

The Maharshi



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Grant Duff

Part II

Throughout his life Grant Duff lived safely within the high walls of the British aristocracy. He moved closely with those of power and influence, the learned and wise from around the world. But it was only when he walked into the Old Hall of the Maharshi in 1935 that he experienced the “greatest event” of his life, which he expressed in the following poem:

With Sri Ramana of Arunachala

I've wandered far: yes I have been
From land to land to land:
Sages I've seen, great king and queen,
The lowly, wise and grand.
But only there – at the Asramam
By Arunachalam –
Have I known that joy without alloy,
I am! I am! I am!

–Grant Duff (Douglas Ainslie)

THIS poem and the following article were written for the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* in 1946. Grant Duff sent it to the Ashram from Santa Barbara, California where he had been living for the previous eight years.

It is interesting that two other foreigners that he met at Ramanasramam in 1935 also spent the last decade of their lives in close proximity to each other in California. The two others were Maud Piggott from England and Evans-Wentz from Florida.

In the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, under the title of “My Visit to Maharshi, The Greatest Event in My Life,” he writes:

I had first become interested in India on perusing my grandfather's *History of the Mahrattas*, which is still read by many and is regarded as a classic of its kind. Though not actually, I believe, styled Governor, he practically ruled that part of the ancient land for some years and became very much attached to the Mahrattas and to the Indian tradition in general.

Leslie Stephen's reference to my grandfather reads as follows: “The Indian Empire is the most marvelous proof of this (he is referring to the many great actions which are completely forgotten) that the world can supply. A man died not long ago who, at twenty-five years of age, with no previous training, was set to govern a kingdom with absolute power, and who did govern it so wisely and firmly that he literally changed a wilderness into a fruitful land. Probably no one who reads these lines will guess to whom they allude. I can, however, say that they allude to James Grant Duff (1789-1858), author of the *History of the Mahrattas*, and father of his (Sir James Fitz James Stephen's) friend, Sir Mountstuart.” [D. A. father's brother] James Grant Duff was employed by the East Indian Company.

In the early days of the 'eighties of the last century, my uncle, the late Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, who

was then Governor of Madras, asked me to come out to his place and stay there as long as I liked. This was just what I should have wished to do. But when I had read my uncle's letter triumphantly to my parents, after a brief consultation my father told me, to my amazement, that they could not allow me to go to India, owing to the climate of that country!

I mention these facts as they may serve to explain to some extent my curious mental position as regards India. I was on the one hand surrounded with the usual crowd of materialists and followers of Herbert Spencer when I was eighteen, and on the other I felt an obscure longing for something else which I knew existing somewhere else, but where I was not sure precisely, owing to the influences of Oxford teaching. There, at Oxford, I wasted my time taking a degree and doing little else but play about as I had done the previous four years at Eton with groups of shallow-minded youths one would often find in the higher classes in a school. Soon after I commenced my studies at Oxford, I felt the urge to write down some of the poetry that was surging within me, and published several volumes of verse besides sending poems to the magazines of the day. In the matter of attending social parties, etc., I was not quite as bad as Robert Browning, though I wasted lots of time that way.

Though the torch be inverted the flame

Will burn upward the same:

Though the name no longer be flame

But just man-in-the-mire,

He too will burn upward aspire

To the place whence he came:

For he too is fire of a quenchless desire.

Though the torch be inverted the flame

Will burn upward the same.

A good deal later there occurred an episode which has some bearing on the present subject of my quest for the Truth, how and where I ultimately found IT. I was a member of the aristocratic Union Club at Naples, where for the first time I came into contact with Benedetto Croce's writings. His

philosophy of art and of the practical as also his logical studies interested me intensely. Unacquainted with anyone who could introduce me to the philosopher, I called upon him myself, to see what would happen next! Everything went splendidly when I had explained who I was and my love for philosophy of the idealistic sort which he practised. In the course of a few weeks I was already at work on his *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*. This intercourse, though verbal and intellectual, with a great thinker did stimulate my interest in the things of the spirit, and I was always looking about for someone with a definite solution to the problem of the universe. While I was in this state of mind, a thirst for a deeper understanding about life, the world and what they mean, I came to know of the Sage of the Hill of the Holy Beacon. It was the good Mr. Raphael Hurst who told me of the Holy One and the Ashram at Tiruvannamalai.

