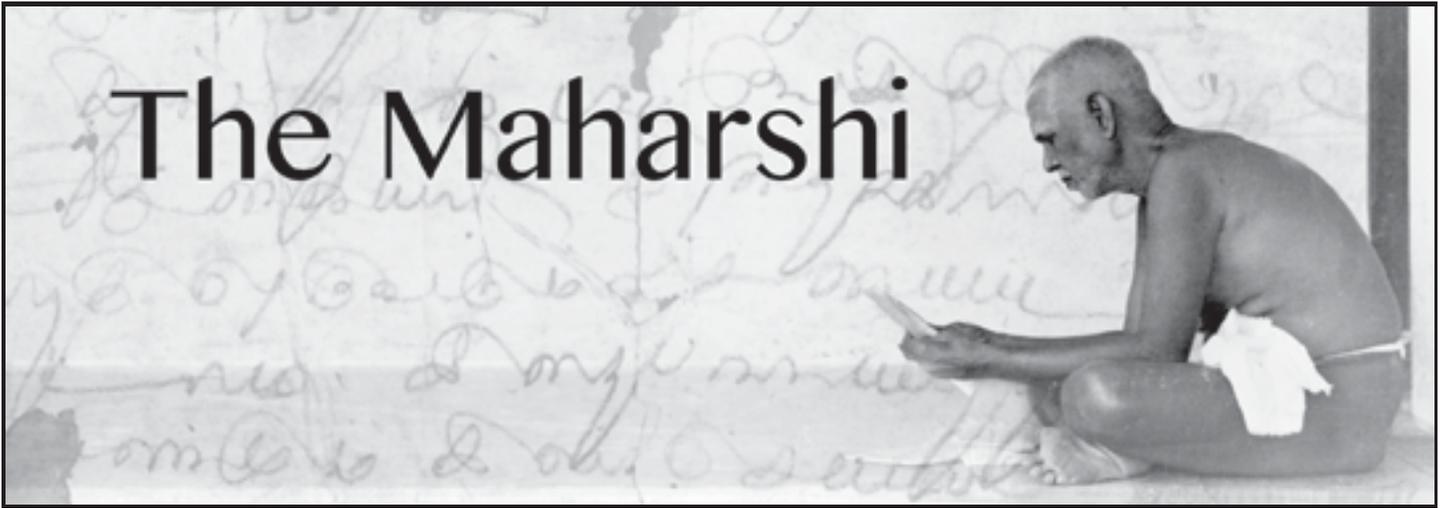


The Maharshi



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50th Anniversary of Arunachala Ashrama Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center in the USA

On December 8th, 1966 in New York City, for the purpose of incorporating a Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center, pursuant Article 10 of the Religious Corporation Law, Arunachala Ashrama was incorporated in the State of New York. Article XVIII of the By-Laws reads: "The purpose of the Center shall be to provide an educational and spiritual center for the study, pursuit and practice of the spiritual heritage bequeathed to mankind by the Great Sage Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi."

To understand how this event came about and the instrument chosen to make it happen, we need to travel back in time at least 75 years to the popular Himalayan hill station of Darjeeling, India.

Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat, the founder of Arunachala Ashrama, wrote about this in New York City on October 26, 1965:

HOW BHAGAVAN CAME INTO MY LIFE 1965 – October 26th, New York City

IT is the greatest thing for me to think of the way Bhagavan came into my life. It is a long story, but I shall try to describe it in a nutshell. It seems that right from my childhood I have been tied to the Lotus Feet of Sri Bhagavan. That is why I have been drawn to the stories of seers and sages, while all along I have longed to experience God.

Near around 10th October, 1941, I received the Hindi book *Gupt Bharat Ki Khoj*, a Hindi translation of Paul Brunton's book, *A Search in Secret India*. I did not know about the book. I had simply come across an advertisement of it in a Hindi magazine.

I must have been drawn towards it because it contained the stories of seers and sages of India. From the moment the book landed into my hands I was glued

to it, and on finishing it I decided to go down to South India to have darshan of Bhagavan Ramana. At that time I was a teacher in Darjeeling and the winter vacation was near at hand. I was also at that time instinctively drawn towards astrology and was very much impressed with the description in the chapter "Written in The Stars". As it turned out, I went to Ujjain to learn astrology, instead of going to Arunachala for Bhagavan's darshan.

