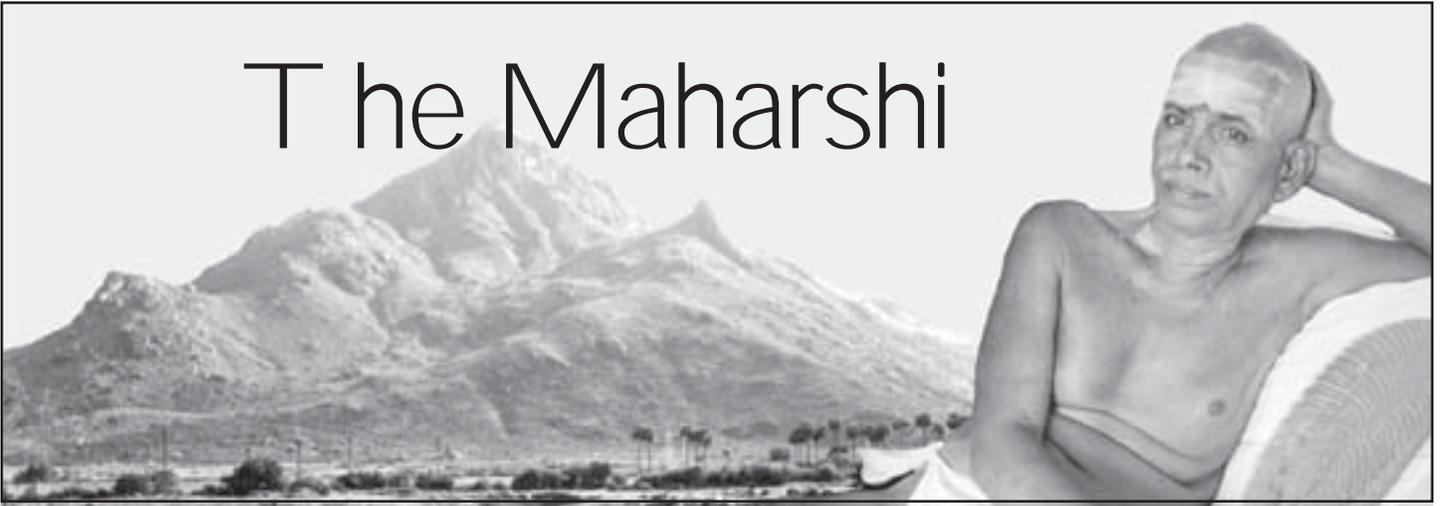


The Maharshi



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Advaitic Sadhana

By S. S. Cohen

CHAPTER 7

SĀDHAKAS

(PRACTISING DISCIPLES)

TRUTH seekers who resort to a *Brahmaṛṣi* (a Sage who has realised Brahman, the Absolute or the Self) for guidance are of great variety. They are not and cannot be all of the same mental and spiritual outlook, the same intellectual abilities or the same constitutional make up nor can they follow the same course of meditation, or hold to it for the same length of time, etc. Modes of meditation differ from one *sādhaka* to another, as modes of thinking and of self-expression differ among individuals in ordinary life. Inspiration and light come to each in various ways, and each follows them as best suits his temperament and in the manner most conducive to his progress. Again, not all come with the same amount of preparation to their credit. Some are ripe, some less so, others are people of the world yet with very strong inclinations for the life spiritual. Some begin with material motives but get caught on the way and turn spiritual.

The Guru knows each and every one of them, yet keeps his own counsel. In his infinite compassion he looks upon all with an eye of perfect equality, so that each disciple may, in his free and pure atmosphere, rise to the greatest heights of his spiritual potentialities. Grace and holiness flow from the Guru as spontaneously as light flows from the sun, or fragrance from the flower. They are ceaseless and infinite.

The foremost *sādhaka* is he who has surrendered himself completely to the practice, which he views as the only reason for his being in an embodied existence. Nothing else matters to him. His mind remains fixed on the search for the Heart, whether in his meditation, which is the time for intense concentration, or in his studies. In this mood he makes rapid progress, for then the mind will be able to shed quickly much of its inherited encumbrances and propensities — its *vāsanās* — and replaces them by the habits of the quest. He asks nothing of the Guru that has no bearing on his *sādhanā*, and desires nothing but to be left in peace to pursue it in his own way.

