



The Maharshi

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नमो भावते श्री रमणाय

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"Where could I go? I am here."
The 50th Mahasamadhi Anniversary

INFO

The following string of reminiscences were collected from devotees who had the rare good fortune of coming under the benign glance of the Master.

The unique manifestation of Divine Grace on earth known and loved by us as Bhagavan Sri Ramana receded into its Reality as night set in on Friday, April 14th, 1950. The very moment that Bhagavan entered into Maha-Nirvana, at 8:47 that night, the skies announced the great event with a long, slow trail of light.

Bhagavan Ramana moved with us, as one of us, though he had, even as a lad of 17, found his Unity with the Reality underlying all appearance and had remained ever since as that resplendent Pure Consciousness, the Self. Though he never left Arunachala after his first arrival there, the power of his Light spread silently through the world during the half century and more of his stay there. Many earnest seekers approached him and some found spiritual illumination in his presence. His mode of life was natural, his ways were gracious, his smile brought peace to the heart. His look was an initiation into Divine Mystery; his teaching was simple, direct and profound, based on man's natural experience of I-ness. He directed all to seek and find for themselves the Source of the ego, the Reality behind their individuality, from which all thoughts and actions proceed. His luminous abidance in the Self was itself a teaching conveyed from heart to heart in silence. As all his actions were waves from the Light within, the grace of which attracted and uplifted all who came in contact with him.^[1]

Rajapalayam Ramani Ammal

I was at Rajapalayam at the time of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana. That night, I saw a beautiful blue light going up in the sky and I knew Bhagavan had left the body. I did not want to live after that and so I started fasting, hoping to drop the body that way. For five or six days, I did not touch food. But during that time, I had several visions, and in one of them, I was taken inside a cave on the Hill and saw Rishis performing Yagnas. Sri Bhagavan was seated there. Bhagavan said, "Why are you crying? You say that I have gone away, but where have I gone? I am here." Some Rishis brought some Prasad to Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan took some and gave it to me. I could not remember in the dream that I was fasting. For five days afterwards, the smell of that Prasad was with me. Now was that a dream or reality? I consider it to be Bhagavan's Grace.

The aroma of that Prasad even spread around my house. My brother wondered what I had eaten. That aroma was simply out-of-the-world. The morning after the dream, I started taking food and coffee. My brother and sister were also fasting with me, deciding to give up their bodies if I were to give up mine. In the dream, Bhagavan was seated near a tank and Kamadhenu (the celestial cow) was near him. Rishis and Munis were serving him. Bhagavan was looking splendid, like Lord Shiva. It was a divine sight indeed. The smell of the Prasad remained for five days. How can I take it to be a dream? From that day onwards I had no thought at all that Bhagavan had left us. He is all pervading. I felt no more sorrow in my heart. He is here too. See how we all are gathered here. What have we done to deserve this?²

Major Chadwick

On the last night, Bhagavan was lying in the small room which had originally been built as a storeroom when he had moved into the big hall. We were all seated along the verandah of the temple opposite. Our only view of the room was through a small ventilator window about six feet from the ground. Naturally, seated as we were on the ground, we had no view of the interior of the room where he lay; all we could see was the constant movement of a fan backwards and forwards. This fan was anxiously watched by everybody, for when it stopped we would know that the end had come.

The Ashram authorities were afraid that there might be some trouble from the waiting crowds, as a certain clique had arranged, if possible, to remove the body and bury it outside the Ashram. It would have been quite impossible to do this. There were lots of police about and the majority of opinion was naturally against such a scandal. However the powers were scared. For this reason about an hour before the end the D.M.O., who was present, was prompted by the Manager to come out and announce that there was no immediate danger of anything happening that night. It was a scandalous thing to do. Naturally many of the people went home for their evening meal and so missed the last moments.

There were some American reporters and photographers, who were there just out for a scoop. They were living less than half a mile away. One of them standing outside the house suddenly looked up and saw very bright star or meteor move slowly across the sky towards the North over the top of the Hill. He called out to the rest of the party, who ran out and saw the same phenomenon. One and all agreed that something had happened to Bhagavan. Even though they were without special faith in him, by some intuition they were certain that this must have been the case. It happened exactly at the time of the passing (8:47 p. m. on April 14th, 1950) and was seen by many people, all of whom strangely enough, associated it with the same thing. People in Madras also saw it and some got into their cars immediately and made their way to the Ashram. This is a fact which I will not attempt to explain, but must accept it as it happened.

