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The Kitchen Garden Party

By T. R. A. Narayana

THE year was 1948. I was then in my thirty-ninth year and lived in Madras with my wife and four children. I was the branch manager of a large British firm and, in happy circumstances, felt no need for any religious practice or spiritual enquiry, and was content with enjoying the good things in life.

I was on a tour of small towns with one of the inspectors under me, Sri Parthasarathi. It was a hot April day. We were boarding the train at Villupuram to go to Tiruvannamalai, we noticed a young man of about twenty-five trying to enter the first class compartment by the next door. The man was so fat that he heaved his bulky body this way and that, while another man on the platform, obviously his servant, pushed him in through the door. He was also ashamed at the curious way the people on the platform, including Sri Parthasarathi and myself, watched his predicament. He got in somehow and occupied the cubicle next to ours.

When the train had run for some minutes, the man came to our cabin, introduced himself as Ratilal Premchand Shah and started talking.

Sri Ratilal was a Saurashtra Vaishya, born and brought up in Gondal and the only son of a rich merchant. He was married six years ago. Since his tenth year he has been cursed with so much body fat, that now, at twenty-five, he was a huge mass of flesh and misery. Oh how he wished to get rid of his fat and be a man!

In the last week of March, Sri Ratilal had had a vision in his sleep at night. He saw an ascetic smiling

and beckoning him. The smile and the beckoning persisted for a long time and stood clearly before Sri Ratilal's mental eye when he awoke. He did not speak to anyone about the vision. Two days later his wife was reading a Gujarati magazine. Looking over her shoulder he saw the picture of the ascetic he had seen in his vision. He came to know that the ascetic was Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. He at once went to his father and arranged for his journey to Tiruvannamalai with the trusted family servant. All he knew about Bhagavan was what that Gujarati article said. But he felt sure that his suffering would end as soon as he reached Bhagavan; the smile and the beckoning of his vision of Bhagavan had given him that firm faith.

Sri Parthasarathi had seen Bhagavan many times before and had also read a good deal about him. He and Sri Ratilal talked about Bhagavan during the whole two-hour journey. I was apparently reading an English novel, but heard their conversation with interest and attention.

At Tiruvannamalai station, Sri Ratilal was received by a local merchant with whom his father had arranged for his stay. Sri Parthasarathi and I proceeded to the travellers bungalow.

It was four when we had our bath and tiffin. Sri Parthasarathi knew that I was very businesslike and would not waste a single minute. He said we could visit the market. He was very surprised at my reply: “No, Parthasarathi! We shall go and have *darshan* of Maharshi first. Then, if time permits, we shall go to the temple. Let business wait!”

It was about five when Sri Parthasarathi and I entered the Ashram. Going round Bhagavan’s Mother’s *samadhi*, we came to the veranda by its side. About fifty people were sitting there, Sri Ratilal, his host and his servant included. Bhagavan was not on his couch as usual. The visitors talked in whispers, trying to find out where he was.

After waiting for some ten minutes and finding that Bhagavan had not come to his seat, Sri Parthasarathi suggested to me that we could in the meantime go around and see the *goshala* and other places.

Finishing our inspection we were returning to the veranda by another side, when we heard a childish voice say “*Chee, asatthe!* (Fie, you creature!).” We could see no children around, and, therefore, peeped to find out the source of the voice. We observed movement among the leaves of the brinjal, lady’s-finger and other plants in the kitchen garden near the veranda. Looking more intently, we saw a small goat, a little monkey and a squirrel and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi! Bhagavan was sitting on his haunches with his legs folded up to his breast. The goat nestled between his knees; the monkey had its head resting on his right knee; the squirrel was perched on his left knee. Holding a packet of paper in his left palm, Bhagavan picked ground nuts from it with his right-hand fingers, one by one, and fed the goat, the monkey and the squirrel, and himself, by turns. His remarks appeared to have been addressed to the monkey which had tried to snatch the nut he was going to place between the squirrel’s lips. As we watched, the four companions went on enjoying the eating. All four seemed to be equally happy; the way they looked at one another and kept close together was touching. The goat, the monkey, the squirrel, and Bhagavan had obviously forgotten their differences in species! And we too, looking on, saw the four only as good friends despite the differences in their forms. No words could describe the feelings which passed through my being at the sight. The vision of the Transcendent



Meena and Chadwick at Arunachala Ashram, Nova Scotia.

appeared as a flash of lightning and revealed to me the essence of being, awareness and bliss, *sat-chit-ananda*.

