

The Maharshi

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ARUNACHALA EVERYWHERE

by Michael Bowes

I want to tell you about a hill where I live. I don't suppose that the hill that I will describe could be the hill that represents the opposite pole to Arunachala. But the location of this hill is definitely on the other side of the globe from Tiruvannamalai.

I have been practicing various forms of yoga and meditation for many years. While on a trip to India in April, 1996 I took up the practice of *Atma Vichara* and subsequently visited Ramana's Ashrama. Prior to my trip my father had passed away and when I returned to the United States I found that my mother had purchased a winter home in Scottsdale, Arizona. She asked me to help her to move some of her belongings from Kansas City to Arizona. So in January, 1997 I drove her to Scottsdale and after about a month I decided to stay.

In May of 1997 I rented my own apartment. After I moved in, and when I was finished setting up my new place, I was walking out of the front door and for the first time took notice of a hill that was very near. It bore an uncanny resemblance to Arunachala. In fact the similarity was nothing short of amazing. Instantly, I wondered if this was the hill named "Camelback." Camelback has a famous rock formation on the Northwest side called the "Praying Monk." Of course it was/is Camelback.

Camelback looks very much like Arunachala. I started doing some research about Arunachala on the internet. According to my best recollection Arunachala and Camelback are within about 50 feet of being the same height. And it seems that they are similar in length.

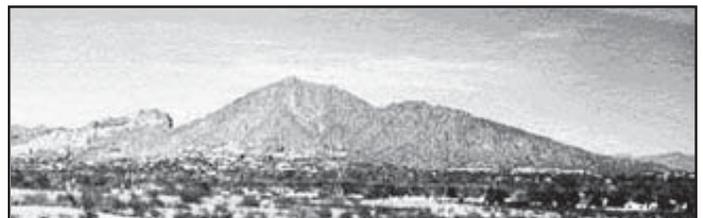
According to Richard Allen of gemland.com, the major portion of Camelback is formed of Precambrian Rock. Precambrian Rock is the oldest rock on the planet. The west side of Camelback, known as the "Camel's Head," is composed of Tertiary Rock which

was formed much later. But the main body of the hill has been present on our earth since the time that rock first started to form from earth's original molten mass. I believe that this type of rock is sometimes referred to as the "Vishnu Sheath."

Not long after I moved into my first apartment, a Tamil friend of mine came to visit. He is a dear friend and we had been to Ramana's Ashrama together in July of 1996. He has never been afraid to speak his true mind, and he too was amazed at how much Camelback looks like Arunachala.

Camelback is central to this valley and visible from nearly everywhere around. Even before my friend arrived I was so overwhelmed by the similarity between Arunachala and Camelback that every time I would see Camelback, whether I was at home or driving, I would remember to practice *vichara*. Soon I was practicing constantly. I couldn't stop. Thank God! Due to the grace of God and Guru, the effect on me over the years has been nothing short of a miracle.

If you could see Camelback yourself, you too would realize how similar it is to Arunachala. Perhaps you have seen it. The color is very much the same as Arunachala (reddish).

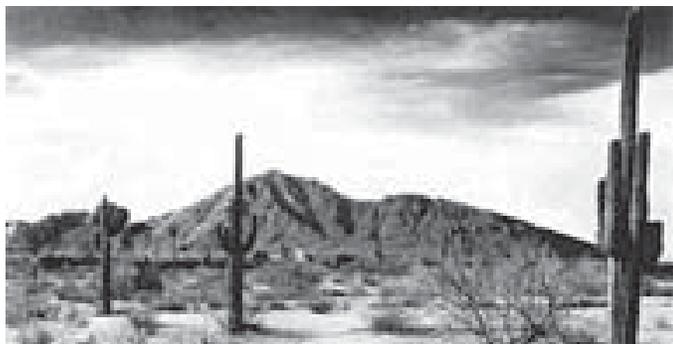


Camelback Hill seen from the South

There are trails that go up the mountain, one from the east and one from the west. The trail on the east side is called the Cholla trail. Cholla is a certain type of cactus found here in the Sonoran Desert. Please forgive me if I can't help but equate the word "cholla" with "chala," though the words are pronounced differently. The small municipality just north of the hill is named "Paradise Valley." There is an exclusive resort development on part of the north side of the hill named "The Sanctuary on Camelback." Farther south, in the municipality of Tempe, Arizona there is a major road named "Priest Drive" that runs north and south. When traveling north on this road an observer has a wonderful view of the hill and is pointing directly at its summit.

There are many, many caves on the hill and every time I see them it reminds me of the caves on Arunachala that were used as ashramas and hermitages. There are Saguaro cactus all around the area that are reminiscent of Shiva's trident.

