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THE MAHARSHI

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नमो भगवते श्री रमणाय

Jan / Feb 2001

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

The Maharshi and the Mahatma

by H.G.Nilkant

NEW *The following has been translated from a passage in Sri Narayan M. Desai's Gujarati book, Santa Sevata. Sri Narayan is the son of Sri Mahadev Desai who was Mahatma Gandhiji's secretary.*

LET me describe right here an incident that happened during our return from the South India Hindi Prachar meeting.

Bezpada (Vijayawada) is a station on the railway route from Madras to Wardha. The talk came up before we reached Bezpada. Jammalaji (Sri Jammala Baja) had then recently been to Ramanashram. He was lavish in his praises before Babu (Mahatma Gandhi) of the holiness and peace of that Ashram's atmosphere. Whenever a saint happened to be the subject of a conversation, my father's heart would melt like butter. With devotional interest he began to inquire about Ramana Maharshi. Jammalaji, Babu and my father started on the subject with equal interest. In the course of the talk Babu suggested, "Mahadev, why not visit the Ashram yourself?" On hearing this, father's heart leapt from sheer joy. Jammalaji also urged him: "Yes, yes. Do it. It is really worth a visit. And now that you have come so near the place, you can go there right away. When, otherwise, are you going to have the leisure for it?"

My father asked me to pack up his kit-bag. The train had by then already reached the Krishna Bridge. Jammalaji was telling Babu, "The peace I felt at Ramanashram, I did not even find at your Ashram." After a short while Babu said to father, "Don't be in a hurry to return. If you have the same experience of peace as Jammalaji, you may stay on longer. Don't worry about the work."

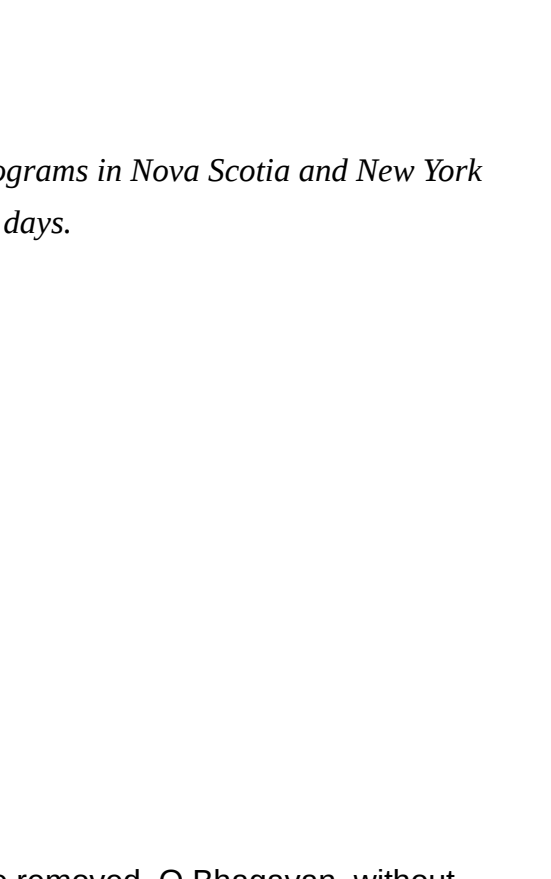
Babu uttered these words in quite a natural tone and manner. But the very thought of keeping away from Babu for any length of time was unbearable to my father. He turned towards me and said, "Babla (a pet name), unpack the kitbag." I was stunned. Babu too looked on in mute surprise.

"Why Mahadev, what makes you ask him to unpack?"

"I have given up the idea."

"But why?"

"One Swami is enough for me."



click to see a larger image

— *The Mountain Path*, 1969

Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawata

August 26, 1989

NEW *On August 26, 1989, James Hartel, with his new video camera, videotaped Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat in the Temple of the Nova Scotia Ashrama. This year at our 'Advent at Arunachala' programs in Nova Scotia and New York we showed a twelve minute segment from this video. Everyone enjoyed watching the vigorous 77-year-old Bhagawat tell the stories and relate the teachings we had heard many times in bygone days.*

Soyi janayi jehi dehu janayee
Janata tumhahi tumhayi hoyi jayee.