With my mind's eye I saw Bhagavan sitting in Arunachala and looking at me. He was pouring His grace on me, but He did not make it possible for me to go to Him. Instead, I pursued the study of astrology. Although I spent some time in Ujjain and applied myself to astrology, I never wavered in my devotion to Bhagavan Ramana and tried my best to draw the attention of my teacher to the wonderful Sage who was radiating His Grace from Arunachala.

In my home town I persuaded several friends to read the Hindi book and learn about Bhagavan. As a result, two school teachers went to Arunachala and were blessed by Bhagavan. I asked one of them on his return from Tiruvannamalai how he found the Maharshi. He told me that the devotees called Him Bhagavan. I took down the name and address of the Ashrama and, for the time being, my story ended there.

I forgot all about Bhagavan and my desire to reach His Lotus Feet. Destiny took me to various other places and interests....

Here we must interrupt Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat's narration to briefly relate how he traveled from India to the USA in 1947.

In 1943, when the British authorities discovered that the then principal of the Darjeeling Hindi School (Bhagawat Prasad Singh) had been imprisoned in 1929 for joining Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement, his security clearance to enter Darjeeling, a controlled secured territory, was revoked. He then went to Calcutta and worked as a journalist.

Bhagawat's childhood dream of travelling to America was fulfilled in the year India gained independence – 1947. He received a fellowship to attend the University of Iowa where he completed a Masters Degree in journalism in 1949. He then took employment as the Information Officer at the Indian Embassy in Washington, D.C. and remained in the United States until 1959.

An American organization had set up a hospitality program to welcome foreign diplomats to their homes with the sole purpose of introducing them to the American people and their culture. While Bhagawat was living in Washington, D.C. with his family he befriended a family belonging to this organization who hosted them several times. It was at the residence of this host that the following story continues in Bhagawat's own words:

On Wednesday, October 13th, 1954, I was in the guest cottage of a Quaker couple, Helen and Albert Baily Jr., located on their farm in West Chester, Pennsylvania. The cottage was situated in a valley near their residence. On the second floor of the cottage



Helen and Albert Baily, Jr.

my wife, Yogamaya, our 15-month-old boy and I were occupying the large wooden-framed bed that night. In the second half of the night I saw Bhagavan Ramana sitting on the bed near my head. Although this was a dream I saw it as clearly as the sun during the day and remember it vividly. His famous figure was near my head and His legs were dangling. Arunachala Siva Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi stayed near my head for quite awhile so I could drink deep in Him. Bhagavan simply kept looking at me. I was filled with joy and happiness and could not turn my eyes away from Him. I do not know how long this lasted. But once I woke up I could not return to sleep and sat on the bed meditating on Him. All morning and day I kept on thinking of the darshan Bhagavan had given me in my dream. That first darshan of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is even now as clear and distinct in my mind's eye as that of the blazing Sun.

During that vision I was magnetically drawn towards Bhagavan as I gazed on Him from head to foot and from foot to head. His majestic figure, the loin cloth wrapped round His waist, a towel on His shoulder, and His hands and arms stretched towards me captivated me beyond words. His brown body was shining and I was being bathed in His Divine Grace. Even now, and all the time when I think of that rare darshan, Bhagavan comes alive for me. That dream enabled the sugar doll to be dissolved into the Divine ocean of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Since then I have not been the same Bhagawat I used to be. In the remotest part of Pennsylvania, surrounded by woods and trees, Bhagavan took hold of my life and I

became a wayfarer on His Path. When I tried to see Bhagavan when He was in the body, He did not make it possible for me. But when He had left the body – more than four years had elapsed since His Mahanirvana – I was blessed by Bhagavan and He made me His disciple and devotee; nay, He made me His very own. Since then nothing has mattered in my life. Whatever I have tried to do, and whatever profession I have endeavored to follow, it has been difficult for me. I can vouchsafe that Bhagavan has held me so tightly that I can't manage to escape from Him. He is in me all the time and I am made to wade in His Grace.