"Gol Where can I go? I shall always be here."

The power of Sri Ramana, who gave up his physical form has not diminished. He is everywhere, like the light in a room shed by an electric bulb. But the light is found to be far stronger near the bulb, the source of light, than in any other part of the room, though no spot is in darkness. What wonder, then, if the power of our Guru is found near the place where his body is interred?³

Attendant Krishnaswami

Bhagavan gave several indications that he wanted no treatment. One day he threatened to drop his body by he eating nothing. I pleaded with Bhagavan that I would take care of all his bodily needs, and that he should eat and stay put inside that room. One day Bhagavan refused to drink water, but the next day he demanded huge amounts of water. I pleaded with him to moderate his intake of food and water. So many things like this happened in those last days.

Two days after he drank lots of water, the end was to come. I was with him on that day, too. In the afternoon, I gave him the essence of pomegranate, which Bhagavan could swallow. At 5 o'clock in the evening Satyananda Swami gave him orange juice, which was advised by the doctors, but Bhagavan had some difficulty swallowing it.

On the day of the Mahasamadhi, O.P. Ramaswami Reddiyar, the retired Chief Minister, was attending to the affairs of the Ashram. A police officer came to inquire about Bhagavan's condition on behalf of the District Police Superintendent, who wanted to have Bhagavan's darshan. I told him to ask the Sarvadhikari. They said that only I would be able to give them the correct picture. So I told them that as far as I was concerned, I did not think Bhagavan's body would last beyond 10 O'clock in the night. So they sent word to the District Police Superintendent to come and see Bhagavan.

There was another problem. Devotees wanted to have the darshan of their Guru. I did not want to incur their anger by denying them one last darshan of their Guru. I requested them to come in a queue and not put any questions or expect any words of wisdom from Bhagavan. Darshan continued till 5 p.m., Devotees came in large numbers, and although police kept the line moving fast, they went back and stood in line again, weeping and crying. It was a sight that moved me very deeply.

Seeing the difficulty that Bhagavan was experiencing, I drew a screen across and didn't allow any more darshan. O. P. Ramaswami Reddiyar came, and I told him that he could come in, but he declined. Seeing how much Bhagavan's body was suffering, O. P. Reddiyar requested the devotees to sing "*Aksharamanamalai*." He did this because Bhagavan's body was suffering and he didn't want anybody to notice it.

Bhagavan had told me that a Jnani does not mind how his body is dropped, for the body idea has already died. It was only for the naked eye that Bhagavan was suffering. In reality there was no suffering since Bhagavan had no dehatma buddhi (I-am-the-body idea). Lots of pillows were placed to prop up his head and He was sitting with his legs stretched. Suddenly, Bhagavan asked me to seat him in padmasana pose, and in that pose the last breath went out of him, and he became still.

When Bhagavan dropped the body, I was holding the head, and Subramanian was standing next to me. I was looking at Bhagavan's face, and when the lower jaw dropped, I knew that he had left the body. The women outside sensed it somehow and, beating their breasts, tried to come inside and have one last darshan. But the police prevented it. I helped carry the body to the Mandapam of the mother's temple. My service to Bhagavan ended there.⁴

S.S.Cohen

5th April: Yesterday, Monsieur Cartier-Brassen, the expert French photographer, took a photograph of Sri Bhagavan, which may prove to be the last one of him.

Maharshi's health has remained more or less stationary since about a week. His nausea and scanty urination have not been persistent, yet there has been no improvement in his general condition, which continues to prevent his coming out for darshan.

Yesterday morning, His Excellency the Governor of Madras, the Maharaja of Bhavanagar, and his wife had Sri Bhagavan's darshan in the small room, then worshipped in the Ashram's temple, inquired after the two white peacocks they had presented some weeks back and left.

6th April, 1950: Symptoms of definite toxæmia have set in Maharshi's body. For the whole day his urinary secretion did not exceed one ounce.... Doctors gently argue with him that scanty urination can be relieved only by an increased intake of fruit juice and water. 'And if I can't take?' he would answer, and there the matter must end. He leaves his body to manage its health or diseases as best it can, without the slightest effort of cooperation on his part. His mind is ever sunk in bliss. It is true that his body is suffering, but that is no reason why he should disturb his mind to oblige it. If it dies, well and good; if it remains, so much the worse for it: it is the business of Him who made it to keep or take it away and do all the worrying-it is none of his own business to interfere and inconvenience himself on its behalf.