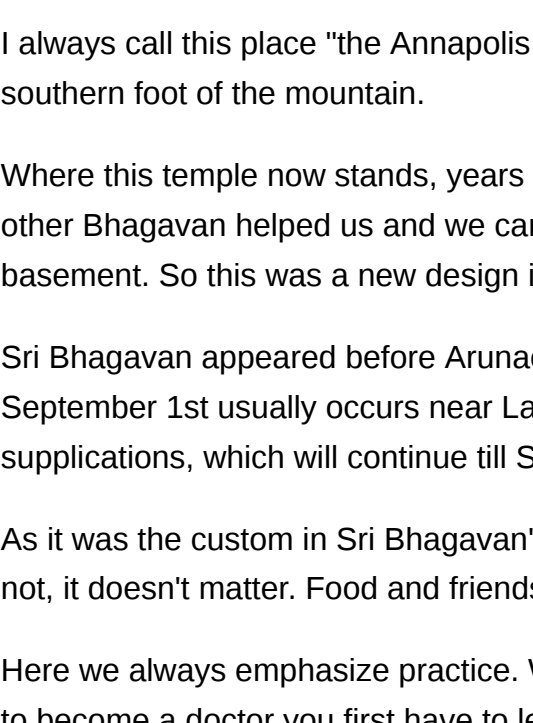
Here Goswami Tulsidas says, "O Lord, only he knows You whom You grant that grace, whom You make to know You, and the devotee who knows You becomes one with You."

Chhutayi mala ki malahi ke dhoyen
Ghrit ki pava koyi bari biloyen.

"Can dirt be got rid of by cleansing with dirt? Can one produce ghee by churning water?"

Prema Bhagati jala binu Raghurayee
Abhiantara mala kabahun na jayee.

Prema. What is Prema? Prema is affection; Prema is love; Prema is dedication; Prema is devotion; Prema is simpleness. The darkness of the heart, the dirt of the heart cannot be removed, O Bhagavan, without devotion, without dedication, without guilelessness, without openness. Without these the ignorance and arrogance of the heart cannot be removed. These are simple things. No discussions or debates are needed.



click to see a larger image

Bhagavan has taught to simply go to the source — "Who am I?" From whatever group the person belongs to, there is no question of interfering with others' faith or thought. A teacher simply shows the path, guides one to the correct route. So, Sri Bhagavan says, "Go to the Heart." When we breathe, the breath comes from the Heart. Just by saying "I-I" one can experience the breath and sound coming from the Heart.

Sri Bhagavan showed me this [in a vision]. He put His hands on my head and Heart and told me in Hindi, "*Dekho hridaya ke under se kahan se avaz aatee hai. Jahan se avaz aatee hai, usee par dhyen karo.*" Since I speak Hindi, He spoke to me in Hindi: "*Watch wherefrom the sound emanates in the Heart. Meditate on the centre wherefrom the sound emanates.*" So that's the simple teaching for who ever wants to learn, who ever wants peace and happiness.

This is the purpose of this Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center, and not to interfere. It is like the sun is shining, the wind is blowing, the river flowing. If an individual wants to be warmed by the sun, feel the breeze or be cooled in these waters, he or she will have to be ready.

Jesus said, "Don't throw pearls before the swine." So only those who are eager, honest, sincere and fit – give it to them. A patient goes to a doctor, is diagnosed and then prescribed a medicine. The patient must take the medicine with faith and report to the doctor.

I always call this place "the Annapolis Valley of peace and happiness." The North Mountain behind the Ashrama is situated just like the Arunachala Mountain in South India, where Sri Bhagavan's Ashram is located at the southern foot of the mountain.

Where this temple now stands, years ago it was a school. This building was picked up and moved a mile from here. Some wealthy person wanted to use it for a utility building at a ski resort. He couldn't do it. Somehow or the other Bhagavan helped us and we carried this building back here to its original location. When the temple was being designed, I used to request from New York to include plenty of windows so the first floor doesn't look like a basement. So this was a new design in those days. Even downstairs there is so much light, and there is also much light streaming through the windows in the temple hall.

Sri Bhagavan appeared before Arunachaleswara on the morning of Tuesday, September 1, 1896, and Sri Bhagavan has been inspiring us to celebrate this occasion since 1972 here in the Nova Scotia Ashrama. Since September 1st usually occurs near Labour Day Monday, we normally observe it on the Sunday before Labour Day. On the Friday before this Sunday, Dr. Lakshminarayan will arrive and start the prayers, petitions and supplications, which will continue till Sunday morning. Sunday will be the public celebration, after which enough food or Prasad will be served to all the friends and devotees gathered that day.