The following night, Thursday, October 14th, 1954, in the same cottage and in the same bed, another dream occurred to me during the second half of the night: I saw the word 'Upanishad' written in bold Sanskrit letters on the top of a bundle of loose leaves. The traditional Sanskrit books used to be either written or printed on single leaves several inches long and a few inches wide. After I had read the word Upanishad, the leaves began to turn by themselves, one by one, and they continued in that manner until I woke up from the dream. After this Divine experience I did not sleep again and kept on thinking of the two wonderful experiences which had blessed my life in that remote part of the world. Not only did Bhagavan give me darshan and initiate me to be His disciple, devotee and servitor, He also showed me the Path through which I would be able to follow His upadesa. The two dreams are the two sides of the same Shield. That Shield is Bhagavan. Bhagavan is Upanishad and Upanishad is Bhagavan.

Time and again these wonderful experiences fill me with Bhagavan and His Grace. When I tried to go to Him I could not reach Him, but when Bhagavan saw that the time had come, He took me into His jaws, just as the lion takes its prey.

For two years after this experience we continued to live in Washington D.C., where I was employed. I obtained all the books concerning Bhagavan from His Ashrama in Tiruvannamalai. Although I did not realize it then, the entire course of my life had undergone a change. I carried on the duties assigned to me, but my inner life and aspirations were never the same.

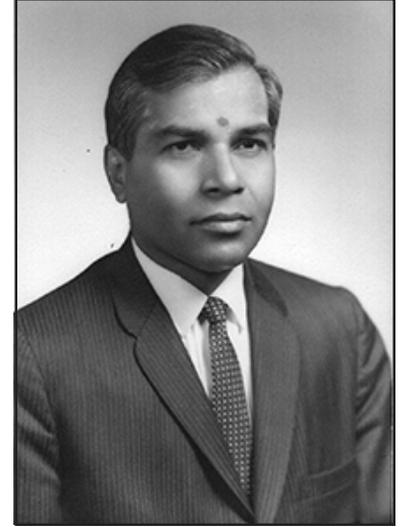
I remember how I used to write to Bhagavan from

Washington, expressing my devotion to Him. I generally addressed all such letters to Bhagavan by name. I knew that He was no more in the body and it was no use addressing these letters to Him. But I was always inspired to write to Bhagavan. It was not so much to prove my devotion to Him but rather evidence of my faith that Bhagavan is as much present as he was when in the body. The practice of writing to Him continues to this day.

In 1957 I left Washington D.C. and returned to my Alma Mater, the State University of Iowa. Someone had held out the promise of a teaching position for me in the Midwest, but it never materialized. That was the beginning of a long time of trials and travails which have taken me to many places. The more Bhagavan got hold of my life, the more worldly and material problems began to plague me and my family and we were put to the severest tests. It was in the quest of the non-existent teaching position that all our savings were exhausted and we were forced to fall back upon the charities of others. But the Divine Bliss of the Silent Sage of Arunachala was with me all the time. He always protected me.

While I was chasing the mirage of teaching Indian culture in an American college, professional complications were piling up and I did not see a ray of hope. My limited resources were rapidly depleting and I was so much obsessed with the idea of getting the teaching position that I was bewildered.

About this time in 1957 at the University of Iowa I saw a dream which is as clear today as it was at the time I saw it. I was in a forest where I saw a swift mountain stream in front of me. I kept looking at the water which was crystal clear, so clear I could easily see the bed of the stream. As I looked on, I saw a black snake sprawled in the water, on account of which I couldn't think of crossing the stream. I was afraid.



Bhagawat Prasad Singh

Instantly, Bhagavan Ramana appeared before me, lifted me on his shoulders and literally carried me across the stream, setting me down on the other side. That showed me how Bhagavan had taken hold of my life and that He was there all the time to protect me from

any kind of harm. It so happened that we returned to India in February, 1959. We lived in my village and the world of cold, corrugated cement and concrete was replaced by the village life.

(To be continued)

The Essence of Sri Ramana's Sayings

By Sivaprakasam Pillai

Sivaprakasam Pillai is the fortunate devotee who put the important question 'Who am I?' to Bhagavan and preserved His answers. This treasure-trove of wisdom now guides innumerable seekers all over the world.

