

The Maharshi



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Confirmed in the Purpose of Existence

These recollections were written in 1976 by Evelyn Kaselow Saphier as a personal tribute to Swami Adiswarananda, the Minister in Charge of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in New York City.

THE GLORIOUS first days of being on the path for me were marked with so many incidents, so sacred to the memory one could barely think to describe them. The stories and words of Swami Adiswarananda are engraved in my memory and the incidents that surround them truly marked the beginning of my life on the path. It was a glorious beginning for one so far from virtue as I. It seemed a true miracle of grace that someone of so little wisdom could have even a little association with one for whom God was as near and dear as father and mother appeared to me to be in my life and whose will was so united to that of God. I thought if such a one would utter a prayer to God on my behalf my salvation would be assured, and I believe my initial feeling was right as association with mahatmas is considered the greatest boon on the path to Self-realization.

I was doubly blessed in this respect for seven months before walking across the threshold of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of East 94th Street. I had met, though not become acquainted with, the Director of Arunachala Ashrama, Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat, who was later to become a dear friend. A friend of mine and fellow “aspirant” took me to the Center for the first time on Ramakrishna’s Jayanthi Day in 1972 and I still remember vividly the stories of Bhagavan Ramakrishna’s life told on that glorious day. Divinely inspired

eloquence flowed from Swamiji throughout that first hour I spent in the Center for every word seemed inspired by the direct experience of the Truth to me. The grace of Sri Ramakrishna was being imparted and the words were almost incidental. It seemed, *that* grace was everywhere and the chapel itself was surcharged with divine peace. How such a one as I could come away with such an impression can only be explained as a miracle of divine grace.

Anyway, I became an awed attender of Swamiji’s Friday night classes. During the question and answer periods held after the talk in the library upstairs, which I got to attend on the coat-tails of my friend, I never had any questions but I watched carefully for one could see that Swamiji’s answers always exactly suited the questioner and proceeded not as with most of us from thought, but from Silence itself. If no one asked questions he withdrew into himself and remained completely still. Though I had no aptitude for intellectual discussion and had no questions anyway, I attended



every class possible for me. After the first class in the library, my friend introduced me to Swamiji. This was an unforgettable experience for Swamiji looked on me with such a look that I almost turned into ashes on the spot. Somehow I remained standing there and fortunately was able to answer his question whether I had been to any other centers. I had only been to Arunachala Ashrama. Other centers where hatha yoga was taught didn't appeal to me.

I didn't know what my path was to be or who my 'Teacher' was, and my life seemed like an enormous question mark before me. I thought a soul could not have been more lost than I in the world. Like in the hymn of Shankara, I had "no wisdom or calling, no servant or master". My only hope was in God who seemed far away. When I was in this state one day Swamiji gave a talk on the four paths of jnana, bhakti, yoga and karma, stressing that a person must take up the practice by the path that suits him. Mustering up all my courage I asked him my path. "If a person is going downtown," he said, "and while riding one bus thinks that another may go faster, dismounts and then goes to another, and then another, will he ever get downtown?" As I had no practice apart from the chanting done at Arunachala Ashrama, I continued with that practice earnestly hoping that God himself would reveal the way meant for me. Early one morning that spring I had a dream of Swamiji standing before me in brilliant gold and orange robe. He merely looked at me and said, "You can rely on me." Then, in the dream, he said, "Why not come three times?" meaning, why not attend all three classes at the Center rather than just the one which offered the talk after the scripture lesson. The dream was very consoling and I determined at once not to miss a class.

Destiny seemed to have other things in store for me, for three friends requested I take them to Arunachala Ashrama on several occasions and thus became instrumental in my going there during that May and June (though I was attending all three classes at that time). As it was necessary for me to have a car for my job I was requested by Barry Zelikovsky at the Center to offer a ride to Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat on the last Sunday of the season so Bhagawat could attend the talk. This I considered the greatest honor and jumped at the opportunity.

After arriving at the Center, Bhagawat went up into the library where several people were gathered around Swamiji who was sitting in his large chair in the corner. Overwhelmed with emotion Bhagawat began the chanting as practiced at Arunachala Ashrama though asked to keep it short due to the failing health of Swami Nikhilananda. The pall of death was present but his songs resounded throughout the library and Swamiji's face betrayed his emotion for one sat before him with genuine love of God. As the singing ended Bhagawat prostrated before Swamiji, tears running over from his eyes uncontrollably and Swamiji's face also was filled with tears as he jumped forward to lift him up from the floor. The sight of Swamiji's face which seldom betrayed any emotion and the intense and pure love between them changed my life for I never suspected any such thing could exist on earth.

