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नमो भगवते श्री रमणाय

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Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram
Twenty-Fifth Anniversary, 1975 - 2000

It was the first year of classes in the newly-built, one-room school house, picturesquely located in the quiet rural community of Clarence in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia. The year was 1879.

At the same time, far across the globe in another quiet, remote place, a village in South India, on the night of December 30, a son was born to *Alagamma* and Sundaram Iyer. Who could have ever imagined that this rural school house and that new born boy, then linked in time, would once again be linked in spirit ninety-five years later?

click to see a large image

Soon after the 130 acre Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center was founded in 1972, Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat began his regular visits from New York City. Immediately, he was attracted to the property on the Ashrama's lower field, just off the Clarence Road, about 50 yards from the Ashrama house. It was the 100 by 75 foot corner lot donated to the local school board in 1879 by the then owner of the Ashrama farm. The Ashrama did not own this lot. Someone had bought it from the school board three years earlier.

Bhagawat would almost daily visit this small plot, always commenting on its "tortoise shape," with lower ground on all four sides. On this lot the Clarence West School stood up to 1969. It was then bought, loaded onto a flatbed truck and moved one mile down the road. The granite slabs that served as its foundation and an old hand-powered water pump was all that remained. Bhakta Bhagawat would daily stroll the grounds, reciting the "Sri Lalita Sahasranam Stotram," praying to the Divine Mother to bless her children by building a Temple on this land for devotees to gather in and immerse themselves in the direct teachings of Self-enquiry. After two years, in 1974, his dream began to materialise.

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Mr. B.K. Raju, a very prominent, but humble and devoted businessman of Nova Scotia, began to take an active interest in the prospect of buying the lot and the old school house, reuniting them once again for yet another type of schooling, the training of the spirit. He started a trust for borrowing funds, arranged for the purchase of the school, engaged an architect, all of which injected the necessary impetus in the hearts of Joan and Matthew Greenblatt and Dennis Hartel, who then lived in the Ashrama, and Darlene Delisi, who lived nearby. They felt charged with energy and genuine inspiration, watching their lofty ideals of head and heart now taking shape in the form of a Temple.

The logistics of returning the school house back to the Ashrama, lifting the thirty-ton structure five feet high and then sliding it onto its new, raised foundation were certainly mind boggling for the young devotees. But every obstacle was calmly met with a growing faith that, by the Temple's completion, established itself in their hearts so firmly that it has been serenely carrying them safely through life's troubled waters ever since.

More than the physical obstacles were the financial hurdles. Mr. Raju's trust fund proved unproductive and was terminated. Daily wages had to be met, supplies bought, contractors paid. The young aspirants of the Ashrama were not fund raisers, nor were they financially savvy. Their only wealth was the devotion and faith that filled their hearts. They solely depended on this to meet their needs. Their faith and devotion were at times severely tested, but proved ultimately triumphant. The Maharshi repeatedly assured them of his all-pervasive presence in many seen and unseen ways. Faith remained steady and help came, especially from the courageously noble hearts of the late Alexander Hixon and Dr. Mohender Goomar, both of which generously expressed themselves, relieving the debts and insuring that Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram would stand as a lasting tribute to the Silent Sage of the Holy Hill of the Beacon Light, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

The Term Hridaya

> *Sri T. K. Sundaresa Iyer was one among the few who had the privilege of not being addressed by Bhagavan in honorific terms: He fondly addressed him as 'Sundaresa' or 'Sundaram'. However, he was known popularly only as TKS in the Ashram. His erudition in Vedantic literature was deep; he was proficient in Sanskrit, Tamiḻ and English. So, he aptly fitted in to act as an interpreter to Sri Bhagavan, though most of his time he spent in the Ashram office attending to correspondence. Of course, in this also he was blessed because he had to show letters to Bhagavan and get hints from Him while answering certain letters...*

"A staunch devotee living in England, Harry Dickman, [1] was soaked in Sri Bhagavan's teachings, though he could not have His darshan. He wrote asking for an explanation as to the term '*Hridayam*' and its significance. I got from Bhagavan hints on how the reply should be formed. The following is the gist of the reply, which was approved by Bhagavan and sent to Harry Dickman:" — TKS

Just as there is a cosmic centre from which the whole universe arises and has its being and functions with the power or the directing energy emanating therefrom, so also is there a centre within the frame of the physical body wherein we have our being. This centre in the human body is in no way different from the cosmic centre. It is this centre in us that is called the *Hridaya*, the seat of Pure Consciousness, realized as Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. This is really what we call the seat of God in us.