As it was the custom in Sri Bhagavan's Ashrama that whosever arrived was sent to the kitchen to eat, whatever time of day, Arunachala Ashrama continues this practice in the West. Whether the person takes the food or not, it doesn't matter. Food and friendship are offered all the time. The ancient Vedic scriptures say, "Food is God; God is in food."

Here we always emphasize practice. We call this Ashrama the triple 'A' Ashrama: Arunachala Abhyasa Ashrama. Whether the visitor is from the West or East we always tell them practice, abhyasa, is necessary. If you want to become a doctor you first have to learn your A-B-Cs. No one can become a doctor by just looking at a medical college. We use the term 'GRIND.' Everyone must go through the grind. The ego must somehow be crushed. Nothing can grow unless we plow the field. "Tasmat sarveshu kaleshu...Thus remembering ME all the time, fight on, fight on."

Work we have to do. Creation has come in and different people have different jobs and different missions. "Keep on doing, remembering ME," says Sri Krishna to Arjuna.

I always say, "Do you have five minutes, Sir? Do you have five minutes, Deviji? Do you have five minutes, Madam? Early in the morning sit down for five minutes, don't do anything. On the floor or in a chair just sit in peace and quiet. The most important thing is the practice."

Whatever we do here in the Temple – sit, recite, read – the practice is the most important thing. We always say, "Soyi janayi jehi dehu janayee...He or she only knows You on whom You grant Your grace."

"Why do I not feel it?" you may ask.

I say, "Do you have eyes? Can you see the sun? Can you breathe?" Grace is there whether you believe it or not. You believe in the wind, you believe in the river, the trees. You believe in the grass – all these. Pay a little attention: "...remembering ME all the time, fight on!"

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in his labour, simple and direct way said, "Go to the Source." "WHO AM I?" Cutting through all ancient dogmas, philosophies and intricacies, Sri Bhagavan came and said very simply, "Go to the Source. Go on repeating 'I' - 'I' - 'I'." The breath, the sound comes from the Heart. Watch the breath. Practice is necessary, faith is necessary.

It is said, "Sradha va labhate jnanam..." Those who have faith, have humility and yearning, they receive knowledge, they receive help. And "Sansyatma bina swasti..." Those who forever have doubts and questions, will be destroyed.

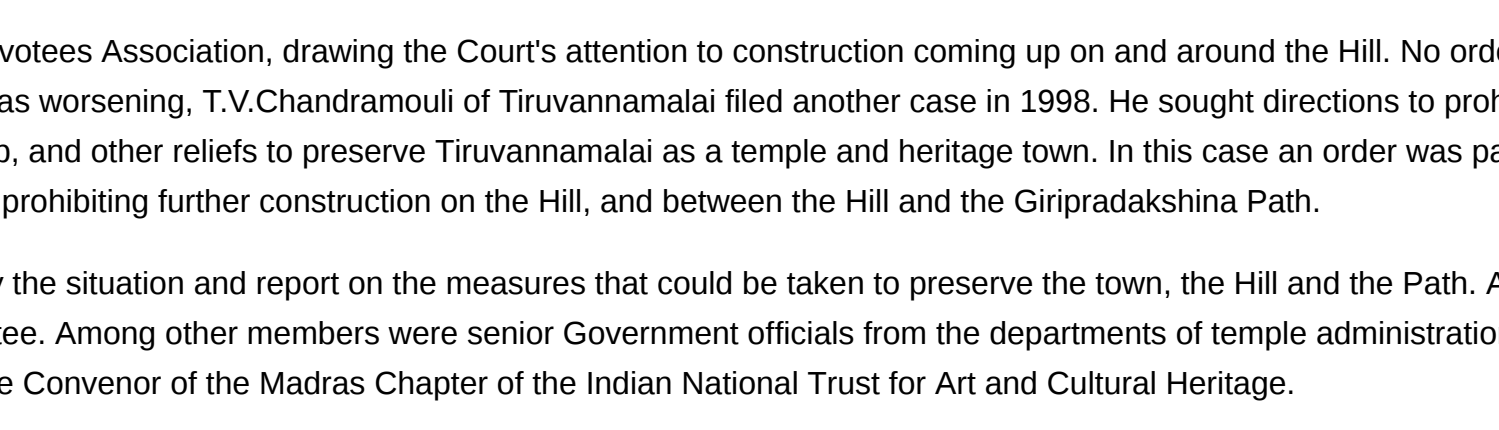
Let me close with this:

With Sri Bhagavan's infinite grace and mercy He brings some selected people and gives them the job, the mission, the work. It is for them to keep on doing.