The summer came. More and more the peace of mind felt at Arunachala Ashrama during the evening chanting and recitation drew me there again and again. The personality of Ramana Maharshi drew me even as Ramakrishna's and the certainty overcame me that this was the practice for which I was built. As devotees from Arunachala Ashrama had recently departed for the newly-purchased Nova Scotia property, ranks dwindled in New York. For warmth and friendship Bhagawat and I would attend the choir at the Ramakrishna Center where we enjoyed the association with the noble and aspiring bramacharis Martin, John and Barry, and the opportunity on occasion to be with Swamiji in the library.

On one occasion the devotees from Nova Scotia returned to New York for a visit. After the sermon Swamiji was going upstairs to dinner and we all met him in the hall. Grabbing Bhagawat's arm he told us with all love and affection, "Though he appears an ordinary man, everything within him remains hidden, he is jnana through and through. Cling to him to the end." We resolved to take his advice and stand by our friend unto death. This advice had come from the Lord himself for us.

On another occasion Swamiji said, "Take a long time in deciding who is the Teacher and teaching for you. Once the path is found, die in its pursuit. You must stand by your teaching until you die." Such fiery words served as the torch to light and inspire

our march to God and as we remember them now help us to continue our march within.

Once, as the choir was assembling for practice, Swamiji – going toward the stairs – unexpectedly said of me, “Though she never says anything, she will conquer the world. Her voice which was weak now has become strong from so much taking God’s name. I hear it rise during the singing.” My breath stopped upon hearing these words. At the same time I got an unshakable conviction within me that the words which had issued from such a pure soul must come true. Fervently I prayed that those words might be realized in me. May I remember these words of encouragement even now is my prayer and in the darkest hours may they be my sustenance. I never mentioned these words to anyone—they were a sacred treasure to be kept within.

The sermons and stories of Swami Adiswarananda were the wealth of our life during 1972 and 73. Finally, by the Lord’s grace, though a mendicant himself, he was instrumental in sending our devotees, four in number, Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat, and his family (7 in all) on a pilgrimage to India during the summer of 1973. Penniless as we were, truly the pilgrimage was in God’s hands. The young men with Swamiji at that time were the kind of devotees who aspired to carry out all the wishes of their preceptor even before He himself conceived of them. When Swamiji said, “If I had the money I would give it to them,” the young men — not other than he — without reservation generously donated funds for the India pilgrimage, and those funds, along with a loan, enabled us to go to India and lay our heads at the Mahasamadhi of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. We also visited Sri Belur Math and Mission and placed our heads on the feet of Revered President Maharaj. We were able to visit Sri Dakshineswar also and offered infinite thanks to God for His abundant kindness showered on us unworthy pilgrims. The kindness the Lord had showered on us surpassed all our expectations for it was none other than a miracle that seven penniless devotees were enabled to travel half-way across the earth to visit and gain inspiration at these holy shrines.

We received the news of Swami Nikhilananda’s mahasamadhi while we were at Sri Ramanasramam

and upon our return the entire burden of the fast-growing Center had fallen on Swami Adiswarananda. We felt very fortunate still to see him when possible. He told us to have complete and total faith in Bhagawat without reservations.

He told us once, “For a woman, the Indian sari is the most dignified and modest dress.” We took to sari-wearing naturally and varied them only when they became troublesome in the office or home from so much use. Swamiji’s words were and are our guidelines and if we acted accordingly peace of mind was always the result.

Finally, I remember a celebration on the eve of Christmas day in 1973. The talk about Jesus and the meaning of Christianity was over and before the Christmas tree, as carols were about to begin in the sanctuary, I turned around and saw Swamiji at the back of the hall once again trying to conceal his emotion, yet his face betrayed the intensity of his desire that we be free from the bondage of maya. That such love should in the midst of suffering humanity take birth in human form was the very meaning of Jesus’ birth for me and I felt infinitely blessed for our own human birth and the opportunity of salvation.

Though life at Arunachala Ashrama drew increasingly upon our time and attention, no one present in the early 70’s at the Ashrama can forget the important role Swamiji played for us, for his life truly set ours straight on many an occasion and the Lord alone can repay the enormous debt we owe him.



Note: Swami Adiswarananda was absorbed in the Feet of Ramakrishna on November 1, 2007 and Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat was absorbed into the Feet of Arunachala Ramana on April 10th, 2000.

My Stories with the Ashram

Guomei Chen was born in mainland China where she studied to become an engineer; however, she was sent to the countryside to work as a farmer during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Ultimately, she immigrated to the United States and worked as an engineer for the City of New York till her retirement. Over the course of the last fifteen years, Chen regularly visited Arunachala Ashram where she would humbly clean the bathrooms and then spend long hours of meditation in the shrine. Chen and her husband recently bought a flat on the coast of China and are leaving New York. We will all miss her quiet, humble ways and sincere presence. Unsolicited, Chen sent us the following article.