It is this *Hridaya* that is said to be different from the physical heart, regulating the blood circulation. The Hridaya has its being on the right side and is not commonly known or felt. The primary thought in us arising as 'I,' when traced to its source, ends somewhere in us and this place, where all thoughts die, where the ego has vanished, is the Hridaya. From this centre is felt and enjoyed the Pure Consciousness.

Hridaya described as 'the literal, actual, physical seat of the intuition of the Self' has the meaning explained above. Perhaps the words 'physical seat' may create some confusion. What it really means is that there is a centre of Pure Consciousness in the physical body. It is related to the physical, but is not itself physical.

The word *Hridaya* is a composite of hrid and ayam - "centre, this". It is the centre on the right which we reach as a result of meditation. From the Hridaya, consciousness arises to the sahasrara through the sushumna and from there spreads out to all the parts of the body through the several 'nadis'. Then alone we become conscious of the objects around us. Man, due to the illusion that these have real existence, experiences suffering, as he strays far away from his Self. The seat from where all these arise and manifest is the Hridaya.

Whether in sleep, joy, sorrow, fear or satisfaction, we return to this heart and that is why we feel lost to all consciousness of things around. If by meditation or Vichara we attain to our centre, the Hridaya, and thus are our real Self, we enjoy unalloyed bliss.

In the course of tracing ourselves back to our source, when all thoughts have vanished, there arises a throb from the Hridaya on the right, manifesting as 'Aham' 'Aham'. This is the sign that Pure Consciousness is beginning to reveal itself. But that is not the end in itself. Watch wherefrom this *sphurana* (throbbing) arises and wait attentively and continually for the revelation of the Self. Then comes the awareness, oneness of existence.

When we steady our breath we feel the steadying of our thoughts. Then the thoughts turn inward and melt away at a point. Watching this point, where the thoughts vanish, will also help us to merge ourselves in the Hridaya.

— *From Moments Remembered*

Footnotes

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[1] Dr. Harry Dickman later moved to New York City and befriended Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat.

The Gift of Life

IT WAS THE FIRST FEW WEEKS of my pregnancy when I was diagnosed with an internal haemorrhage. The prognosis was grave and surgery was an option only as a last resort at the risk of losing the foetus. I was ordered complete bed rest with absolutely no movement, so to give the wound a chance to heal itself. I lay in bed all day and night staring at the ceiling most of the time. The only welcome distraction to my eyes was the picture of Bhagavan and Sri Arunachala that I had asked to be glued on the closet door at the foot of my bed. I tried to concentrate on my prayers, repeating "Sri Arunachala Akshara Mana Malai" as much as possible. But the physical pain was immense, not to mention the agony of being bed ridden.

Though I was under excellent medical care and had full attention from my family, I felt my strength draining from my body with each passing day. One afternoon, I had an experience. I felt the heat dissipating from my body and a chillness setting in. My hearing began losing its sharpness, vision blurring and a cloud of darkness set in. I could not move my hands nor could I voice a single word, even though I was trying to scream from within. I felt suffocated, was aware of my consciousness slipping away and felt myself sinking into something that I have no words to describe. I panicked inside, gripped by the fear of death and thoughts of unfinished responsibilities. I experienced my life slipping away. At that moment, I cried inside to Bhagavan, begging Him, that if this was death, he should take me to Him.

Then, I had the vision of the holy Sri Arunachala Mountain zooming back and forth and Bhagavan standing at one side of the hill. There was an arc of light leaving my body, like what you see in children's fairy tale movies. Bhagavan raised his hand and pushed the light back into my body.

He then said, "This is not the time for you to go. You have a purpose in life. Do your duty." Then in the most gracious and affectionate way, he put his hand where I had been hurting and said, "Is this where you hurt?"