There is a rock formation on the Northwest side of the hill called the "Praying Monk." It is phenomenal. The Praying Monk has been worshipping this hill day and night for eons. To me it is symbolic of the constant effort and perseverance that is required in order to realize the Self. The Praying Monk is probably eighty to one hundred feet tall and it can be seen from many locations around the valley. It looks just like a monk in a "Franciscan" style robe, or the same style of attire that the swamis of the order of Shankara wear. The figure is bowing to a rock formation on the west side of the hill that reminds me of a *lingam*. Many years ago the Franciscan order of Catholic monks built a retreat center nearby that still operates to this day. Just the very sight of the Praying Monk quiets my mind. Sometimes it nearly brings me to tears. But it



Saguaro cactus, reminiscent of Siva's trident



The Praying Monk on Camelback Hill

always causes me to deepen my abidance.

About a year and a half after I moved to the valley a book was published entitled *Camelback, Sacred Mountain of Phoenix*, by Gary Driggs. He calls Camelback the "Sacred Mountain of Phoenix" because archaeologists have determined that a cave near the Praying Monk is the first known place of worship in this valley (pages 74-79 of the book). The native people used this cave for their religious ceremonies. Gary Driggs calls this cave the "Sacred Grotto." The cave is quite large and is capable of accommodating many people at once. The book was the final confirmation for me. This hill is a physical manifestation of the Sadguru.

I suppose that I may as well mention that the original Arizona State Capitol building's foundation is built with stone that was quarried from Camelback Mountain. A huge white angel crowns this building. The building was outgrown and is now a museum, surrounded by more modern and spacious state government buildings. So in a symbolic sense, the government of the state was built upon the foundation of Camelback Mountain.

One last thing is that the hill is located in Phoenix, Arizona. Of course the legendary "Phoenix" is the mythological bird that symbolizes immortality, resurrection and life after death. According to the myth, when the bird felt its death was near, it would build a nest of aromatic wood and set it on fire. Flames then consumed the bird and a new phoenix would spring forth from the pyre. It embalmed the ashes of its predecessor in an egg of myrrh and flew with it to Heliopolis, "City of the Sun." It is easy to make a comparison between the self-immolation of the Phoe-



aerial photo of Camelback Mountain taken in 1954

nix bird, and our efforts to destroy the “ego sense” so that the SELF will rise from the ashes (*vibhuti*).

In the course of the unimaginable march over eons of time, worlds have come and worlds will go. Societies will come and societies will go. Persons come and go. Philosophies come and philosophies go. Hills will be built up due to the forces of nature and once again they will be destroyed by the very same

forces that created them. But the SELF has been forever and always is. The object of *vichara*, indeed the object of life, is to abide as the SELF, our own true nature. We can, we must, and eventually we all will make every effort to personally realize this truth. The SELF is the only perpetually abiding truth of life. Guru’s grace is ample for the task. May we always realize the grace of the Guru.

JAYANTI

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The Two Kinds of Guru

by Arthur Osborne

FOR those who aspire to proceed beyond belief to experience in religion it has normally been held necessary to follow a guru or spiritual director. It is not really correct to translate the word 'guru' as 'teacher' because, although he may incidentally expound doctrine, his main function is the transmission of an influence which will fortify the disciple in his inner quest and his guidance of the disciple, verbally or in silence, on that quest. What, then, is the nature of the guru?

Ramana Maharshi said: "The Guru is the formless Self within each one of us. He may appear as a body to guide us, but that is only his disguise." And the author of the article from which this is quoted goes on to say: "It appears from this that to be consciously the Self is to be consciously the Guru."

This statement involves the following doctrinal position. The Supreme Spirit (*Paramatma*) is the true self (*atma*) of each person (*jiva*) and would naturally give right spiritual understanding and guidance, but in most cases the conscious mind is shut off from this by the ego-sense (*ahankara*), that is the belief in one's existence as a separate individual entity. The impulse arises to return to one's Source but the mind is too estranged to perceive and follow the path directly. Since one mistakes oneself for a separate human being, one can respond to the guidance only through a manifested Guru whom one mistakes for another human being, although he himself is aware of his universal nature. Therefore the Tamil poet-saint Thayumanavar compares the Guru to a deer being used as a decoy to capture another deer. The Maharshi said that the function of the outer Guru is only to awaken the inner Guru in the heart.

The above refers only to the ideal or perfect Guru who is in a state of constant, unwavering consciousness of his universal nature (and it will be observed that in writing it I have spelled the word 'Guru' with a capital letter). But this is a very rare thing. Usually a guru or spiritual director is a member of a spiritual hierarchy who has been invested with the authority and function of directing others without having him-

self broken free from the existential (as distinct from theoretical) illusion of his individual state. With regard to the guru in this sense I will limit myself to five observations.