He dedicated the rest of his life to contemplation on His teachings and now and then he used to write a few verses. Sivaprakasam Pillai passed away in January 1949. Soon after that when Sri Manickam Pillai, his nephew, came to the Ashram, Bhagavan enquired about Sivaprakasam Pillai's last days. He asked whether 'Pillaiyavargal' (this is how Bhagavan referred to Sivaprakasam Pillai) had left any poems behind. The nephew hesitatingly replied: "Bhagavan! He did leave some manuscripts with me, but with the instructions that I should burn them after his death and not show them to others."

"Oh, is it so! Doesn't matter. You can show them to me!"

Bhagavan looked through the bunch and picked out one sheet and said: "This one is enough," and returned the rest.

Below is the English translation of the poem selected by Bhagavan.

Sri Ramana Vachana Saram

This is the essence, this is the essence!
This indeed is the essence of Ramana's words!
Tell me who is the real You! Seek the real You!
You are not surely the putrid flesh.
The body is born, the body dies.
The body knows not itself in deep sleep.
You are Knowledge. Knowledge is you.
Knowledge Eternal is never born nor dies.
In sleep is Awareness of Self, not of body.
You alone witness absence of body-consciousness.
Do not all know that body takes birth?
Is there anyone who is aware of the birth of Consciousness?
You are not the body, as declared above.

Destroy the false notion that you are the body.

Seek ceaselessly your real nature.

Think no other thought.

If the root thought 'I am the body'

Subsides, then all other thoughts subside.

'Who is aware of the body?'— this quest

Alone will eliminate the 'I am the body' notion.

The deluded one who thinks 'I am the body',

Will crave for food, clothes and fulfillment of desires.

He who is free from the delusion 'I am the body'

His mind will not crave for food, clothes and desires extensive.

Even as the end draws nigh, he will not be perturbed.

Be tranquil; it is all God's work.

Ponder not whether the body be one, two or three (gross, subtle or causal).

Vain is such pursuit.

If you observe attentively,

There is no scope for body-consciousness at all.

Reject all appearance that seems apart [from you].

Reject it as 'Not I'.

All other dogmas and tenets are garbage-like collections.

Remove them all, Repeatedly questing 'Who am I?'

The I-thought alone remains.

The rest will be ashes.

When the I-thought gets burnt away,

You will know the 'Real You', bereft of thought.

That which neither rises nor sets is the Real You, shining effulgent.

As the Self shines like the resplendent Sun,

Be that, never falling back.

This is the essence, this is the essence!

This indeed is the essence of Ramana's Teaching!

— from www.sriramanamaharshi.org

Meeting the Maharshi

By Sri A. Meenakshisundaram Iyer

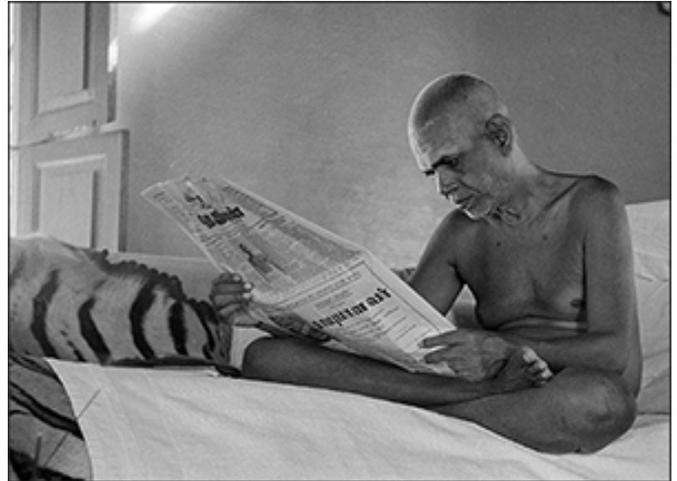
THIS was not my first visit to Sri Ramanasramam. I had been there once before, but only for ten minutes. About four years earlier I had visited out of sheer curiosity. I arrived on one train and left by the very next. It was in the afternoon. The Maharshi was reading a newspaper. I prostrated and stood before him. The Maharshi did not even care to look at me, much less speak a word. My pride was wounded. More than four years rolled by.