13th April, 1950: Tamil New Year, 2 p.m., Morning observations : Maharshi's diastole climbed up to 46, but the systole remained stationary at 68, pulse 94, temperature 98.4 (normal! what an irony!), breathing 22 per minute.

Morning darshan ran for half an hour, during which Maharshi's eyes remained closed and when he occasionally opened them, they looked in front rather than to the left where the devotees were filing past him. His diet consists now of only buttermilk.

10 p.m.: Owing to the very heavy attendance of visitors from all over the South, nearly 1500, the evening darshan had to be lengthened to 45 minutes.

Many devotees remained till late in the evening to receive the final medical oral report for the day. At 9.30, Dr. Krishnamurti, a local physician and a great devotee, walked up to me and said: 'My own impression is that there is no immediate danger. Bhagavan has just told the attendants to go to sleep as he himself was going to do. His breathing is not laboured, and there is no gasping in evidence.'

Friday, 14th April: Maharshi is in a very precarious condition. The whole morning has been spent by devotees in hushed gloom and with bated breath. After evening darshan, the unanimous verdict is that it is positively the last. The Master is now propped on large pillows, almost in a sitting posture, the head resting backward with open mouth, and two attendants briskly fanning him, to enable him to breathe freely-the battle for air, has thus started. At 7 p.m., oxygen is administered to him for about five minutes, but seeing that it gave him no relief, he feebly asked that it should be stopped.

The situation was tense: about five-hundred devotees were outside in sad expectation of the solemn last moment. Blood relations. Ashram workers, a few old disciples, and some new aspirants went in by turn to have a last sight of him. When the end was known to be approaching, the whole congregation with one voice started chanting the Tamil hymns he had many years ago composed in praise of Lord Arunachala: "Arunachala Shiva, Arunachala Shiva, Arunachala!" till it came at about 8.47. Many devotees, grief-stricken and beating their breasts, lost control of their feelings and rushed en masse to the small room where the sacred body lay, but police officers immediately cordoned off the area till it was brought out and placed in the centre of the big darshan hall in yoga asana for all the people to pay their last respects to it. The news spread like wildfire to the town and the neighboring villages and drew huge crowds. By 9.15, the crowd grew so thick, that it became necessary to give a chance to all to pay their homage and pass the body in an orderly manner. A queue was thus formed- seven to ten broad-at a quick-march pace. It is still (11.55 p.m.) continuing unabatingly.

Around the sofa sat dozens of disciples, some chanting Maharshi's verses and other devotional hymns, but others remained in silent contemplation. Sandalwood paste and jasmine flowers now cover the body and incense burns by its side.

At about 9 p.m.,Monsieur Cartier-Brassen, the French photographer, who has been here for about a fortnight with his wife, related an experience of his to me. "It is a most astonishing experience," he said. "I was in the open space in front of my room, when my friends drew my attention to the sky, where I saw a vividly-luminous shooting star with a luminous tail, unlike any shooting star I had before seen, coming from the South, moving slowly across the sky and, reaching the top of Arunachala, disappeared behind it. Because of its singularity we all guessed its import and immediately looked at our watches - it was 8:47 - and then raced to the Ashram only to find that our premonition had been only too sadly true: the Master had passed into Mahanirvana at that very minute." Several other devotees in the Ashram and in the town later told me that they too had seen the tell-tale meteor.⁵

Footnotes

1. The Last Days & Maha-Nirvana of Bhagavan Sri Ramana
2. Videotaped, Arunachala Ashrama (see *Guru Ramana* DVD)
3. *A Sadhu's Reminiscences*
4. Videotaped, Arunachala Ashrama, *Guru Ramana, His Living Presence* DVD
5. *Guru Ramana*, by S.S.Cohen

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The New York Times
Sunday, April 16, 1950
Religious Recluse Mourned in India
Shri Ramana Maharshi Was Called a 'Living Saint' — Made Abode in Cave

NEW DELHI, India, April 15 — Hindu India mourned today the death of one of her greatest "living saints" and a remarkable man of his time, Shri Ramana Maharshi, who died last night at the age of 71 in his Ashram retreat at Tiruvannamalai near Pondicherry.