1. The power that is conveyed is to be regarded as valid within its limits, just as is the power to perform sacraments that is conveyed to a priest by his ordination.

2. Nevertheless, too great expectations are not to be placed on such direction, since a guide cannot normally lead others farther than he has gone himself.

3. A guru who has not transcended the individual state is liable to individual failings. Being revered as a guru may particularly, for instance, give rise to the faults of arrogance and hypocrisy. Such faults are infectious and liable to be caught by the disciples. The guru may be compared to a pipeline bringing the waters of life to thirsty men; if the pipe has not been well cleaned inside, the waters that quench their thirst may also carry the germs of typhoid or cholera.

4. This is an age when traditional forms are losing their rigidity. All the Hindu spiritual masters since Ramakrishna have recognized this, including the Maharshi. It is a time when "the Spirit bloweth where it listeth" and many cases of spontaneous awakening to Truth without the mediation of a guru are reported. These, of course, need further effort and discipline to establish them firmly, but so also does the initiation given by a guru.

5. The Maharshi indicated before shedding the body that he would still be the Guru. Ample evidence has accrued (if any were needed) that this is so.

Perhaps this last point needs to be amplified, as it is not usual for a Guru to continue to function as such after physical death, though there have been cases.

According to the ancient traditional teaching reiterated by the Maharshi, a man does not become one with the Self by attaining Liberation (or Realization); he simply realizes his innate, preexisting oneness. Also he does not merge in the Absolute at death (thus becoming, as some have supposed, incapable of performing any individual function) since he already was one with the Absolute. The Maharshi stated explicitly that there is no difference between the Jivan-Mukta (one liberated while embodied) and the Videha-Mukta (one liberated after death). Once when asked whether a Liberated Man (he always used the Sanskrit term 'Jnani', meaning 'Man of Knowledge' for this) still

1. "The Human Status of the Maharshi" by Dr. T. N. Krishnaswami, The Mountain Path, April 1967

continued to perform a function after death, he answered curtly, “Some may.” This assertion is also to be found in the *Brahma Sutras*, one of the three basic Hindu scriptures. When some of Bhagavan’s followers asked him shortly before his own death what they could do for guidance after he left them, he made the curt reply: “You attach too much importance to the body.” The implication obviously was that only the body was leaving them; he was not.

In saying that there is ample evidence that this is so, I put in the parenthesis “if any were needed” so as not to seem to be suggesting that the Maharshi’s words need any corroboration. They do not. The sort of evidence I have in mind is testimony of those many who have found

guidance and support from the Maharshi either in dream or vision or formlessly since his death. Two examples that could be quoted are the poem “A Beacon Still” by S. P. Mukherji in the January 1964 issue of *The Mountain Path* and the article “How the Maharshi Came to Me” by G. N. Daley in that of January 1967.

Finally, reverting to the two types of guru it should be said that the distinction is important because it sometimes happens that the theoretical explanation of the first type, the Sad-Guru or Divine Guru, is used to justify one who is in fact of the second type, the appointed functionary. This can cause theoretical confusion and actual danger.

—*The Mountain Path*, July 1969

Easy Yet Difficult

by G. L. N.

THIS is a brief account of how my contact with Sri Ramana helped me. Truth transcends individuality. What I depict is my limited personal understanding of him.

My contact with him began in 1930. It was by Divine Providence, not by my planning, that I was able to spend a continuous period of three years at Sri Ramanasramam. It was a great blessing.

I was a science graduate. I had learned about the atomic structure of the universe and how matter finally resolves into energy and the mind also is a form of energy. So the entire world of mind and matter, when traced to its source, is one uniform Energy, or God, or whatever you choose to call it.

This was my attitude of mind when I first went to Sri Ramanasramam. Bhagavan was then translating his ‘Ulladu Narpadu’ (Forty Verses) into Telugu at the request of Yogi Ramiah. After finishing it he threw the book to me and said, “You are an Andhra; see if there are any mistakes of grammar in it.” This was an act of grace, for it was that translation which was responsible for turning my mind inwards and setting it on the right path.

The essence of what Bhagavan said to me in my talks with him was: “You say that on final analysis all that I see or think or do is one; but that really comprises two notions—the all that is seen and the I that does the seeing, thinking and doing, and says ‘I’. Which of these

two is the more real, true and important? Obviously the seer, since the seen is dependent on it. So turn your attention to the seer who is the source of your ‘I’ and realize that. This is the real task. Up to now you have been studying the object, not the subject; now find out for what reality this word ‘I’ stands. Find the entity which is the source of the expression ‘I’. That is the Self, the Self of all selves.”