Next is the *sādhaka* who cannot sustain prolonged concentration, but who compensates by long stays in the presence of the Guru and more study. After him comes the one who cannot meditate at all, preferring to serve the Guru in all sorts of ways. He earns the merit of serving a Guru and a *Brahmaṛṣi* and at the same time benefits by his tranquil atmosphere, with the result that his mind will, in course of time, become fit for meditation.

Next is the devotee who does not strictly come in the *sādhaka* category. He does not stay with the Guru, but visits him off and on, and performs *sādhanā* in his own way at home. He may have a family whom he finds it his duty to maintain and look after. There is no valid objection to a married life, notwithstanding the widespread prejudice against it. The objection is to the net of complexities which married life, especially in present-day society, weaves round the life of the seeker, which impels many

of them to keep away from matrimonial ties in order to be free to surrender themselves to the life contemplative.

Many other classes of devotees crowd round the Guru, ranging from the householder who considers *sāadhanā* superfluous, taking the Master to be like a solid raft which carries all the passenger-devotees to the other shore of *Mukti* (liberation) with all their luggage of sins and shortcomings, to the one who expects a return on his devotion, or the one who first puts the Guru to the test in his worldly affairs before accepting him. All these benefit by their attachment to the Master, for no one who draws near the fire will miss being comforted to a degree by its warmth. The Guru, like the sun, sheds his light on one and all, leaving it to each devotee to receive the quantum which is commensurate with his ability to absorb. Worldliness sticks to all the disciples in various degrees, which the Master's holy presence mysteriously rubs off, particularly in those who cooperate in their *sāadhanā* with humility, detachment, and strong common sense.

The variety of ways God or the Self brings men to him is amazing to watch. No one is forgotten; no one is forever left behind, and no one is totally annihilated as a 'lost soul' for whatever wickedness one has at one time or other been guilty of. The creed of lost souls is not that of Vedanta: it does not fit in with its teaching of the single Substance, single Existence.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

THOSE who are already *sādhakas* are on the highway to Release. To them there is nothing more to say. They are already safe. Nor is there anything more to say to those who are on the brink. These need a little push — a gentle push — and they will soon be squatting at the feet of the Guru, appealing for light. The more sluggish ones need a more forcible push to make them fall into line with the former. To these one would suggest: do not lag behind and waste your time in useless things. Do not wait for the knock down. You are almost a renouncer. Start your march towards your destined goal right now, as start you will some day, somehow. Change your outlook on life, your value of the things in which you have reposed your trust, for happiness. For none can give you true happiness - neither man, woman nor even God Himself - but the spiritual strength derived from self-restraint, self-discovery,

and the aspiration for Truth.

Kaivalya Upaniṣad begins with a prayer of the disciple to Lord Parameṣṭha, the Supreme Guru:

O Lord, pray impart to me the most excellent wisdom (*Brahmavidyā*), which is ever enjoyed by the Enlightened Ones, and by which the wise, having freed themselves from all sins, reach Puruṣa, the Most High.

The Blessed Lord answers:

Know It thou through faith, devotion, meditation, and through yoga. For neither by action (ritualistic) nor by progeny nor by wealth is Liberation attained, but by Renunciation alone.

*Paramahamsas** of pure mind, by realising the true meaning of the highest Vedanta through the yoga of renunciation (*Sannyāsa yoga*) enter into That, which is above heaven and which resides in the Cave of the Heart, and thus attain Liberation.

[*Advaitic Sadhana*, by S. S. Cohen is presently under print by Sri Ramanasramam, India. Besides the foregoing chapters serialized in this newsletter, it contains a succinct translation and commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, which is considered to be the briefest, clearest, and most practical study of the nature of man, or *Ātman* (Self). We will announce in this Newsletter when the book becomes available.]

* *Paramahamsas* are the yogis who follow the path of Direct Liberation in this life. (See Preface and *Nāradaparivṛāja Upaniṣad*)

Saranagathi

The Devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's
Satsang Group, Connecticut

would like to warmly and affectionately invite all
devotees for a two-day program
on May 26 and 27, 2007 (Memorial Day weekend)

Venue: 269 North Bride Brook Road,
East Lyme, CT 06333

Overnight accommodations will be provided for all participants. The program will consist of Vedic recitations, homam, Carnatic concert, slide show, interviews with devotees, Tamil parayanam, puja and much more.

