waking state.

Therefore your true state is that fourth one which is distinguished from the waking, dream and deep sleep states. You are that only. What is this fourth state? It is knowledge which does not particularize anything. It is not unaware of itself. That is to say, the fourth state is Pure Knowledge which is not conscious of any object, but not unconscious itself. Only he who has realized it even for a trice, has realized the Truth. You are that only.

8. What is there more for him who has gained the fourth state? Practically, it is not possible for anyone to remain forever in that state, that is, the state of no particular knowledge. He who has realized the fourth state later wakes up in this world, but for him this world is not as before. He sees that what he has realized as the fourth state, shines forth as all this. He will not imagine this world as distinct from that Pure Knowledge. Thus what he saw within, he now sees without in a different form. In the place of the differentiation of old, he is now established in the state of non-differentiation everywhere. Now, he is all. There is nothing distinct from himself. His eyes closed or open, however the things may change, his state remains unchanged. This is the state of Brahman. This is the natural eternal state. You are that ever-ture state.

9. There is nothing beyond this state. The words, 'inward' and 'outward' have no meaning for him. All is one. His body, speech and mind cannot function selfishly. Their workings will be grace for the good of all. The fragmentary "I" is lost forever. His ego can never revive. Therefore he is said to be liberated here and now. He does not live because his body lives, nor does he die because his body dies. He is eternal. There is nothing other than he.

10. Who is God? He is Grace. What is Grace? Awareness without the fragmentary ego. How can one know that there is such a state? Only if one realizes it. The Vedas laud such a one as having realized God and become one with Him. Therefore the greatest good that one can derive from the world and the greatest good which one can render unto it, is to realize this state. In fact, there are no states besides this. They appear in the state of ignorance. For him who knows, there is one state only. You are that.

— continued in the Nov/Dec issue

Letters and Comments

Preordained Everything is preordained. Everything is the Self, even all our little egos. What is seen and the one that sees are all the same. So, all the thoughts that come to our minds and the efforts that anyone makes are already preordained, isn't it?

Why, then, Ramana and many scriptures instruct so often that "effort is necessary"?

I mean, if every detail of the ego is preordained before the body comes into this world, so even the efforts that will be made are also preordained. Is that so? Or is there any space for freewill? Of course not, because everything is the Self. So, who takes the decision of making the effort, or who practices the sadhana?

The efforts we make in this life and the path we follow depend on the efforts and the respective karma made in previous lives. But, who made those efforts in those previous lives? The point is, are the efforts to be made in anyone's life already preordained? Should we worry about that? Or will all that happen automatically? The thought to make the effort comes to one's mind. Is then one free to choose to make it or not?

I am aware that if I could present these questions before Ramana the answer would be more or less, "Find out to whom the questions arise...". Yes, who asks the questions? — Devotee from Europe.

If we experience, rather than just try to understand intellectually, the first paragraph of your question then all the other doubts will not come into play. But since the doubt has arisen, we have Bhagavan's replies to similar questions to turn to:

"One summer afternoon I was sitting opposite Bhagavan in the Old Hall, with a fan in my hand and said to him: 'I can understand that the outstanding events in a man's life, such as his country, nationality, family, career or profession, marriage, death, etc. are all predestined by his karma, but can it be that all the details of his life, down to the minutest, have already been determined? Now, for instance, I put this fan that is in my hand down on the floor here. Can it be that it was already decided that on such and such a day, at such and such an hour, I shall move the fan like this and put it down here?'"

"Bhagavan replied, 'Certainly.' He continued, 'Whatever this body is to do and whatever experiences it is to pass through was already decided when it came into existence.'

"Thereupon I naturally exclaimed: 'What becomes then of man's freedom and responsibility for his actions?'"

"Bhagavan explained: 'The only freedom man has is to strive for and acquire the jnana which will enable him not to identify himself with the body. The body will go through the actions rendered inevitable by Prarabdha (destiny based on the balance sheet of past lives) and a man is free either to identify himself with the body and be attached to the fruits of its actions, or to be detached from it and be a mere witness of its activities.'

"This may not be acceptable to many learned people or philosophers, but I am sure I have made no error in transcribing as above the gist of the conversation that took place between Bhagavan and me. Though this answer of Bhagavan may upset the apple cart of our careful reasonings and conclusions, I am satisfied that what Bhagavan said must be true. I also recall in this connection the following lines that Bhagavan once quoted to me from Thyaganavara: 'This is not to be taught to all. Even if we tell them, it will only lead to endless discussion'

"It may be to remind ourselves that Bhagavan has given his classic answer to the age-old question 'Can free will conquer fate?' as follows in his 'Forty Verses': 'Such questions worry only those who have not found the source of both freewill and fate. Those who have found this source have left all such discussions behind.' The usual reaction of Bhagavan to any such question would be to retort: 'Who is it that has this fate or freewill? Find that out and then this question will not arise.'

— from My Recollections, by A. Devaraja Mudaliar

Please join us in celebrating the 102nd anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramana's Advent at Arunachala. At Arunachala Ashrama - Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama - Nova Scotia 1451 Clarence Road R.R. 1, Bridgetown, Nova Scotia CANADA B0S 1C0 At 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 30, 1998 Tel: (902) 665-2090. At Arunachala Ashrama - New York Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center 66-12 Clyde Street Rego Park, Queens, NY 11374 at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, September 6, 1998 Tel: (718) 575-3215

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 MaharshP" 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.