This direct, simple teaching was like a tonic to me. It swept away the unrest and confusion that till then had haunted my mind. It is, of course, the essence of ‘Ulladu Narpadu’ and the central theme of all Bhagavan’s writings. The simplicity of it made me burst out: “Then Bhagavan, Self-realization is very easy, just as you say in the poem ‘Atma Vidya’!”

Bhagavan smiled and said, “Yes, yes, it seems so at first, but there is difficulty too. You have to overcome your present false values and wrong identification. Therefore the quest requires concentrated effort and steadfast abidance in the Source when this is reached.”

However, even while warning me, he also added words of solace: “But don’t let that deter you. The rise of the urge to seek for the ‘I’ is itself an act of Divine Grace. Once this urge gets hold of you, you are in its clutches. The grip of Divine Grace never relaxes and finally devours you, just as the prey in a tiger’s jaws is never allowed to escape.”

—*The Mountain Path*, January 1966

FORTY VERSES IN PRAISE OF SRI RAMANA

by Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni

translated by Dr. Anil K. Sharma

(continued from July/August 2003 issue)

ramaṇa janmināmayi bhavānguruḥ |
abhida āśayastava mahānuruḥ | |24| |

ramaṇa - O Ramana, *janminām* - of men, *aji* - O, *bhavān* - you, *guruḥ* - Guru, *abhidā* - non-difference, *āśayas* - heart, *tava* - your, *mahān* - very, *uruḥ* - great, infinite

O Ramana, you are the Guru of men. Infinite is your heart, in which there is no differentiation.

jagadahaṁ paraḥ sphurati me trayam |
sadabhidam girā tava viśamsayam | |25| |

jagad - the world, *ahaṁ* - 'I', *paraḥ* - the Supreme, *sphurati* - destroys, *me* - for me, *trayam* - the triad, *sad* - the reality, *abhidam* - without differentiation, *girā* - speech, word, *tava* - your, *viśamsayam* - without doubt

Your word destroys for me the triad of 'world', 'I', and 'the Supreme', (and there remains) the one reality without differentiation, without doubt.

tvadupadeśato galati saṁvidā |
mayi niranyayā sadahamorbhidā | |26| |

tvadupadeśato - from your teaching, *galati* - dropped, lost, *saṁvidā* - by knowledge, *mayi* - to me, *niranyayā* - not other, inseparable, *sadahamor* - between the reality and the ego, *bhidā* - difference

From your teaching, by knowledge inseparable from me, the difference between the reality and the ego is lost.

ahami yo'ntaras tam amalam hṛdi |
anubhavema bhos tava kṛpā yadi | |27| |

ahami - ego, *yo* - which, *antaras* - Supreme Self, *tam* - that, *amalam* - pure, *hṛdi* - in the Heart, *anubhavema* - we could experience, *bhos* - Oh, *tava* - your, *kṛpā* - grace, compassion, *yadi* - if

Oh (Ramana), if your grace (extends to us), we could experience the Supreme Self in the pure heart, hidden within the ego.

na karunā gunas tava vidāmpate |
hṛdayatejaṣaḥ sahaḥabhaiva te | |28| |

na - not, *karunā* - compassion, *gunas* - quality, *tava* - yours, *vidān* - of the wise, *pate* - Oh Lord, *hṛdaya* - heart, *tejaṣaḥ* - brilliance, *sahaḥabhaiva* - only natural, *te* - your

Oh Lord of the wise! Compassion is not just a quality of yours. It is natural for you, as the effulgence of your Heart.

tava tanurjvalatyanagha vidyutā |
tava dṛgātātā lasati bhāsvatā | |29| |

tava - your, *tanur* - body, *jvalati* - blazes, *anagha* - Oh spotless one, *vidyutā*, as lightning, *tava* - your, *dṛg* - look, *ātātā* - pervasive, extended, *lasati* - shines, *bhāsvatā* - bright

Oh spotless one, your body blazes like lightning. Bright and pervasive is your look.

kabalitaṁ manas tava vibho hṛdā |
tvamasi santataṁ vilasito mudā | |30| |

kabalitaṁ - weakened, dissolved, *manas* - mind, *tava* - your, *vibho* - Oh Lord, *hṛdā* - by the heart, *tvam* - you, *asi* - are, *santataṁ* - eternally, *vilasito* - gleaming, shining, *mudā* - with bliss

Your mind has been dissolved by the heart, oh Lord! You are eternally shining with bliss.