Eventually I found my way out there and had the greatest adventure of my life. Mark my words: I do not know what happened when I saw Maharshi for the first time, but the moment he looked at me, I felt he was the Truth and the Light. There could be no doubt about it, and all the doubts and speculations I had accumulated during the past many years disappeared in the Radiance of the Holy One.

It is very difficult to describe in words the unanticipated change that came over me. Suffice it to say that, though my visits to the Ashram were brief, I felt that every moment I was there I was building up within me what could never be destroyed, whatever may happen to this body and mind.

A careful reading of the admirable biography of Sri Ramana Maharshi by B. V. Narasimhaswami revealed to me what I could never hope to know otherwise. I will only mention here just a very few of the points in which the Maharshi has particularly appealed to me. One of these is the extreme politeness and gentleness which always surrounds his least act. It is as though he is actually conscious of the frail beings whom he is addressing and avoiding the words that may cause them to be ashamed or to regret something that they had done. All the incidents in the above-mentioned biography

seem to me to illustrate this fact in relation to Maharshi — his extraordinary insight into other beings combined with his marvellous gentleness.

He sees and knows everything about all those who come before him but he is gentle to a degree that surpasses gentleness, whereby he reaches his end with perfect ease and to the utmost benefit of the visitor.

The visit of Humphreys to the Maharshi is one of the most interesting incidents for us Europeans. It occurred over thirty-five years ago, yet the account he left of his visits to the Sage supplies all the details that are necessary. His concluding words are highly significant: "It is wonderful what a difference it makes to have been in his Presence!" I must say the same from my personal experience. My visit to the Sage of Arunachala has been the greatest event in my life.

Any of those of the West who are still waiting and wondering would do well to pack their sack as quickly as possible and be off to India while there is yet time. What I feel personally is that so much has been done during the last ten years in the way of making known the Saviour of mankind that further comment is simply otiose.

Grant Duff appears to have resided in South India and Ceylon for at least two years. He studied Sanskrit in Coimbatore for six months. From conversations recorded in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* we know for sure that he visited Bhagavan at least three times. During his visits he would occupy the small cottage next to Major Chadwick's. About two years after he arrived in India he was still found to be in Ceylon. And his proximity to the Ashram proved advantageous when a summons arrived in the Ashram ordering Bhagavan to appear in the Vellore Court.

Sri Kunju Swami writes about it in his reminiscences:

A devotee went to Court claiming the property of the Ashram. He tried hard to drag Sri Bhagavan himself to the court as the defendant. Following the legal process, a summons was also served on Sri Bhagavan to appear in court. Devotees felt very sad at this.

At this time, divine forces began to work through Grant Duff, a great devotee of Sri Bhagavan, who was at the time in Ceylon. When he



heard the news he was shocked. "What? dragging Sri Bhagavan to court! This must be Satan's plot. This must be foiled." He sent a telegram to Lord Erskine, the Governor of Madras. "Please don't drag Sri Bhagavan to court. A commission can examine him in the Ashram itself." An order to this effect was sent to the court concerned, and a copy of it was sent to the Ashram.

The letter came to Tiruvannamalai post office the day before the trial. Ramaswamy Pillai used to fetch the mail in a leather pouch. When he emptied the contents of the pouch, everyone anxiously looked for the letter from the government. There was none. All were disappointed. That night devotees were deeply worried. When they were talking among themselves in the presence of Sri Bhagavan, Ramaswami Pillai put his hand into the leather pouch casually. Lo! His hand felt a big envelope. It was the letter from the government. He took it out. It had got stuck to the pouch. It was a marvel. The commission met Sri Bhagavan at the Ashram. The whole enquiry fizzled out.

That commission's lawyers visited Bhagavan twice, November 15th and December 5th 1936. Fortunately for us Munagala Venkataramiah was present on both occasions and we have today a record of Bhagavan's replies to very pointed questions regarding his spiritual state, how he views the Ashram, its management, the devotees gathered around him, upadesha and the Guru. While reading it you can't help but think that Bhagavan was fully aware of the objectives of the commission and answered the questions in such a manner that would ultimately undermine the legitimacy of the whole affair, which it did.