“A Higher Power is leading you. Be led by the same.” – Sri Ramana Maharshi

It was Labor Day weekend in 1998 when I took a walk along the street where I lived. After only five minutes, I found myself standing in front of a small two-story, corner house. I hesitated, then walked up the steps to the porch. The door was open. I walked into the house. Little did I realize then how walking up those steps would make such a big difference in my life.

The small dwelling housed Ramana Maharshi's Ashram, in Forest Hills at that time. How did I hear about this place? I had a co-worker whose name was Rao. He took a vacation in India and, when he came back, he told me of a mountain called Arunachala and the mysterious attraction he felt for it. Arunachala had a center in North America; he gave me the address. When I looked at it, to my surprise, it was on the same street where I lived!

That was how I found the Ashram. The house was crowded that evening, probably due to the long holiday weekend. I found a quiet place in the hall and sat there for a while. Ramana Maharshi's smiling picture was on the wall. A very subtle feeling quietly came to me, like a gentle breeze or very light music—I could not explain what it was. I did try to tell others later, but I don't think they understood. I liked that feeling, and kept coming back.

After I got to know the people in the Ashram, I had the feeling that I had found my own 'tribe' or my own 'race'. I was the kind of person who did not easily fit into the social circles around me. But here, in the Ashram, the people I met were interested in the same things that interested me. It was quite normal to talk about saints, teachings, meditations here. Finally I realized that deep in my heart I belong

Sri Ramana Retreat in Florida

Due to a scheduling complication at the Franciscan Retreat Center our retreat dates had to be changed to

Friday Morning, 2 January - Sunday Afternoon, 4 January

All who expressed interest in attending have been informed of the new dates and were sent registration forms.

Registration ends on November 30th

If you intend to participate in the retreat, please contact us now and we will send you the registration package.

The three-day retreat will consist of meditation, chanting, readings, presentations, satsang and quiet time for reflection. Double and single rooms are available at the center. We are also renting the conference room and two quiet meditation rooms. The center is located on eight acres of property overlooking the beautiful Hillsborough River in Riverside Heights, Tampa, Florida. For a full description please visit their website: <http://www.franciscancenter Tampa.org/>

For Sri Ramana Retreat information, please contact:

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

to a special group. *I am a spiritual seeker!*

Since then, I started to meditate in the Ashram.

One summer night, I went to the Ashram after dinner. It was raining hard. Only two people were meditating there in the shrine at the time—an elderly gentleman and I. I started meditating on the inquiry “Who am I?”. After a while, another curious question arose: “If I die, what will go with me? What will be left behind? How about my feelings, my memories of my friends and family?” Very slowly, the mind slid into a state that was peaceful, transparent—a vast, limitless feeling. That night, when I finished meditation and walked home along the street, I had a strange feeling that the apartment buildings along the street were somehow transparent. I could see through them... see far away....

The following day’s normal activities continued; however, those feelings lingered, like background music. After about 10 days, the feelings gradually faded away.

Ramana Maharshi appeared in my dreams twice. I told these dreams to several people. One of them told me: “This is a beautiful dream, why don’t you write it down?” Now I am trying.

Dream 1: I had this dream about ten years ago. It was unforgettable; I still remember it very clearly.

In the dream, I went to visit a school. The school entrance had a gate and a security guard’s small hut. Ramana Maharshi was standing next to the small hut, looking a little bit darker and older than he appears in the big smiling picture in the hall, similar to a black and white picture I had seen somewhere in the Ashram.

It seemed a natural thing to see Bhagavan there, I didn’t feel any surprise. Bhagavan didn’t show any surprise either.

It seemed he said something. I was not sure what he said; however, I understood his meaning: “I knew you were coming, I have been waiting.”

Then he showed me around the school. I followed him. In the middle of the school, there was a courtyard. Around the courtyard, were several two-story buildings. Young people were walking around, talking, laughing. We visited the Art Department. I saw people studying singing and dancing there. The Science Department was much quieter.

Finally, we came to the Department of Yoga. Here there was a group of yogis meditating in a large hall. Bhagavan and I were standing by a large glass window,

looking at those yogis. At that moment, I suddenly felt very happy. Happiness welled up from deep within my heart and spread all round, like an endless ocean.

A soft, colorful mist surrounded us. I had the strong feeling that everything around us was so beautiful. I felt as free as the wind, full of energy. Compared to that moment, I had been living like a corpse, always so inhibited and full of stress.