Shri Ramana was renowned as a religious recluse and seer whose piety and philosophy of self-abnegation gained him followers in many countries. His devotees in Tiruvannamalai, who include men and women of many nationalities, held to their master's own philosophy as he was taken from them. They believe, like him, that there is no death, but that Shri Ramana's physical form has ceased to function, while his inner-being continues on an exalted plane.

It was his development of this theory that made the second son of an obscure village lawyer one of India's most revered sages.

Shri Ramana had humble beginnings, and his school record was far from brilliant. Neglecting his studies, he brooded on religious subjects. One day in July, 1896, while reflecting on the mystery of death, the young Venkataraman, as his name was then, conceived the idea that death of the body is a relative thing and that the intellect belongs to a power beyond which never dies.

After a month of profound meditation on this subject, he left home abruptly and repaired to the temple of his particular God, Arunachala, in Tiruvannamalai. Here he shaved his head and adopted the robe of the Sanyasi (holy man). Soon he came to be regarded in the neighborhood as a queer one and he was jeered, stoned and eventually disowned by his family.

To escape persecution, the young ascetic took abode in a cave. He became so immersed in meditation that, according to his own later accounts, he was totally unaware of the terrible ravages to his physique by starvation and the bites of scorpions and insects that nearly devoured him alive.

Though he rarely spoke-but composed religious expositions that later became famous throughout the Hindu world-the recluse attracted followers. Eventually, his dwelling became a place of pilgrimage. In later years, the large Ashram grew about the odd man, who made no effort to proselytize and continued in silent meditation and writing. His followers changed his name to Maharshi, which means great saint.

Here in India, where thousands of so-called holy men claim close ties with the infinite, it is said that the most remarkable thing about Shri Ramana Maharshi was that he never claimed anything remarkable for himself, yet became one most respected of all.

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Eternal Existence

INFO

Grief exists only so long as one considers oneself to be of a definite form. If the form is transcended, one will know that the one Self is eternal. There is no death nor birth. That which is born is only the body. The body is the creation of the ego. But the ego is not ordinarily perceived without the body. It is always identified with the body. It is the thought which matters. Let the sensible man consider if he knew his body in deep sleep. Why does he feel it in the waking state? But, although the body was not felt in sleep, did not the Self exist then? How was he in deep sleep? How is he when awake? What is the difference? Ego rises up and that is waking. Simultaneously thoughts arise. Let him find out to whom are the thoughts. Wherefrom do they arise? They must spring up from the conscious Self. Apprehending it even vaguely helps the extinction of the ego. Thereafter the realization of the one Infinite Existence becomes possible. In that state there are no individuals other than the Eternal Existence. Hence there is no thought of death or waking.

— Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 80



Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat
(1912 to 1992) (1990-1994)

Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat
1912 - 2000 (part 1)

INFO

All devotees of Arunachala Ashrama in New York and Nova Scotia were very saddened to hear of the passing of the founder of Arunachala Ashrama, Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat.

At the New York City Ashrama, in the early morning of Monday, April 10, Sri Bhagawat was found completely merged in His Master, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Eighteen months earlier, near his 86th birthday, he suffered a stroke which left him partially paralyzed. From then on he was unable to walk, and yet except for occasional lapses remained stable and strong. A smile was never far from his lips and he rarely asked for anything other than a warm blanket. His deep love for all of Sri Bhagavan's devotees was still being expressed in many subtle ways and his daily absorption in the Heart was his only source of joy and comfort. The care of love and service he dedicated in many devotees will continue to grow and guide them throughout their lives.

The July/August issue of "The Maharshi" will be planted to his memory.

Sometimes I touch this friend (typewriter) with my prayers, and sometimes I sit back, close my eyes and drink deeper, deeper, and yet deeper in the Ocean of Peace, Bliss and Happiness that Thou art for the world. Every expiration and inspiration of my breath has slowed down, reminding me to abide in the Self, nothing but the Self, and thus transfer all my burdens to Thee. Every atom and proton of my life is pulsating, heaving, bubbling, bursting and dancing with Self-Awareness, and how I would like to resound and reverberate the land with the chanting and recitation of Thy Name.