The nuts were over. Bhagavan threw the paper away and said: “*Pongoda!* (Go away, you fellows!),” just like any old man speaking to his grandchildren. The goat, the monkey and the squirrel left. Bhagavan made to get up. Sri Parthasarathi and I hurried away, feeling guilty of trespassing into the Divine, but not sorry.

Soon after Sri Parthasarathi and I had resumed our seats in the veranda, Bhagavan came to his couch. I cannot say he looked at us. He stood facing us, his eyes fixed on something far above and beyond anything on earth. They were like screens which shut the material world off from the light which was burning behind them. Sparks of light shot out through the fibres of the screen at times, sparks which cooled the eyes on which they fell, pierced the gross coverings and lighted the wick inside them.

Bhagavan reclined on the pillows placed on the couch, supporting his head on his left palm. We all sat down to look at his face. We sat and sat, and looked and looked. No one spoke or made any noise. But the confrontation was not a dead silence; it was a very live experience in which the innermost being of each of us communed with the Supreme Consciousness which was Bhagavan.

I was numb with the realization that this Glory was the same that dwelt in the simplicity which I had just seen eating groundnuts in the intimate company of the goat, the monkey and the squirrel. My mind kept recalling that scene: how the goat had snuggled to

Bhagavan's breast in perfect confidence in his love for it; how the monkey had grinned in joy and how Bhagavan had returned the grin as both bit the nut; how the squirrel had peered with its pinhead eyes into Bhagavan's dream-laden ones and scratched his nose tenderly with its tiny left paw. The splendor of the Supreme Spirit underlying and overlaying the sense perception was spiced with the lovely sight of the groundnut party in the kitchen garden.

Bhagavan got up from the couch. We got up. It seemed tacitly understood that we were to leave. We left. I felt a hitherto-unknown peace and joy inside me; the faces of the others also showed a similar condition.

I saw Sri Ratilal, his host and his servant get into their bullock cart at the Ashram gate. There was a new spring in Sri Ratilal's movements. Bhagavan's promise in the lad's vision appeared to be starting a fulfillment.

Many things have happened in my life since that day. My material circumstances underwent changes for the worse, but my inner life has always been happy since that day, for I often had a vision of Bhagavan, particularly when I was most depressed in spirits.

In 1953, I was in Rajkot staying alone in a lodge. One day, while in the dining hall, a man of about thirty accosted me, "Don't you recognize me, Sir?"

"No, I'm sorry," I replied, truthfully.

The man continued: "I am Ratilal of Gondal, Sir! You remember the *darshan* of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, five years ago?"

I looked at the man again. He was thin and wiry, his face aglow with health and happiness. I shook his hands heartily. He spoke again: "Sir, Bhagavan fulfilled his promise wonderfully well. You see me. I am now managing our family business, my father taking complete rest. I have a son two years old and expect my wife to give me another child in a month or two."

My mind immediately went back to the goat, the monkey and the squirrel – and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. I could never think of Bhagavan alone!

So it has been all these years. The scene comes to my mind's eye often. The kitchen garden with the four friends at the groundnut party.

And, I thank Sri Ratilal and Sri Parthasarathi for guiding me to the Vision Beautiful!

— *The Mountain Path*, 1975, Vol. 12, No.2

CONTINUE WITH AIDS UNTIL SAMADHI STATE

M.: Ignorance — *ajnana* — is of two kinds:

- (1) Forgetfulness of the Self.
- (2) Obstruction to the knowledge of the Self.

Aids are meant for eradicating thoughts; these thoughts are the re-manifestations of predispositions remaining in seed-form; they give rise to diversity from which all troubles arise. These aids are: hearing the truth from the master (*sravana*), etc.

The effects of *sravana* may be immediate and the disciple realizes the truth all at once. This can happen only for the well-advanced disciple.

Otherwise, the disciple feels that he is unable to realize the truth, even after repeatedly hearing it. What is it due to? Impurities in his mind: ignorance, doubt and wrong identity are the obstacles to be removed.