Then I read references to him as a yogi who had realised. The religious people of Madura were celebrating Ramana's Jayanti and I wondered how a jayanti was being celebrated in his own time. Had I mistaken the Maharshi when I saw him sitting on soft cushions in comfortable surroundings, ignoring the adoration of a believing crowd? Possibly so. Contrition began to eat away at me and I decided to make a second visit.

I reached the Ashram at about ten in the morning. I went straight into the hall. As before, the Maharshi was reading a newspaper, but when he saw me at the entrance he looked up and welcomed me, saying, "Come in." As I turned round to sit I was surprised to find just opposite to me a form that seemed like a waxen image – perhaps a lady. It was a motionless, life-sized figure. Closer observation soon convinced me that it was, indeed, a person of flesh and blood.

Then turning back, I perceived a number of men, some with half-closed eyes and some in attitudes of deep meditation. Brunton has written that the vicinity of the Maharshi is perfumed with an atmosphere of peace, and the devotees were obviously engaged in meditation with the help of that atmosphere.

In a few minutes, the bell rang in the dining hall and the meditators awoke to their mundane existence. Though I had come to the Ashram after eating, I too joined the diners, more to see the Maharshi than to eat. The Maharshi was at the head of the group seated in the general dining section. He knows no distinction of caste, but existing scruples were respected and I was led into the adjoining brahmin section, the division being made by a thatched fence. Meals over, we



proceeded to the tap outside to wash our hands, where I discovered that the waxen figure I had seen earlier was a young European woman, whom I unsuccessfully endeavoured to draw into conversation.

It was now midday and the inmates and visitors adjourned for rest. But I was restless in spite of the need for rest after a night's journey in the train. I therefore wandered aimlessly for a short distance from the hall and observed a row of numbered thatched sheds which evidently provide accommodation for visitors. I peeped into one of them whose wicket door was half open. Its inmate, an old Iyengar gentleman, beckoned me to walk in. He talked admiringly about his neighbour, a young French lady, who had become a Buddhist Nun [Sujata Sen]. I at once recognised her as the lady at the tap. I learnt that she had married a Bengali, I. M. S. Officer, but soon preferred a meditative life to one of luxury. She had wandered over the Himalayas and performed tapas in the wilds of Tibet. When, about a month earlier she had arrived at Ramanasramam, the place was full of visitors and there was no accommodation. She thereupon spent her nights on the slopes of the hill until a hut fell vacant. Her hair was closely cropped after the manner of Buddhist bhikshus. What renunciation for one of her race and of her youth! Occasionally I saw her moving in and about the Ashram with an eel-like elusiveness.

The sun was beating fiercely outside the Maharshi's hall, but it was cool within. The floor had just been washed and as soon as the carpets were spread devotees had gathered and were already seated when I walked in. Here and there men devotees were sitting and I joined them. A little while later I rose

with trepidation, and with a beating heart and a suppliant posture, approached the Maharshi. A kindly smile welcomed me. Yet with a faltering voice I made my submission to him, which was that I wanted to clear a long-standing problem of mine relating to past and future births.

The Maharshi listened in patient silence to my lengthy introduction. When I finished, he said: “You wish to know what you were and what you will be. Have you considered what you are? It is important to know yourself, to know what you are and you will then have known what ought to be known.”

I recognised that it is more practical to know what I am than what I was or what I will be and I cited the example of Buddha who refused to answer questions about God or the Ultimate Reality. He was more concerned with instructing people on how to attain happiness.

The Maharshi interjected, “For this, he has been misconstrued to be a Sunya Vadi (Nihilist).”

I said, “I have an intellectual cognition of what I am, based on the data of science and theorising on them. I also have just an intellectual cognition that I am Brahman and that Brahman alone exists.”

The Maharshi said, “You can only say ‘I am’ and no more. Anything more will imply duality and limitation. It is not enough that you have a mere intellectual cognition of the Truth. That is no good without realization.”

“Is it this Atma Jnanam or the knowledge of Self that Jesus meant by the expression ‘Kingdom of Heaven’?” I asked.

The reply was, “Yes, Vedantins can understand him.”