RSVP Contact: vprashanth@msn.com

Phone: 860.691.1862

The Voice of Thayumanavar The Silent Sage - Part IV

At Chidambaram

The heart feels joyful as one thinks of Chidambaram, sanctified by holy saints. Thayumanavar stood there in the entrancing presence of Lord Nataraja. He was bathed in tears of emotion. He forgot himself in trance. He poured his heart's fervour into hymns of sublime wisdom.

“There is no treasure higher than Thy Grace.

I am full in Thy fullness.

Thou art the Ocean into which countless religious streams empty themselves.

O beginningless, endless Vastness,
rare for the Vedas, rare for the different warring creeds,

rare for thought and word,

Thou art felt only in Silence.

Hail Light, Hail Purity,

Power that movest all beings!

“Every religion hails Thee as its God.

Thou art beyond religious creeds
that speak in terms of ‘I’ and ‘mine’.

Thou art known only when all these are silenced in the
peace of trance.

Having found Thee, one finds no more religious difference.
For everything is Thy fullness and nothing exists without
Thee.

All differences in the world are born of the ego ‘I’.

This ‘I’ must be burnt away like a camphor hill in the
flame of Thy Grace.

Then nothing shall be left in me except Thyself.

Thou hast made me realise that I am not the body,
the senses, the mind, the intellect, the modes of nature,
but that I am a crystal Consciousness.

Thy Consciousness allows no occasion for the insurgence
of any other entity.

It has left nothing behind.

It has consumed all, as fire consumes camphor.

There is neither knower nor known nor knowledge;
the trinity of separateness is no more.

Thee I love, in Thee I live and into Thee I disappear!

Hail, Truth Light!

Hail Supreme Grace!”

Thayumanavar was steeped in trance for a month or two at Chidambaram and then went on a pilgrimage to Arunagiri [Arunachala], Kanchipuram, Tiruvotiyur, Tiruvarur, Madura and other places before he finally reached Rameshwaram.

Final Beatitude

The world's life depends upon rain. Rains failed and famine raged fearfully. Thayumanavar meditated before Lord Ramanatha at Rameshwaram for the good of the land. He looked up and prayed: “*Pour down, O Blessed heavens, if it be true that God is one and His blissful path is the path.*”

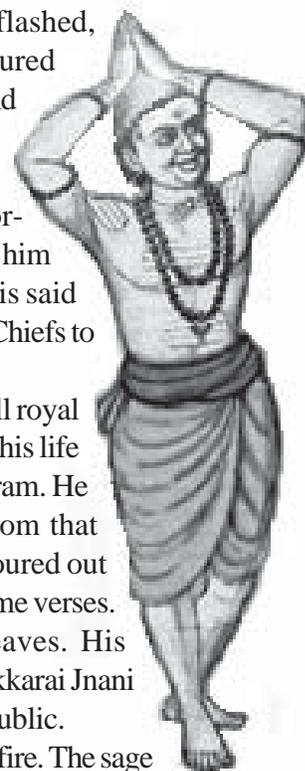
The heavens heard his prayer. The clouds gathered, lightning flashed, thunder roared and rains poured down until the tanks were full and the fields green, and famine was no more. The Raja of Ramnad and his subjects worshipped the Sage and brought him to Ramnad in a palanquin. It is said that he mobilised the Marava Chiefs to ward off foreign incursions.

Thayumanavar rejected all royal honors and preferred to spend his life in a garden hut in Lakshmipuram. He entered into deep trance. From that highest state of divinity he poured out his spiritual intuitions in sublime verses. He wrote them on palm leaves. His disciples Arulayaya and Kodikkarai Jnani copied and sang them to the public.

The songs spread like wildfire. The sage did not like publicity. He wrote in silence, lived in silence and steeped himself in Divine Silence. His mission was fulfilled. The purpose of his embodiment was over. He had prayed for a strong body only for Self-realisation. He was now in perfect union with the Divine, immersed in That consciousness. The body was dead to him, so he willed to shed it off. He entered into his samadhi room and closed the door, leaving a note outside on which these words were written:

“*Dear friends,*

Withdraw the mind from the senses



and fix it in meditation.
Control the thought-current.
Find out the thought-centre and fix yourself there.
Then you will be conscious of the Divine Self;
you will see it dancing in ecstasy.
Live in that Delight.
That Delight plus Consciousness, is the God in you.
He is in every heart.
You need not go anywhere to find Him.
Find your own core and feel Him there.
Peace, bliss, felicity and health are all in you.
Trust in the Divine in you.
Entrust yourself to His grace.
Be as you are.
Off with past impressions.
He who lives from within, an in-gathered soul and life,
is a real Sage, though he may be a householder.
He who allows his mind to wander with the senses
is an ignoramus, though he be learned.
See as a witness, without the burden of seeing.
See the world just as you see a drama.