After this I became conscious. I had no idea how long I was unconscious. All I knew was that this experience had transformed me, for when I became aware of the world, I had absolutely no pain. I immediately rose from my bed and walked briskly across the room. I felt and appeared perfectly healthy. The next visit to the doctor showed a completely healed wound.

Now I have been blessed with a beautiful, healthy baby. Bhagavan gave me a chance to bring a gift of life into my family. Everyday I remind myself that I live by His grace alone.

— A New York Devotee

Namaskaram and the Seer

Bhagavan used to say with a laugh, "A person performs namaskaram to the Swami or an idol, and expects all his prayers fulfilled and boons granted. Who wants this namaskaram? Even before they prostrate physically, I prostrate to them mentally." Bhagavan would add, "Who wants all this namaskaram? Try to know Who You Are. That is the import of the namaskaram. I would not be taken in by all this gymnastics."

One day He told me "One could produce God through alchemy. But even if that God tells you something don't believe it. If I come in front of you don't believe it. The Seer is most important. YOU ARE!. That's most important. Concentrate on the seer, not the seen. All that you see is false and the seer alone is true. All that you read, all knowledge you gather is useless, until you hold on to your Self. YOU ARE THE TRUTH, not what's being told to you, not what you see. What you read in books may be knowledge, but not the truth."

— Attendant Krishnaswami,
from a 1989 videotaped interview

Children's Ashrama 2000

Infectious enthusiasm reigned throughout the course of the five-day celebration which took place in the first week of July in Nova Scotia, where Arunachala Children's Ashrama 2000 was attended by approximately 13 children over the course of five days.

L-to-R: Athman, Varsha, Tara, Radha, Alexi
click to see a large image

Those children fortunate to attend were regaled with stories of Sri Bhagavan and his love of animals and his love for the sacred hill, Arunachala. The children's day began with hatha yoga, walking meditation (pradakshina), and instruction in the basic elements of traditional Ganesha Puja. The stories of Sri Bhagavan were reinforced with storytelling, crafts, music, art projects, puppet shows, and a visit to a riding stable. The children also enjoyed days of hiking, canoeing, and picnicking. A hike to the top of the North Mountain was a high point, in which the children sang bhajans in the cave at the mountain's peak in the company of Yogi Arthur Coucouvitis.

Children and parents chanting in
the Ashrama cave on North Mountain
click to see a large image

At nightfall, all the children gathered in the temple where they received specific instruction in meditation from our camp organizer par excellence, Geeta Bhatt.

Camp counsellors Darlene Delisi, Mamtha & Prakash Adiseshan, *Raju Parekh* and Evelyn & Paul Saphier felt fortunate to share the blessings of Sri Bhagavan's loving presence with our Ashrama children. Mention should also be made of the invaluable aid of Chancy Bhatt and Radha Mohan, for the loving care and attention with which they looked after our campers throughout the day.

> As the mind tends to go out turn it inwards then and there. It goes out owing to the habit of looking for happiness outside oneself; but the knowledge that the external objects are not the cause of happiness will keep it in check. This is vairagya or dispassion. Only after perfect vairagya the mind becomes steady.
>
> — *Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi*, No.344

Letters and Comments

Guru Available ?

In our initial correspondence, I had asked if there was anyone available to assist with the "Who Am I?" meditation. You indicated that you knew of no one in Oregon that I could contact and that I should pray to Sri Ramana Maharshi. I am sure that was/is good advice, but Ramana Maharshi himself said that the process was not possible without a Guru. I find that to be true. Is there anyone in North American that is of the Guru status and has realized the Self? If so, is he/she available? If not, is there such a person at the Arunachala Ashram?

Thank you for your assistance on this matter.