Incidentally, I referred to Sri Krishna as a human friend of Arjuna, though he on one occasion showed

Sri Ramana Jayanti Retreat in Tampa

Thursday, December 29th – Sunday, January 1st

Registration Deadline is November 30

This year’s four-day retreat will have periods of meditation, chanting, readings, presentations, satsang and quiet time for reflection and relaxation, and will once again be held at the Franciscan Center in Tampa, Florida.

Participants are requested to arrive by Wednesday evening to attend the Thursday morning inauguration ceremony for the replica constructed in Tampa of Sri Ramanasramam’s Old Hall.

If you would like a registration form emailed to you, please write to: rohitrkvaiddya@yahoo.com

or call: (813)-766-0145

The retreat center’s capacity is 65 attendees, which will soon be met. We therefore recommend that all genuinely-interested individuals request a registration form, complete it and return it immediately. Details related to the cost for lodging and food will be provided along with the forms.

For more information, please contact:

rohitrkvaiddya@yahoo.com / (813) 766-0145 or dennis@arunachala.org / (718) 560-3196

The program will be held at:

The Franciscan Center, 3010 N. Perry Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33603

Website: <http://www.franciscancentertampa.org/>

his Supreme Self to Arjuna by giving him his own Samashti Chakshu (vision of the Reality).

The Maharshi pointed out that Krishna did not show Arjuna the Reality but only enabled him to see through (Krishna's) own eyes, like a mesmerist. "What was given to Arjuna for the occasion was not Samashti Chakshu but Divya Chakshu (a divine vision). The stars and the worlds that Arjuna saw were not real. Space is not real. Time also is not real."

"Sankara is sometimes charged with denying any reality to the phenomenal world," I said.

The Maharshi repudiated the idea that phenomena are unreal in all respects. "That alone," he said, "can be called real which is permanent and does not change."

"How can the word reality," he asked, "be applied to phenomena which undergo change and transformation every instant? It would be a wrong application of language to describe as real what undergoes change every instant. Such changeable appearances are not worth knowing, and what every one ought to know is the true Self, the Absolute, which includes all."

– *The Sunday Times*, March 21, 1937

Ramana Satsangs

Regular satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted in or near 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 — Nirupama & Ramesh (574-514-4766 / neeru_2@hotmail.com)
Birmingham, AL — Sai Kand (205-441-6859 / kandsai@yahoo.com)
Boston, MA — David & Anna (617-928-1487 / annaklegon@gmail.com)
Canada, Ottawa — Anantha Padmanabhan (613-733-8250 / madhupaddy@rogers.com)
Canada, Toronto — Thiru (416-876-1942 / thirusivasamy@hotmail.com)
Canada, Vancouver — Akash (778-321-4499 / eternalshiva@hotmail.com)
Canada, Victoria — Saibish (250-818-2875 / saibish@gmail.com)
Chicago Area — Jean-Luc & Rita (719-480-3530 / blueskyvalley@mac.com)
Connecticut Area — Aruna & Ram (860-284-0078 / rsankaran2000@yahoo.com)
Chapel, Hill, NC — Ranjani Ramanan (919-338-2551 / ranjani1@yahoo.com)
Dublin, Ohio — Abilash & Madhavi (614-789-9058 / mungamuru@hotmail.com)
Florida, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-600-1967 / arunahill@gmail.com)
Florida, Tampa – Rohit (813-766-0145 / rohitk vaidya@yahoo.com)
Florida, Palm Coast – Shriram & Rekha (904-347-3434 / ssmarathemd@gmail.com)
Houston, TX — Kumar Saran (832-435-3761 / saran01@earthlink.net)
Los Angeles, CA — Natarajan & Indira Venkatesan (310-473-9441 / nvenky30@yahoo.com)
New Jersey, West Windsor — Gurunath & Leena (609-273-6216 / gsnetravali@hotmail.com)
Puerto Rico — Rosa & Scott Mathewson (787-531-5295 / rosilinm@hotmail.com)
San Francisco Area — Karthik & Sunita (510-656-2752 / sunita_parasuraman@yahoo.com)
San Francisco Area — Subadra & TKS (925-373-6909 / subadra2001@yahoo.com)
Seattle, WA area — Sunil Bala (425-996-4144 / sunil.n.bala@gmail.com)
Washington, D.C. Area — Uma & Santosh (301-528-5526 / uma_santosh@hotmail.com)

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