(a) To remove ignorance completely, he has to hear the truth repeatedly, until his knowledge of the subject-matter becomes perfect;

(b) to remove doubts, he must reflect on what he has heard; ultimately his knowledge will be free from doubts of any kind;

(c) to remove the wrong identity of the Self with the

non-self (such as the body, the senses, the mind or the intellect) his mind must become one-pointed.

All these things accomplished, the obstacles are at an end and *samadhi* results, that is, Peace reigns.

Some say that one should never cease to engage in hearing, reflection and one-pointedness. These are not fulfilled by reading books, but only by continued practice to keep the mind withdrawn.

The aspirant may be *kritopasaka* or *akritopasaka*. The former is fit to realize the Self, even with the slightest stimulus: only some little doubt stands in his way, it is easily removed if he hears the truth once from the Master. Immediately he gains the *samadhi* state. It is presumed that he had already completed *sravana*, reflection, etc. in previous births, they are no more necessary for him.

For the other all these aids are necessary; for him doubts crop up even after repeated hearing; therefore he must not give up aids until he gains the *samadhi* state.

Sravana removes the illusion of the Self being one with the body, etc. Reflection makes it clear that Knowledge is Self. One-pointedness reveals the Self as being Infinite and Blissful.

— *Talks No. 249*

DAKSHINAMURTHY HIMSELF

WHEN in ancient days even Dakshinamurthy the Adi-guru, guru of all gurus, was able to reveal the truth of that one Self only through silence, the speechless speech, who else can reveal it through speech? In this connection, Bhagavan once told the following story to Muruganar:

When the four aged Sanakadi rishis first saw the sixteen year old Dakshinamurthy sitting under the banyan tree, they were at once attracted to him, understanding him to be the real Sadguru.

They approached him, did three pradakshinas around him, prostrated before him, sat at his feet and began to ask very shrewd and pertinent questions about the nature of Reality and the means of attaining it. Because of the great compassion and fatherly love (vatsalya) which he felt for his aged disciples, the young Dakshinamurthy was overjoyed to see their earnestness, wisdom and maturity, and gave apt replies to each of their questions.

As he answered each consecutive question, further doubts rose in their minds and still they asked further questions. Thus they continued to question Dakshina-

murthy for one whole year and he continued to clear their doubts with his compassionate answers.

Finally, however, Dakshinamurthy understood that if he continued to give answers to their questions more doubts would rise in their minds and there would never be an end to their ignorance (ajnana). Therefore, suppressing even the feeling of compassion and fatherly love welling up within him, he merged himself into the supreme silence. Because of their great maturity (which had been ripened to perfection through a year-long association with the Sadguru), as soon as Dakshinamurthy merged within himself, they too were automatically absorbed into silence, the state of Self.

Wonderstruck on hearing Bhagavan narrating the story in this manner, Muruganar remarked that in no book is it mentioned that Dakshinamurthy ever spoke anything. "But this is what actually happened," replied Bhagavan.

From the authoritative way in which Bhagavan answered his doubt and from the clear and descriptive way in which he had told the story, Muruganar understood that Bhagavan was none other than Dakshinamurthy himself.

— *The Silent Power*, page 48

Ocean of Mercy

Question: In the books it is stated that Bhagavan is an ocean of Mercy. Is it a fact?

Bhagavan: Ocean? Ocean (sagara) has a limit, a boundary (or coast line), but the kripa of Bhagavan has no such limit. It is limitless. It knows no bounds.

This explanation of Sri Bhagavan gave us great satisfaction, roused new hopes, and opened a new chapter in our spiritual lives.

— K. R. K. Murthi

Jayanti

The 129th Birth Anniversary of

Sri Ramana Maharshi

Sunday 11 January 2009

11:00 a.m.

The program will include recitations, bhajans, talks and puja, followed by luncheon prasadam.

For more information call:

(718) 560-3196 or 575-3215

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I FOUND PEACE

A Letter to Dilip Kumar Roy

The following letter, written by A. W. Chadwick to Dilip Kumar Roy, has been extracted from Kumbha, a Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan publication.