When God came to Moses He told him: "I Am That I Am." In the Bible it is written that Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you." What did Jesus say? Go to the Heart. Peace is there. Again, "Ask and it shall be given; seek and you shall find; knock and the door shall be opened."

So it is only a question of different lands, different religions, different languages, but the Source is the same.

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya



Protecting Sri Arunachala

The Legal Efforts

NEW *The following talk was given by Sriram Panchu on September 10 at the 104th Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's 'Advent at Arunachala' program in New York City. Sriram Panchu of Madras is on a research and teaching fellowship at New York University. He has been visiting Sri Ramanasramam in Tiruvannamalai for the last two years.*

CONSTRUCTION around the Holy Hill has been going on for sometime; worse still is that some has come up on the Hill itself. This has been the subject of litigation in the Madras High Court. Under India's public interest law, any citizen may draw the Court's attention to a matter of public interest and seek remedial relief.

The first case was filed in the early 1990s and was directed against the proposal of the Government to set up the office of the Collectorate between the Hill and the Giripradakshina Path. It was pointed out that such a location would mar the sanctity of the Hill and would interfere with the pilgrimage around the Hill. An interim order of injunction was made by the High Court. Subsequently, after representations were made by Sri Ramanasramam and others, the Government relocated the new Collectorate elsewhere.

Around 1995 another case was filed by the Arunachala Devotees Association, drawing the Court's attention to construction coming up on and around the Hill. No orders were passed in this case, and it was kept pending. Since the situation was worsening, T.V.Chandramouli of Tiruvannamalai filed another case in 1998. He sought directions to prohibit such construction, to remove the illegal ones which had come up, and other reliefs to preserve Tiruvannamalai as a temple and heritage town. In this case an order was passed in the latter half of 1998 by the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court prohibiting further construction on the Hill, and between the Hill and the Giripradakshina Path.

In early 1999, the Court appointed an Expert Body to study the situation and report on the measures that could be taken to preserve the town, the Hill and the Path. A former Judge of the Madras High Court, Mr. Justice Arunachalam, was named as the Chairman of the Committee. Among other members were senior Government officials from the departments of temple administration, forests, archaeology and traffic planning; also appointed was a prominent architect, Mr. P.T.Krishnan, who is also the Convenor of the Madras Chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage.

The Committee received representations by affidavit and also held public hearings. A large number of representations were made by people from different parts of India and the world stressing the sanctity of the Hill and the need to preserve it by all means possible. A substantial number of representations came from local residents, especially owners of land which lay between the Path and the Hill, who strongly resisted any move to prevent them from constructing on land that they owned. There was also resistance to removal of construction which had come up on the foot of the Hill. On several other aspects which did not interfere with private ownership of land, there was consensus on the steps to be taken.

The Expert Body made its report in early 2000. It set out the historical and spiritual facts and background. It dealt with the current position and stressed the need for preventive and corrective action. It made as many as twenty-nine recommendations. These relate to prohibition against fresh construction on the Hill and between the Path and the Hill, the removal of illegal construction thereon, afforestation and environmental measures, the preservation of water bodies, facilities for pilgrims, moving the highway and heavy traffic zone away from the Path, etc. It called for protection under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites Protection Act and for declaration of the Hill, the Path, the Temple and Town as national heritage sites and ultimately as World Heritage Sites. The Expert Body's report is featured on the website: [/sriramanamaharshi.org/appeal.zip](http://sriramanamaharshi.org/appeal.zip) [which is no longer available]

In August 2000, the High Court heard arguments in the case. The State Government agreed not to construct on the land owned by it in the area between the Path and the Hill but was against an absolute ban on privately-owned areas. With regard to removal of illegal construction it stated that large scale removal was difficult and may lead to law-and-order problems. The Central Government stated that it had declared the Virupaksha Cave, Skandashram and the Path leading to it as national monuments (and thus to be protected against encroachment). However, with regard to the plea that the entire Path, and the land between the Path and the Hill be so protected, it stated that the excessive construction which had taken place on this area would prevent it from being declared a national monument. (This is ironic, because it was the Government's duty in the first place to prevent such construction.) The other parties, namely, the Petitioners and the local residents, also submitted arguments.