No sooner I close my eyes than I find myself absorbed in the Holy Hill of the Beacon Light, and there is not the least desire in me for anything but Thee. Like an inebriated, intoxicated and drunken person I find myself sunk in the Ocean of Sri Sachchidananda Ramana Bhagavan. I call on Thee to shower Thy Infinite Grace and Mercy upon me and make me the instrument of Thy Mighty, Powerful and Inscrutable Will, Sri Ramana Arunachala Dakshinamurty Parabrahman! Thou lifted me from the dust and dirt of my village Sahuri and carried me across the seven seas so that Thou would take the work from me of building Thy Fifth Avenue Temple in New York. Thou art my only wherewithal, and on the sheer strength of Thy Name I must trudge along to the Holy Hill of the Beacon Light, my Master and Lord, Ramana!

Thou hast reduced the entire creation into the Self in the Lotus of my Heart, and I sit here with my eyes closed and drink deep in the celestial wine of Bhagavan Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagavan's Infinite Grace and Mercy, I continue to abide in Thy Name day and night. Many times I saw a vividly-luminous shooting star with a luminous tail, unlike any shooting star I had before seen, coming from the South, moving slowly across the sky and, reaching the top of Arunachala, disappeared behind it. Because of its singularity we all guessed its import and immediately looked at our watches - it was 8:47 - and then raced to the Ashram only to find that our premonition had been only too sadly true: the Master had passed into Mahanirvana at that very minute." Several other devotees in the Ashram and in the town later told me that they too had seen the tell-tale meteor.⁵

— Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat
New York, 1980
(continued in the *July/August* issue)

Thou hast reduced the entire creation into the Self in the Lotus of my Heart, and I sit here with my eyes closed and drink deep in the celestial wine of Self- Inquiry of WHO AM I? Under the mighty impact of Ramana Bhagavan's Infinite Grace and Mercy, I continue to abide in Thy Name day and night. Many times I saw a vividly-luminous shooting star with a luminous tail, unlike any shooting star I had before seen, coming from the South, moving slowly across the sky and, reaching the top of Arunachala, disappeared behind it. Because of its singularity we all guessed its import and immediately looked at our watches - it was 8:47 - and then raced to the Ashram only to find that our premonition had been only too sadly true: the Master had passed into Mahanirvana at that very minute." Several other devotees in the Ashram and in the town later told me that they too had seen the tell-tale meteor.⁵

— Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat
New York, 1980
(continued in the *July/August* issue)



You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in commemorating the

50th Anniversary of
Sri Ramana Maharshi's Mahasamadhi
11 a.m. Sunday 07 May 2000

With special guest
Sri V.S. Ramani
President, Sri Ramanasramam,
India

The program will include a
puja, recitations, bhajans and readings,
followed by a lunch.

Venue: Community Center
Hindu Temple Society of
North America
(Ganesha Temple)
143-09 Holly Avenue
Flushing, Queens, NY 11355

Travel Directions to the Community Center

By Automobile:

From Manhattan, take Midtown Tunnel to Long Island Expressway. Exit at Kissena Blvd. (Exit No. 24), and turn left onto Kissena Blvd. travel approximately 1 mile, then turn right onto Holly Ave. Travel four blocks and you will see the Community Center on your left.

From Long Island, take Long Island Expressway (I-495 WEST) and exit at Kissena Blvd. (EXIT No. 24). At second traffic light turn right on Kissena Blvd. Once on Kissena Blvd. travel approximately 1 mile, then turn right onto Holly Ave. Proceed four blocks and you will see the Community Center on your left. The bus ride is about five to ten minutes.

If you are coming from areas other than Manhattan or Long Island, take any one of the highways most convenient to you - The Belt Parkway, Brooklyn-Queens Expressway or Grand Central Parkway - and then get on Long Island Expressway. From there, follow directions given above.


By Public Transportation:

Take IRT Flushing Line (No. 7) train from Times Square and get off at the last stop - Main Street, Flushing. Take Q27 Bus from Main Street, and it will go on Kissena Blvd., and turn left onto Holly Ave. Get off at the 2nd stop just before Bowme Street, walk one block and you will see the Community Center to your left. The bus ride is about five to ten minutes.

Community Center Tel: (718) 460-3869 — Arunachala Ashrama 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 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  channel.

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