See without attachment. Look within.
Look at the inner light, unshaken by mental impressions.
Then, floods of conscious bliss shall come pouring in
and around you from all directions.
This is the supreme Knowledge.
Realise! Aum Aum!"

The disciples read this with great joy and meditated before the door. There was no stir inside; it was very late for supper. Arulayya gently called, then knocked; no response. He broke open the door. Ah, what did he see? The body lay there. The face was smiling as usual, but the soul that was the real Sage had flown away like a bird from its cage.

It was on a full moon day in the month of January, 1742 that Thayumanavar entered the final beatitude. January 15th is this Saint's day. The disciples, the Rajah and the local worthies adorned the body, took it in procession, paid their last honours and buried it, singing his hymns.

The real Thayumanavar, his spirit, still endures and shall ever live in his soul-thrilling hymns.

Hail Thayumanavar!!

Ways to Realization

D.: How is restlessness removed from the mind?

M.: External contacts —contacts with objects other than itself — make the mind restless. Loss of interest in non-Self, *vairagya*, is the first step. Then the habits of introspection and concentration follow. They are characterized by control of external senses, internal faculties, etc. (*sama, dama*, etc.) ending in *samadhi* (undistracted mind).

D.: How are they practised?

M.: An examination of the ephemeral nature of external phenomena leads to *vairagya*. Hence enquiry (*vichara*) is the first and foremost step to be taken. As *vichara* continues it automatically results in a contempt for wealth, fame, ease, pleasure, etc. The 'I' thought becomes clearer for introspection. The source of 'I' is the Heart – the final goal. If, however, the aspirant is not temperamentally suited to *Vichara Marga* (to the introspective analytical method), he must develop *bhakti* (devotion) to an ideal – maybe God, Guru, humanity in general, ethical laws, or even the idea of beauty. When one of these takes possession of the individual, other attachments grow weaker, *i.e.*, dispassion (*vairagya*) develops. Attachment for the ideal simultaneously grows and finally holds the field. Thus

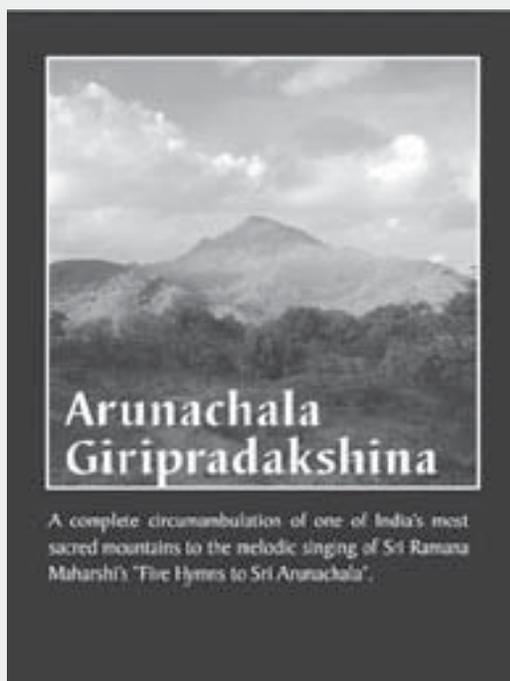
ekagrata (concentration) grows simultaneously and imperceptibly, with or without visions and direct aids.

In the absence of enquiry and devotion, the natural sedative *pranayama* (breath regulation) may be tried. This is known as *Yoga Marga*. If life is imperiled the whole interest centres round the one point, the saving of life. If the breath is held the mind cannot afford to (and does not) jump after its pets external objects. Thus there is rest for the mind so long as the breath is held. All attention being turned on breath or its regulation, other interests are lost. Again, passions are attended with irregular breathing, whereas calm and happiness are attended with slow and regular breathing. Paroxysms of joy are in fact as unsettling as those of pain, and both are accompanied by ruffled breaths. Real peace is happiness. Pleasures do

not form happiness. The mind improves by practice and becomes finer, just as the razor's edge is sharpened by stropping. The mind is then better able to tackle internal or external problems. If an aspirant be unsuited temperamentally for the first two methods and circumstantially (on account of age) for the third method, he must try the *Karma Marga* (doing good deeds, for example, social service). His nobler instincts thus become more evident and he derives impersonal pleasure. His smaller self is less assertive and has a chance of expanding its good side. The man becomes duly equipped for one of the three aforesaid paths. His intuition may also develop directly by this single method.