Life was like a flower bud in blossom at that moment, expressing all its beauty and energy.

Overwhelmed by happiness and wonder, I turned to Bhagavan and said, “**Now I know... this is what I want to learn in my life.**”

This was really a very special dream for me. It gave meaning to my life. I have never doubted it. Since then not a day has passed in which I don’t meditate or read some spiritual books. Slowly or fast, I have been walking on the path that seeks wisdom.

Dream 2: I had this dream in the period just after I retired.

From the time I was young, I always liked art. However, before my retirement I could only take painting class during the evening or on weekends. After I retired, I could at last paint full-time, every day. My new life made me feel so happy. All of my thoughts became focused on art and painting, and I became a little crazy about my pursuit, talking to everybody about art.

Then, once again, Bhagavan appeared in my dream, very kind—like a father or uncle—and very gentle. He said something to me. I was not quite sure what he had said; however, I understood his meaning, “You have some problems now.”

Probably, in order to convey his message more clearly, a movie (or video) was being shown. In it, I saw a young man who used to be my co-worker. We had been working on a research project together. For whatever reason, he was crazy about the job he was doing and often talked about it with great excitement. He thought he was doing the most important thing in the world! As I watched him talking in the video, I realized that I was doing the same thing — talking about painting all the time, believing my art was the most important thing in the world.

Like a cool breeze blown into my overheated brain, I realized my mistake.

Letters and Comments

I AM a devotee trying my best to practice what Bhagavan teaches and to also live happily and harmoniously in my work, family and social life. Socially, I often feel out of place because those I sometimes meet with do not have the same inner aspirations; in my professional life I often have to attend board meetings and such things, though inwardly I do not have any personal ambition or passion for my profession like I used to have; and in my family life, though I love my wife and children and try my best to provide for them and give them happiness, I find that my mind is constantly drawn away from the spiritual ideal and aim in life while occupied doing this.

What is the best way to overcome these conflicts in my life?

– Devotee from Canada

What is the best way? Said simply, it is to practice more intensely the teachings of Bhagavan Ramana. We can read them, discuss them and understand the teachings, but their proper effect cannot manifest in our lives without verifying their truth by experience. As our understanding deepens by practice all these conflicts melt away, just as wet snow melts when it falls on the warm, fall ground. Surely, all Canadians have seen this phenomenon.

It is true that we must 'play' the part we are given in life. It is true that personal ambition and passion for work and all things related to mundane existence may appear as obstacles to the sadhaka and relegated to a lower level of prominence in our mind, but that does not mean in any way that our work will be less productive, our family affairs less attended to and harmonious or our lives less meaningful and fulfilling. It is only that the impetus that motivated us before has now shifted to another place, another locus or center.

That center is the Self. It is the same Self of all beings. It acts through all beings and activates our mind and body to move in the world. Now instead of living in the world in pursuit of happiness from our outer life and occupation, we live in the world to realize

that the actual source of all happiness is not in the forms, not in the actions, not even in the mind, but in the Self alone.





When this ideal is firmly rooted within us, then attachment to all things dissolves. When attachment dissolves, love, beauty, kindness, compassion and all divine qualities rise to the surface and manifest unconsciously through our words and deeds. Conflicts evaporate. Spontaneity manifests in every facet of our life. We are now free and love all and serve all.

This may sound very lofty. You may think that this state is not available to you now and some other

2015 Calendars

are now available from Sri Ramanasramam, India, at their following website link:

http://worldstore.sriramanamaharshi.org/index.php?main_page=index&cPath=163

	Desk Calendar (Arunachala Hill Photo) 2014 Desk calendar with a photo of Sri Ramana Maharshi and a quotation from the Master.	\$3.00 Add: <input type="text" value="0"/>
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method must be adopted for the present. But it is not so. Bhagavan clearly tells us that conflicts, problems and suffering exist =only in the mind. They are, in fact, nothing but unwanted thought. To prevent unwanted thought we must learn to control 'wanted thought'. Wanted thought is desire. This must be eradicated. We can throw the whole bundle of life's cares on the lap of the Lord and be free. It is so simple, so direct.

Everything, including all these situations which appear as conflicts, can be utilized as a means to free

the mind, to surrender the outcomes, to witness the Divine Hand orchestrating every aspect of our life. Doing this, along with regular meditation will certainly hasten our release from all conflicts and suffering.

Other than this there is one more thing we must do, no matter what state or situation we imagine ourselves to be in. That one thing is to PERSEVERE. We must march on, push on, move forward and keep the ideal ever within sight. The Master knows our hearts. He is always and everywhere present and, if we are sincere, He will definitely help.

— Editor

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.

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)

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 / ranjanil@yahoo.com)

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

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