— Oregon, USA

> *Sri Maharshi did say that a Guru was necessary. He also said that the Guru may not be external, as in his case. Again, upon his physical demise he also said that he was not leaving, as he was never identified with the body; meaning, he is present even now.*
>
> *The truth is that no one can give us liberation. The way can be pointed out, directions can be given. Our intense earnestness and total dedication to the goal is the most essential factor. If we become obsessed with this one thing-realizing Truth-Truth, a physical Guru (if necessary) and all else will be drawn to us automatically. The Guru will come to us when we are ready. We simply need to attend to making ourselves ready and the rest is automatic. For those with faith in the Maharshi's living presence there are no doubts in this matter.*
>
> *Other than the above, there is no other advice we can give you regarding the Guru. We know this to be the true and proven method.*
>
> — *Editor*

* * * * * * *

What is "I - I?"

I am writing to ask if you can explain something to me that has been puzzling me-probably is very simple....

Here it is: The mundane self is referred to as the "I-thought". Okay, but why, or what is the significance of the Self being referred to as a double-I, like this: "I - I"?

Hoping you can illuminate that for me.

— Sussex, England

> *The Pure Self is the constant "I-Awarness". It underlies our waking, dreaming and deep sleep states. It is our inherent natural state which is obstructed by thoughts, the primary being the individual "I" thought, the ego. When the "I-Awareness" is constant it has been described as "I - I". It could be written "I - I - I - I..." infinitely. Thus the limitations of language to express the inexpressible.*

— Editor

* * * * * * *

Death and Devotion

I just got to know that the prasadam from Sri Ramanasramam reached Trichy the night before Mother died. Talking with her about the puja was the last conversation I had had with her just a few hours before she collapsed.

I feel the tight embrace of Sri Bhagavan, not only on us, but also on our loved ones.

What can one say...even though I have been finding it difficult to silence my mind during meditation, I feel the ever gushing shower of Bhagavan's Grace stronger and stronger.

Like this evening, when I was panicking on the number of things that needed to be done before leaving for India. Right then, Kiran (Bhagavan's devotee) called, and with such sweetness and assurance said that she and her husband Shri would come over tomorrow and do whatever needs to be done.

My husband said that the funeral ceremony was extraordinarily peaceful after he and his brother-in-law started to sing Bhagavan's songs. Even those who had been hysterical with uncontrollable emotions calmed down. He said that he felt the power of Bhagavan when he touched his mother's body.

I don't know what to say...

— A Devotee from Michigan

New Releases

Arunachala Stuti Pancakam
Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala

Now part of "Tamiḻ Hymns" 2 CD set

click to see a larger image

This is the first CD production from the professionally recorded Tamiḻ Parayanas from Sri Ramanasramam. These highly melodic songs written by the Maharshi in praise of Sri Arunachala are sung before his tomb every Monday night. It is performed by two groups of devotees, the men sitting on one side of the Maharshi's Samadhi and the women on the other. It contains the most popular of the Maharshi's compositions, "Arunachala Akshara Mana Malai" (*The Marital Garland of Letters to Sri Arunachala*).

— 53 minutes, $12.00, plus postage

All Is One — Ellam-Ondre

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Originally written by a 19th Century anonymous author in Tamiḻ and titled *Ellam Ondre*. First translated into English in 1951, this carefully *revised edition* was one of the favorite small Advaitic Tamiḻ texts often recommended by Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Annamalai Swami has said that the Maharshi "laid particular stress on *Ellam Ondre*, telling me, 'If you want moksha, write, read and practise the instructions in Ellam Ondre.'"

— 44 pages, $2.00, plus postage

1975 - 2000
The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Sri Arunachala Ramana Mandiram

Bridgetown, Nova Scotia

Sunday 3 September 2000

You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama Temple.

The program will begin at 11:00 A.M. and will be followed by the serving of prasad (meals).

For accommodation, please call.
Arunachala Ashrama - Nova Scotia
1451 Clarence Road, Bridgetown, Nova Scotia B0S 1C0
(902) 665-2090

104th Anniversary of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala

Sunday 10 September 2000
At the New York Ashrama

You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the104th Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's arrival at the holy Arunachala Mountain.

The program will begin at **11:00 a.m.**
and will be followed by the serving of prasad.
Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center
66-12 Clyde Street, Rego Park, New York 11374
Tel: (718) 575-3215

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation have been going on in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please see the *Sri Ramana Satsang online* pages.

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