bhuvanabhūpater bhagavataḥ kṛte |
bhavasi pācako yamavatāṁ pate | |31| |

bhuvana - mankind, *bhū* - universe, *pater* - of the Lord, *bhagavataḥ* - Bhagavan, *kṛte* - for, on the account of, *bhavasi* - you are, *pācako* - the cook, *yamavatāṁ* - of the self-controlled, *pate* - Oh Lord

For the Universal Lord of mankind, you are the cook, oh Lord of the self-controlled!

narapaśūnimān ahami tāḍayan |
paraśivaudanaṁ vitanuṣe pacan | |32| |

nara - man, *paśūn* - beasts, *imān* - these, *ahami* - ego, *tāḍayan* - slaying, *paraśivaudanaṁ* - food for Supreme Shiva, *vitanuṣe* - you prepare, make ready, *pacan* - cooking

Slaying the ego of these man-beasts (humans steeped in ignorance), and cooking them, you prepare food for the supreme Shiva.

Letters and Comments

My father related this experience this morning.

He is in the process of selling the house and buying an apartment in Bangalore. Yesterday, he arranged to have a simple ceremony at the new apartment — just the priest and himself. On the way to the apartment it seems he wondered if he should have invited anybody else.

The priest began the pooja. Then my father had this experience/vision. He saw Bhagavan enter the apartment, sit across from him, with his head shaking and smiling. After this my father felt like he was drowned in bliss and lost awareness of the surroundings, the priest and everything else. When the pooja was completed he distributed sweets to the workers in the apartment complex.

Relating this experience, my father was very moved and said that he was not being allowed to think beyond the next step in the apparently complex series of tasks of selling and buying real estate property. He felt that this move was the preliminary step in setting direction to his life hereafter.

A Devotee from Washington, D.C.

I appreciate from the bottom of my heart the work you are doing. Like me, many Indians come to know about the “real India” after we come here. Your work keeps us in touch with India. Thank you very much for that.

I’m very new to this spiritual life. I became serious about the spiritual life only during the last few months. Many people had the good fortune to have a glimpse of the Self in Bhagavan’s presence because of Bhagavan’s grace. Even though I’m new to the spiritual life, by His grace, even I had a taste of this Pure Self. This instilled in me the belief that Bhagavan is still around us and is helping us. I wanted to share my experience.

I have been doing meditation (some kind of *Kundalini*

practice) since I was 21 (now I’m 31), but it was not continuous. I was doing meditation just to live my life better, not for any spiritual reasons. Even though I heard about Bhagavan a few years back, I never knew his teachings. Recently, during the last few months, there appeared a sudden improvement (or force) in my life, which made me to read about Bhagavan. At the same time my friend got the *Nan Yar? (Who Am I?)* book from Sri Ramanasramam.

This is the first book I have ever read about Bhagavan’s teachings. After reading that book, during my waking hours, I couldn’t think of anything else except *Nan Yar?* It went on for three weeks continuously. I believe because of that I got a severe cold, headache, and body pain. Strangely, though this was little different from the normal illnesses, it was only the right side of the body that was affected with symptoms. The left side of the body was normal. Then I stopped thinking about this for a day. The following night, while I was in the bed, again this ‘I-thought’ became very strong, and I started analyzing how this thought came, which made the investigation into the ‘I-thought’ more intense. After some time the thought reduced to a small point and immediately vanished. I then felt only perfect peace, nothing else, not even my body. After a few minutes, I became aware of the body. Then suddenly I became still for some time, I couldn’t even feel the peace. My mind was not thinking anything, just still for a few minutes. After this experience, I started reading more about Bhagavan, and His teachings. Then I came to know that in His presence many felt this experience at least once, as He showed a glimpse of the Self to people who intently wanted to know. And I also came to know that He continues to help people in the spiritual process even though He left his body. After this experience I’m feeling that Bhagavan is always with us, helping people in their spiritual process.

A Devotee from California

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 contact the individuals below for more information.

Boston Area — David & Anna Klegon (617-928-1487 / dklegon@rcn.com)

Detroit, Ann Arbor Area — Prashanth & Shobana (734-327-0109 / prashvis@hotmail.com)

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-423-7324) / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adishesan (703-502-4892 / adishesan@worldnet.att.net)

Miami, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-755-4758 / arunahill@earthlink.net)

San Francisco Area — Swaminathan & Sangeeta (510-324-1160 / nachiketas@hotmail.com)

Toronto, Canada — Krishnan & Padma Sastri (905-849-6005 / psastri@hotmail.com)

Ottawa, Canada — Anantha Padmanabhan (613-733-8250 / padmanabhan_ananth@hotmail.com)