—*Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Nos. 26, 27*

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Jayanti Programs in the USA

In Florida

On Sunday, December 31, 2006 devotees from the New York Arunachala Ashrama attended Bhagavan's Jayanti program arranged by the Florida Satsang group at the Hindu Temple of Southern Florida, near Ft. Lauderdale. A brief talk on Bhagavan's life was followed by Comal Subramanian's firsthand description of sitting in the Old Hall with the Master. The 'Sage of Arunachala' video was projected onto a screen and free books and videos were distributed to all interested devotees.

In New York

On January 6th a large number of devotees gathered in the New York Arunachala Ashrama for the Jayanti. Bhagavan's works were recited, devotional songs were sung, Prashanth Visweswaran spoke with deep devotion about his recent visit to Sri Ramanasramam, and Thiru Sivasamy from Toronto spoke with wonder and fervor about Bhagavan's guiding Presence in his life and the trip he made to the Nova Scotia Ashrama with his whole family during the Children's Ashram program last summer.

The Ashrama overflowed with devotees and Mother Nature accommodated them all by producing record warm temperatures (72 degrees Fahrenheit), allowing the use of the spacious lawn and outside patio area for serving prasad and dining.

In California

A large number of enthusiastic devotees gathered at the Milpitas Jain Temple, in the San Francisco Bay area, to celebrate Bhagavan's Jayanti on January 13th. Bhagavan's "Aksharamanamalai" was sung along with Bhagavan's bhajans, led by Srimati Sangeetha Swaminathan. Terry Sayre inspired the gathering by relating his recent unforgettable trip to Arunachala, Madurai and Tiruchuzhi. Following the program, prasad was served.

At least a hundred devotees attended each of these celebrations.

On Monday evening, January 15th many of the same devotees gathered at the home of Kusum Nakra in Los Altos for recitations, readings and silence, followed by prasad and the affectionate hospitality of the host.

Dedicated devotees also conducted other Jayanti Satsangs in different parts of the USA and Canada. All

devotees experienced the divine presence, the unflinching guidance, the sublime teachings and the abounding grace of the Master.

Satsang in Maryland

Devotees of New York Arunachala Ashrama attended a Satsang at the residence of Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan, in Fulton, Maryland on 18th November 2006. The following is a synopsis of the talk given by Commissioner C. V. Narasimhan, I.P.S (Retd.) on that day.

Bhagavan's time at the Ashram in Tiruvannamalai was taken up by several people who used to go there frequently to have his darshan and get relieved from some distress and secure peace of mind. Their quest was primarily for mental solace and not physical relief, like a cure of a bodily malady or success in business or a chosen profession. Bhagavan provided mental relief — to some by a mere look, to others by a terse observation that would kindle their thoughts towards relief, and to others by briefly conversing with them and analyzing their situation objectively. Bhagavan's helpful intervention was always directed to the mind and not the body. His grace always enabled them to fine tune their thought processes, turn inward and find their own way to abiding peace within themselves.

On one occasion a devotee who was worried by unfulfilled desires was told by Bhagavan: "The proper way to get rid of a desire is to find out 'Who gets the desire? What is its source?' When this is found, the desire is rooted out and it will never again emerge or grow." On another occasion Bhagavan observed: "Renunciation is always in the mind, not in going to forests or solitary places or giving up one's duties. The main thing is to see that the mind does not turn outward, but inward. It does not really rest with a man whether he goes to this place or that or whether he gives up his duties or not. All that happens according to destiny. All the activities the body is to go through are determined when it first comes into existence. It does not rest with you to accept or reject them. The only freedom you have is to turn inward and renounce activities there."

The path of intense 'Self-enquiry' pointed out by Bhagavan can be better appreciated and understood if we recall the experience Bhagavan went through as a sixteen-year-old boy in his house at Madurai. In his aloneness one day he was suddenly gripped by the fear of imminent death which made him perceive his own body as a corpse, even

as he was aware of his capacity to perceive it so. That led him to the question 'Who am I, if I am not this body?' And then came his illumination and journey to Tiruvannamalai. When I read this part of his story I was reminded of the French philosopher Rene Descartes' oft quoted observation "I think. Therefore I am". Bhagavan has taken us much further than Descartes by inducing us to say: "I think, therefore I must find out who I am!"