(To be continued)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

April 1950

How Maharshi Helped His Devotees

SRI Bhagavan was unique, peerless. Why should I say 'was'? He *is* unique and he *is* peerless.

One gracious look, one understanding nod and, one sympathetic word had always meant oceans to the earnest seeker to the aspiring pilgrim. And which sincere voyager has gone to him and returned empty? And which devout sadhaka has sought his guidance and has not got it?

The intellectual quibbler might have been given the short shrift by him. The dry philosopher might have found in him a steel wall. The eternal doubter would have returned from him not any the better.

But those who have unreservedly surrendered themselves to a pursuit of Truth have never failed to find in him a great guide. And in what infinite ways has he helped the true sadhaks?

Sometimes the sought-for guidance would come through an answer given to somebody's question. Sometimes it would be provided through a direct monosyllabic answer. And sometimes it would come through a subjective experience.



AND if the hundreds of pilgrims on the path of spirituality who have sought and received guidance from Sri Bhagavan were to unfold their subjective experiences, the world would know how gracious, compassionate, benevolent and all pervasive Sri Bhagavan has been, and is.

But subjective experiences are

THAT VOICE FROM THE HILL

Infinite are the ways through which Sri Maharshi helped his devotees. An European sadhak below recounts a strange experience which befell him on the Hill of Arunachala.

intimate and they are provided only for the personal spiritual advancement of the particular aspirant. It is, therefore, not usually considered necessary to take the world into confidence regarding the subjective experiences of sadhaks.

But since I have been invited by the editor to write on how Sri Maharshi has been helping the aspirants, I venture to refer to just one experience of mine.



ONCE I was going on the eastern side of the Arunachala hill in full belief and confidence that I had unreservedly surrendered myself to Sri Bhagavan. Suddenly I saw a leper woman walking towards me. Her face was terribly disfigured by the disease. Her nose had been completely eaten away and in its place were found two holes. The fingers on her hands had all gone. She advanced towards me and, extending the stumps of her hands, asked me to give her something to eat.

The sight of her disgusted me,

frightened me. My whole frame shuddered with terror that she might touch me. Overcome by repulsion, I hastened to move away from her.

Suddenly, I heard the voice of Sri Bhagavan coming clear and ringing from across the mountains. It said: "To surrender to me is to surrender to every one, for the Self is in every one." Hearing this I regained my poise and offered the leper woman the plantains that I had in my bag.



IN a few minutes, I saw myself standing before not the disfigured leper woman but before a tall old man with long white hair and beard. The man looked like a rishi and was smiling. When the thought of prostrating before the rishi entered my mind, I saw before me the old leper woman again. I bowed happy at heart though somewhat confused in mind and then resumed my walk up the hill.

This experience taught me a new lesson and made me tread a new path. I have cited this as just one of the ways through which Sri Bhagavan teaches, guides and helps.

Infinite, indeed, are the ways through which he teaches the aspirant. Since what he has been providing before and what he will continue to provide hereafter is a subjective help to a subjective research, it may not and usually does not produce wondrous ripples on the objective surface. Sri Bhagavan is the one and real Guru. May his grace enfold our being.

How Maharshi Helped His Devotees

THE previous article is a reproduction of an April, 1950 article found in the Times of India. Louis Buss discovered it along with two other newspaper articles on the Maharshi in Enid Chadwick's scrapbook in Walsingham, England. Enid was Major Chadwick's younger sister who passed away in 1982. The two other articles from the Indian newspapers were authored by Major Chadwick. This one was anonymous, but by the style of writing and the circumstances in which it was found, there is little doubt that Major Chadwick wrote it also.