The basis of the plea for preserving the area can briefly be stated as follows:

The Constitution of India (Article 25) protects religious practices. Lakhs of devotees come every month to have darshan. Many people from other parts of India and abroad make such pilgrimage often and residents of Arunachala, and also to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram, in the heart of the Annapolis Valley.

Such pradakshina from time immemorial constitutes a customary right and qualifies for protection under the law.

Environmental reasons also mandate prevention of construction on and at the foot of the Hill. Tiruvannamalai is a water-starved place. The water runoff from the Hill cannot reach the tanks and lake beds on account of the construction. Tiruvannamalai has a well-connected system of water bodies which, in the past, collected the water coming down the Hill slope and recharged the ground water table.

The Hill is the object of veneration for countless numbers of people and forms the focal point of their belief, faith and practice. Thus, the right and Where private rights cannot survive along with a clearly established public right, it is the former which must yield to the latter.

The Hill and the Path qualify for protection and preservation as ancient monuments and archaeological sites. The Hill is believed, from time immemorial, to be the very embodiment of Lord Shiva. The scriptures say so, and saints and sages down the years have taught so. Furthermore, geological experts estimate that the Hill is one of the oldest rock formations in the world, substantially older than the Himalayas. Few monuments can possess the great spiritual, historical and geological importance of the Hill.

The High Court's judgment is awaited.

continued in the *Mor/Apr 2001 issue*

Advent at Arunachala

New York And Nova Scotia

NEW *Nova Scotia, Canada*
ON SUNDAY, September 3rd, 2000, devotees gathered at Arunachala Ashrama in Bridgetown, Nova Scotia to celebrate the 104th anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's arrival at Arunachala, and also to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram, in the heart of the Annapolis Valley.

The program began with the performance of Ganesha Puja, followed by Sri Ramana Puja conducted by Dr. Anil K.Sharma. The rendition of Sri Bhagavan's 108 Names was done by Srimati Geeta Bhatt, who was assisted by the young children at the Ashrama. During the chanting, the children laid flowers at Sri Bhagavan's feet.

Welcoming remarks were given by Dennis Hartel, who shared with all his memories of the initial days of the Mandiram, including the actual physical moving of the entire building to its current location in the year 1975.

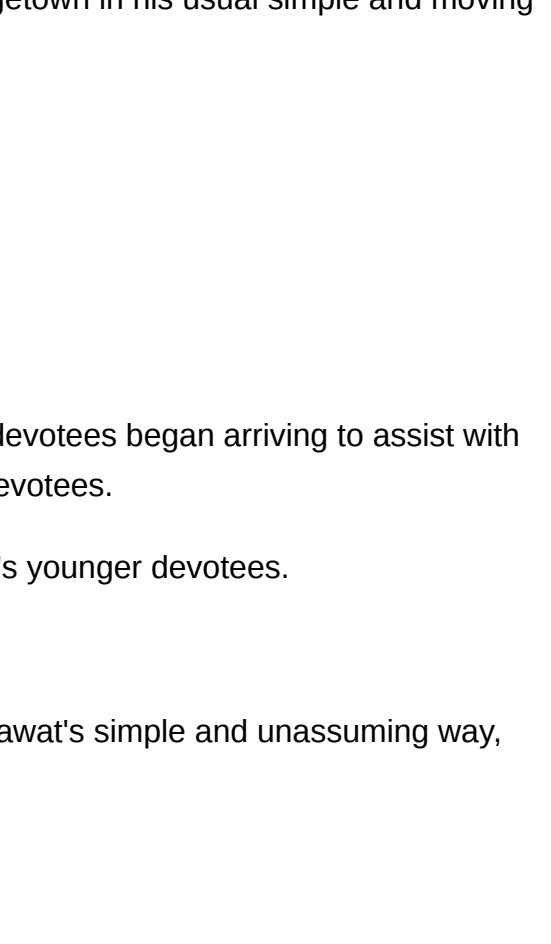
A statue of Sri Ramana was installed in the Mandiram during this function. This is a lifelike replica of the statue of Sri Ramana present in the New Hall of Sri Ramanasramam, India. This work was the result of the dedication of James Hartel, who also gave a brief talk on the making and installation of the same.