The fact that relentless enquiry into our inner situation is deeply embedded in our tradition is brought out by the remarks made by our renowned free thinker and philosopher J. Krishnamurthi during his last visit to Varanasi in 1985. While standing in a room in a guest house he looked across the Ganges and, absorbing its history and geography together, he suddenly exclaimed to a companion by his side, "Do you know, Sir, 5000 years of enquiry lie buried under us!". Bhagavan's repeated reference to the path of Self-enquiry is in line with this great tradition of Bharat, our Punyabhoomi.

The path of Self-enquiry on the philosophic plane may be as a higher level extension of the principle of self-assessment and self-correction in Management Science. In our respective fields of mundane professional activities we are frequently advised to be objective and free from bias in handling any matter. We find it useful to develop a capacity to see ourselves as others see us while at work, and identify corrective steps, from their point of view, to improve our performance. Bhagavan's call for Self-enquiry helps us similarly on the spiritual plane to discover ourselves and reach a stable and peaceful state.

In this context, I would like to recall a story I have heard relating to Appayya Dikshitar, a highly revered Sanskrit scholar and Vedantist who lived in the Madurai-Tirunelveli area during the 16th Century. It is said that a scholar-philosopher from North India came to Appayya Dikshitar's place to engage with him in a debate on different philosophies. Dikshitar, who was suffering from severe stomach pain at that time, agreed to sit down for the debate on the insistence of the visitor. Before the debate began Dikshitar pulled out a blade of grass from the ground, kept it by his side and did a brief meditative chant, at the end of which the grass blade started quivering. Leaving it to remain in that state Dikshitar told the visitor that he was ready for the debate. When the perplexed visitor wanted to know the 'how and why' of the presence of the quivering blade, Dikshitar explained that he had

transferred his stomach pain to the blade temporarily so that he could be free to join the debate without any distracting pain, and he would take back the pain after the debate was over. The astounded visitor then asked why Dikshitar, with such extraordinary psychic powers at his command, could not straightaway get rid of the pain itself, completely. Dikshitar then clarified that his suffering from stomach pain at that time was the result of his karma and he had to bear it out. There was no escape from it. All he could achieve was temporary relief to be able to participate in the debate. In transferring the pain to the grass blade he was aware he was doing something wrong to the blade, and therefore would be suffering the further karmic consequences later; but he did it for the sake of the debate to oblige the visitor!

In our life's routine, each one of us is constantly engaged in becoming something which we are not presently. A person without money or job wants to become one with money or a job. A physically weak man wants to become a physically strong man. A childless couple wants to become parents of a child. It is this constant attempt to become something that creates mental disturbance as long as the 'becoming' remains incomplete. Instead, if we focus our thoughts on 'being' what we are in reality, we will be in a stable state of peace. Bhagavan has on several occasions commented on the need to 'be' instead of acting to 'become'.

I would say that it is a misnomer to call ourselves 'human beings' while in fact we are all 'human becomings'!

Bhagavan exhorts us to remain 'human beings' in a state of abiding peace and also to be aware of it.

I will conclude by recalling a pregnant sentence I read sometime ago on the very first page of a heavy book on Western philosophies. The sentence said: "The first step in any philosophic enquiry is not a step but to remain where you are and have a good look at your whole self." That is the core of Bhagavan's teaching.

An Invitation

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

The 57th Mahanirvana Day
of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

in
New York City

28 April 2007

11:00 a.m.

at

ARUNACHALA ASHRAMA

86-06 EDGERTON BOULEVARD

JAMAICA ESTATES, QUEENS, NEW YORK 11432

The program will include recitations, bhajans, talks and puja, followed by prasada (lunch).

For more information call: (718) 560-3196

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.

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

Ann Arbor, MI — Mohan & Gayatri (734 623-7199 cedararbor@yahoo.com)

Connecticut Area — Prashanth & Shobana (860 691-1862 / vprashanth@msn.com)

Dublin, Ohio — Abilash & Madhavi (614 789-9058 / mungamuru@hotmail.com)

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

San Francisco Area — Swaminathan & Sangeeta (510 979-1679 / nachiketas@hotmail.com)

Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adiseshan (703 257-5589 / adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)

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