Enid Chadwick

Five Gems on Arunachala Explained By Sri Ramana Maharshi

ABOUT 1917, Bhagavan once wrote down on paper *Akaruṇā pūrṇa sudhābdhe* (ocean of nectar full of grace) and then set it aside. When Vasishtha Ganapati Muni saw this paper he asked the Maharshi to compose some verses in Sanskrit beginning with these words. Bhagavan demurred saying that he did not know Sanskrit metre and composition rules. Nayana (Ganapati Muni) briefly explained to him the construction of the *arya* metre. The "Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam" (Five Gems on Arunachala) was the result. These spontaneous verses welled up from the depths of the Maharshi's experience like the ancient *riks* recorded by the seers of the Veda. The metre was in perfect *arya*; the subject was an epitome of his teaching of the direct path to the Self; the form was a laudation of Arunachala conceived as the Self of all. Nayana was ecstatic over this unexpected bounty of grace from his guru Ramana. He wanted to write a commentary on these precious verses but somehow it was not to be.

Later, Nayana's disciple, Kapali Sastri, composed the Sanskrit commentary that his guru had been unable to write. Also, others have written commentaries on these inspired verses that embody the direct teachings of Bhagavan Ramana.

Reading through the publications of Sri Ramanasramam we are treated here and there with commentaries on several of the verses given by Bhagavan himself. Who can better comment on them than He!

The following text has been extracted from *Day by*

Day with Bhagavan, Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi and Letters from Sri Ramanasramam:

G. V. Subbaramayya slightly altered his translation of the "Pancharatna" and showed it to Bhagavan. In the talk that followed, Bhagavan said: "This is how the "Pancharatna" was composed: I had somehow composed the first stanza in a slightly different form. When Ganapati Sastri saw it he altered it a little and said it had become *Arya Geetha*. He asked me to write four more similar stanzas, saying that he would use them as *mangalam* for his works. That was in 1917. Later, in 1922, Aiyasami Pillai was getting up an edition of the first four songs of the present *Arunachala Sthuthi Panchakam* (Five Hymns to Arunachala) and I was asked to translate the "Pancharatna" also into Tamil to go with them, and I did."

करुणापूर्ण सुधाब्धे कबलित घनविश्वरूप किरणाऽवल्या ।
अरुणाचल परमात्मन् अरुणोभव चित्तकञ्जसुविकासाय ॥ १ ॥

karuṇā pūrṇa sudhābdhe kabalita ghana-viśvarūpa
kiranā'valyā |aruṇācala paramātmann aruṇo bhava
citta-kañja-suvikāsāya ||1||

*Ocean of nectar, full of Grace, engulfing the universe in
Thy Splendour, O Arunachala, the Supreme! Be Thou the
Sun and open the lotus of my heart in Bliss.*

Ramakrishna Swami, a long-resident disciple, asked Maharshi the meaning of *Twaiyarunachala sarvam*, from a stanza in *The Five Hymns*.

Maharshi explained it in detail, saying that the

universe is like a painting on a screen – the screen being the Red Hill, Arunachala. That which rises and sinks is made up of what it rises from. The finality of the universe is the God Arunachala. Meditating on Him or on the seer, the Self, there is a mental vibration ‘I’ to which all are reduced. Tracing the source of ‘I’, the primal ‘I-I’ alone remains over, and it is inexpressible. The seat of Realisation is within and the seeker cannot find it as an object outside himself. That seat is bliss and is the core of all beings. Hence it is called the Heart. **The only useful purpose of the present birth is to turn within and realise it. There is nothing else to do.**

त्वय्यरुणाचल सर्वं भूत्वा स्थित्वा प्रलीनमेतच्चित्रम् ।
हृद्यहमित्यात्मतया नृत्यसि भोस्ते वदन्ति हृदयं नाम ॥ २ ॥

tvayy-arunācala sarvaṁ bhūtvā sthitvā pralīnam-
etat-citraṁ |hr̥dyaham-ityātma-tayā nṛtyasi bhoṣte
vadanti hr̥dayaṁ nāma ||2||

2. O Arunachala! In Thee the picture of the universe is formed, abides, and is dissolved. In this enigma rests the miracle of Truth. Thou art the Inner Self who dancest in the heart as ‘I’. Heart is Thy name, O Lord!

G. V. S. translated the *Pancharatna* of Bhagavan in English verse and showed it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan said, “The third stanza deals with the *sat* aspect, the fourth with the *chit* and the fifth with the *ananda*. The *jñani* becomes one with *sat* or Reality, like the river merging in the ocean; the Yogi sees the light of *chit*; the *bhakta* or *karma yogin* is immersed in the ocean of *ananda*.”