Dear Dilip,

It was kind of you to write ... I feel diffident in answering your question as I fear I have made or may make myself appear of some spiritual attainment, a thing to which I have no pretension. I am just a humble seeker, with the same failings and the same difficulties as everybody else. That all paths are extremely difficult there can be no doubt, but how can it be otherwise? The ego which has taken such tremendous pains to establish itself as a seemingly independent and self sufficient entity will fight to the last ditch before it will admit defeat and relinquish its claims. But my motto has been persistence and I think that by that, victory is assured. The Guru of a friend of mine, who passed away some years ago and was undoubtedly a *jnani*, used to tell him that if he desired Self realization sufficiently he could not even die till he had attained his goal. And in that is our hope.

You ask me how long I had to persevere in solitude before I attained peace... Surely peace is a thing which grows and is not for the majority attained in a flash once and for all. (I do not speak of Self-realization) The

moment I came into the presence of my Guru, eleven years ago, I found peace. My staying here was never premeditated; it was just something which had to be in spite of myself. It was my true home. However the pendulum swings, in time the beats become shorter and shorter until it comes to rest in the Self. To expect anything else is to expect the impossible.

It seems to me that the great thing is to follow one Guru and one path unwaveringly and the goal is assured. For after all, the goal and the path are the same; the Chinese call both the Way – Tao. But we become disheartened and impatient. These seem to be the greatest obstacles to attainment. If we can only face up to these and go on in spite of everything and everybody then there is absolutely no doubt as to the result. But few of us can! May the Supreme Guru give us the necessary strength!

I seem to have been very prolix and to have preached. I ask your forgiveness.

Very cordially yours,
A. W. Chadwick

SRI N. BALARAMA REDDY

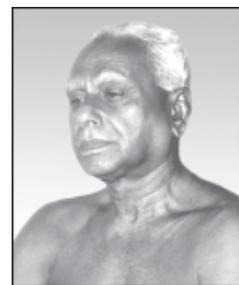
One Hundreth Birth Anniversary

OCTOBER marks the Birth Centenary of one of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's most intimate devotees, Sri N. Balarama Reddy — born October 30, 1908.

In his book, *My Reminiscences*, he tells of his early life as a spiritual aspirant born into a family of sincere seekers, and how he began his formal spiritual training at Pondicherry under the guidance of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. When he first heard of Sri Bhagavan and went to Sri Ramanasramam, he was more than favorably impressed with what he felt and saw. Sri Bhagavan's mighty Presence, his simple and natural style of living and the liberating freedom he experienced in the Ashram drew him like a magnet and led him to sit for the rest of his life at Sri Bhagavan's feet.

He writes: "When I had observed Bhagavan closely for some time, I discovered that he would never openly say that he was our Guru and we were his disciple; in fact, he would sometimes say things that sounded contrary to this. But for us close devotees there was never a doubt that he was our Guru. He loved us like a mother, protected us like a father, guided us like a teacher and moved with us like a friend. We constantly felt his guidance and grace."

Sri N. Balarama Reddy was absorbed in his Master on May 11, 1995.



Letters and Comments

Leave Our Burdens

Bhagavan says to leave our burdens at his feet and he will determine the course of action. Sometimes, with some things, this is easy to do. With some other things that we are emotionally attached to, for whatever reason, it is very difficult to do. Is there something that will help the process?

A Devotee from Michigan

This is a good question because Bhagavan has directly spoken to it.

“He knows what is best and how and when to do it. His is the burden,” He tells us. So whatever may happen in the devotee’s life, happens for their spiritual uplift and good. We can carry our burdens if we wish, but whose fault is it if we suffer from them? Unless we give over our burdens to Him, how will He carry them. We will have to carry them ourselves and suffer the consequences. We must give over the burdens to Him and let him do with us as He pleases. There is no other way. That is true surrender. Just try that. Completely stop thinking about the problems. Give them over to Him and be at peace. Be a silent witness to whatever happens. You may be surprised at the results. This process will strengthen your faith.

To “leave our burdens” to Bhagavan with faith in His guidance and grace, replaces worry and anxiety with peace and joy, which is our natural essence.

Bhagavan does advise us to perform our duties to the best of our abilities with detachment. “Detachment” is the key word. This detached attitude is strengthened by faith. Once our faith is firm that we are only instruments in the hands of the Master, then whatever happens, we understand it to be His will, not our own. We take joy in having His will fulfilled through us.