With rapt attention, devotees listened to a videotape of Sri Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat which had been recorded in 1989, explaining the nature and purpose of Sri Arunachala Ashrama. (see article.2 for text.) We could all feel that Bhagawat's utter devotion to Sri Bhagavan continues to inspire us, despite his having shed his mortal coil.

Bhajans were offered by devotees. Following the bhajans, *Mr.B.K.Raju*, whose friendship the Ashram continues to cherish, gave his recollections of the early days of the Ashram in Bridgetown in his usual simple and moving manner.

Following the puja and the chanting of "*Upadesa Saram*," prasad was served to all by Mrs. Raju and her band of dedicated devotees.

Bhagavan's grace was showered upon all.



Dr. Anil K. Sharma at the
Nova Scotia Temple Shrine
click to see a larger image

Be Still, It is The Wind That Sings

Arthur Osborne's thorough understanding of the Maharshi's teachings was not simply the result of a refined intellect. It was a heart illumined by spiritual experience. His language is robust; his knowledge of spirituality pervasive. This was most evident in his editorship of *The Mountain Path* magazine. When articles on spiritual topics were not forthcoming, Mr. Osborne would write them himself with remarkable clarity and insight under several pseudonyms. This comprehensive collection of articles and poems – 16 poems previously unpublished – is a tribute to the author's stature as a writer and his illustrious spiritual journey.

475 pages \$13.00

Sri Devikalottara

One of the Upa-agamas highly valued by the Maharshi, so much so that he spontaneously translated it into Tamil text during his stay in the Virupaksha Cave. It contains Lord Shiva's instruction to Parvati, outlining the direct Advaitic path to liberation. This edition contains the Maharshi's Tamil verses, original Sanskrit text with English transliteration and translation.

91 pages \$4.00

The Veda Parayana (Now on CD)

The Veda Parayana consists of Vedic Sanskrit chants carefully prepared for recitation by Sri Ramana Maharshi. During his lifetime the Veda Parayana was held twice a day, morning and evening. This practice is still continued in Ramana Ashrama. The Maharshi obviously encouraged aspirants to attend it, as it was a time of tremendous silence when he sat immobile as though carved in rock. Sri Bhagavan said it was not necessary to know its meaning, that it was sufficient that the chanting serve as a support for meditation. These recordings were made under special arrangements in the Old Hall of Sri Ramanasramam, India.

Two CDs, total time: 86'48"
(Digitally enhanced) \$18.00

Visiting Arunachala Ashrama, New York

All the friends of Arunachala Ashrama in New York were happy to have Sri V.S.Subramanian (Mani), Manager of Sri Ramanasramam, his wife and son, Srimati Ramani and Ramanan, visit with us from October 10 to October 25. Mani and his wife were visiting their son Ramanan for the first time in the U.S.

Travelling to Niagara Falls, Washington D.C. and other nearby places the Subramanian family was the guest of Prof. Ram Desai in Buffalo, Krishna and Padma Sastri in Ontario. Drs. Aruna and Ramkumar in Hartford and Drs. Niya and Jagadev Ramanani in Maryland. In New York City they also visited the homes of Mohan Ramaswami, T.S.Vaidyanathan and Geeta Bhatt, who attended on them with genuine warmth and affection.

They will remain in California with their son until their December 12th departure for India.

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* page.

"The Maharshi" is a free bimonthly newsletter distributed in North America by *Arunachala Ashrama*, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center. You can subscribe to this newsletter's announcements by email. All back issues are available as *html pages* and in *Acrobat PDF* format from 2000 to the present. *Books, images, videos and audio CDs* on Sri Ramana Maharshi can also be found in the *eLibrary*, the *On-line Bookstore* pages and the Ashrama's [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com) channel.

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D. How can I get peace? I do not seem to obtain it through vichara.

M. Peace is your natural state. It is the mind that obstructs the natural state. Your vichara has been made no such thing in the mind. Investigate what the mind is and it will disappear. There is no such thing as mind apart from thought. Nevertheless, because of the emergence of thought, you surmise something from which it starts and term that the mind. When you probe to see what it is, you find there is really no such thing as mind. When the mind has thus vanished, you realise eternal peace.

— *The Maharshi's Gospel*