अहमिति कुत आयाती त्यन्विष्यान्तः प्रविष्टयाऽत्यमलधिया ।
अवगम्य स्वं रूपं शाम्यत्यरुणाचल त्वयि नदीवाद्यौ ॥ ३ ॥

ahamiti kuta āyātī tyanviṣyāntaḥ
praviṣṭayā’tyamaladhiyā | avagamyasvaṁ rūpaṁ
śāmyatyarunācala tvayi nadīvābdhau ||3||

3. He who turns inward with untroubled mind to search where the consciousness of ‘I’ arises realizes the Self and rests in Thee, O Arunachala! as a river when it merges in the ocean.

त्यक्त्वा विषयं बाह्यं रुद्धप्राणेन रुद्धमनसाऽन्तस्त्वाम् ।
ध्यायन्पश्यति योगी दीधितिमरुणाचल त्वयि महीयं ते ॥ ४ ॥

tyaktvā viṣayaṁ bāhyaṁ ruddha-prāṇena ruddha-
manasānta stvām | dhyāyan-paśyati yogī didhitim-
aruṇācala tvayi mahīyan te ||4||

4. Abandoning the outer world, with mind and breath controlled, in order to meditate on Thee within, the yogi sees Thy light, O Arunachala! and finds his delight in Thee.

Mr. Nanavati of Bombay asked Bhagavan, “In the fifth stanza of “Arunachala Pancharatnam” reference is made to seeing ‘Your form in everything.’ What is the form referred to?” Bhagavan said, “The stanza says that one should completely surrender one’s mind, turn it inwards and see ‘You’ the Self within, and then see the Self in ‘you’ in everything. It is only after seeing the Self within that one will be able to see the Self in everything. One must first realise there is nothing but the Self and that he is that Self, and then only can he see everything as the form of the Self. That is the meaning of saying, ‘See the Self in everything and everything in the Self,’ as is stated in the *Gita* and other books. It is the same truth that is taught in stanza four of the “Reality in Forty Verses.”

If Self has form, the world and God likewise have form. If Self is without form, by whom and how can form (of world and God) be seen? Without the eye, can there be sight or spectacle? The Self, the real eye, is infinite.

“If you have the idea that you are something with form, that you are limited by this body, and that being within this body you have to see through these eyes, God and the world also will appear to you as form. If you realise you are without form, that you are unlimited, that you alone exist, that you are the eye, the infinite eye, what is there to be seen apart from the infinite eye? Apart from the eye, there is nothing to be seen. There must be a seer for an object to be seen, and there must be space, time, etc. But if the Self alone exists, it is both seer and seen, and above seeing or being seen.”

त्वय्यर्पितमनसा त्वां पश्यन् सर्वं तवाकृतितया सततम् ।
भजतेऽनन्यप्रीत्या सजयत्यरुणाचल त्वयि सुखे मग्नः ॥ ५ ॥

tvayy-arpita-manasā tvām paśyan sarvaṁ
tavākṛtitayā satatam |bhajate’nanya-prītyā sa
jayatyarunācala tvayi sukhe magnaḥ ||5||

5. *He who dedicates his mind to Thee and, seeing Thee, always beholds the universe as Thy form, who at all times glorifies Thee and loves Thee as none other than the Self, he is the Master without peer, being one with Thee, O Arunachala! and lost in Thy bliss.*

Address God as a Separate Being?

Dr. Syed asked: I have been reading the *Five Hymns*. I find that the hymns are addressed to Arunachala by you. You are an Advaitin. How do you then address God as a separate being?

M.: The devotee, God and the Hymns are all the Self.

D.: But you are addressing God. You are specifying

this Arunachala Hill as God.

M.: You can identify the Self with the body. Should not the devotee identify the Self with Arunachala?

D.: If Arunachala be the Self why should it be specially picked out among so many other hills? God is everywhere. Why do you specify Him as Arunachala?

M.: What has attracted you from Allahabad to this place? What has attracted all these people around?

D.: Sri Bhagavan.

M.: How was I attracted here? By Arunachala. The power cannot be denied. Again, Arunachala is within and not without. The Self is Arunachala.

Ramana Satsangs in the USA and Canada

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.

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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)

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