It is erroneous to imagine that only if certain events take place or achievements accomplished in our lives we can have a meaningful existence. That is what is called Maya, or illusion. We can only have a fulfilled life when we completely surrender all desires, pursuits, and the very individual that seeks happiness, to Bhagavan, or the Higher Power.

In theory it is all so very simple, but without practice and grace it will not be a palpable reality in our lives. That is why we must make an effort to remember Bhagavan, practice his teachings to the best of our ability and surrender all to Him or the Self. Only then will we know what real surrender is and be happy.

Editor

Serving Mother

Thank you for the newsletters that you have been sending me over the years. They are very uplifting and inspiring. I have books and articles by Ramana and I read them regularly. I also try to put his teachings into practice.

I have some concerns that I’d like to ask you. Hopefully you can help me.

My concern is my Mother. For years she was following natural therapies and natural, or herbal medicines. I am also a follower of natural/herbal therapies for myself.

About five years ago her medical Doctor told her she was diabetic, put her on medication and informed her about changing her diet.

Last month (June 2008) her Doctors attempted to surgically remove a polyp from her colon. They had to halt the anesthesia because her heart rate started to increase and blood pressure started to decrease.

Her Doctors are postponing her polyp surgery until they figure out why her heart reacted that way. The Doctors have also changed her blood pressure and diabetic medication.

My concern is this new blood pressure medication seems to be affecting her. She tells me that she is fatigued, can’t sleep through the night, etc. These are the side effects of the new blood pressure medicine. To me, she also sounds depressed. She says that her Doctor told her that her body is getting accustomed to the new medication.

She says that she needs to have this polyp surgery because the Doctor told her that if she doesn’t get it removed that it could turn into cancer in 5 years. So she’s going through all this change of medication to get her heart corrected before the polyp surgery.

She seems to be very afraid of getting cancer, so she’s putting herself through this agony. It seems she doesn’t want me to talk her into going back to natural remedies.

My question to you is: Should this worry me? It does seem to be worrying me because I know that she doesn't need these drugs and the surgery. If she stops eating meat, sugar, and going to the Doctor too much, I think she can allow her body to heal itself.

She says I'm trying to play 'Doctor'. Why isn't she listening to me? It seems to me that she is putting too much faith in her medical Doctors.

I know about Ramana Maharshi's view of death. But I would feel sad if anything happened to my Mother, knowing that it could have been avoided if she only follows the natural ways of correcting the body.

Hopefully you can help me. Thank you in advance.

American Devotee

To your question, "Should this worry me?" The answer is no, it shouldn't.

You simply have to shift your approach and attitude towards your mother and what your duty to her is. As a daughter it is your duty to serve your mother, to make her happy and assist her in anyway you can, especially

now in her final years. "But that is exactly what I am trying to do," you may say. However, to do this properly you must step back from attempting to direct her life and decisions. That is not an expression of love, but of attachment. You must serve her without any expectation. That is all. If she asks for your opinion on certain matters, you can certainly give her them, and then leave it. Whether she follows it or not is not your concern. Simply serve and try to make her happy and comfortable on her grounds, not yours. That is proper service, and you should take joy in it. If done properly, it is a sadhana.

After all, she is your mother *now*, but how many mothers have you had, how many fathers, brothers and sisters in past births. We should not lose sight of the scheme of creation and ideal because of our attachment to human relations in this life. Serve them, but seek not your happiness in them. Seek it within where it is eternally flowing. That is the only way to serve and be happy in life.

Editor

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 (678-546-0378 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

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

Boston, MA — Abhirami and Venkat (508-358-1144 / vshash@gmail.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@gmail.com)

San Francisco Area — Karthik & Sunita (510-656-2752 / sunita_parasuraman@yahoo.com)

Los Angeles, CA — Natarajan and Indira Venkatesan (310-473-9441 / nvenky30@yahoo.com)

Washington, D.C. Area — Uma and Santosh (301-528 - 5526 / uma_santosh@hotmail.com)

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

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

Toronto, Canada — Thiru (905-686-6592 / Thirusivasamy@hotmail.com)

Vancouver, Canada — Zoya (778-863-9692 / Zoyaonline@yahoo.ca)

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