



The Maharshi

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Madhavi Ammal

Srimati Madhavi Ammal was the sister of K. K. Nambiar. She, like her brother, was an earnest devotee who looked upon Bhagavan as her Master and Lord. K. K. Nambiar writes in his book, The Guiding presence of Sri Ramana: "My sister, K. K. Madhavi Ammal, was deeply religious. She went to the Ashram quite often, much against the will of her husband, who sometimes even scattered the fruits, flowers, etc., got ready by her for being taken to Bhagavan. One day Bhagavan had some tooth trouble and one tooth had to be removed. My brother-in-law, the doctor in charge of the hospital nearby, was sent for. He went inside Bhagavan's hall fully clad in a suit, approached Bhagavan's sofa and asked him to open his mouth. 'Bhagavan, Vayi thora!' was what he said, to the amusement of devotees gathered in the hall. The tooth was extracted and the doctor left, a changed man. He no longer stood in the way of my sister visiting the Ashram as often as she wished. He even felt that the hand which had touched Bhagavan was able to perform surgery more successfully thereafter. He, too, now visited the Ashram, prostrated before Bhagavan, and sat in the hall like other devotees in meditation."

Madhavi Ammal was fortunate in having many opportunities to talk freely with Bhagavan and appeal to him directly for upadesa. Bhagavan made things easy for her in many ways, one of which was to speak to her in Malayalam, her native language. He gave a patient hearing to her tales of woe, which were many. A devotional entreaty of hers can be seen in the archival films. In the following narrative, Madhavi seems to have almost wrested the upadesa from the Guru by her perseverance.

I KNEW FULL WELL that Sri Bhagavan gave no formal *upadesa* but I kept on asking for it whenever an opportunity presented itself. Invariably Sri Bhagavan used to reply, "Who is the Guru and who is the *sisya* (disciple)? They are not two. There is but One Reality. It is in you and It can neither be given nor taken. But you may read books for intellectual understanding."

On March 12, 1934 after prayers at the Shrine of Sri Mathrubhuteswara, I went to the old hall. Only the attendant Madhava Swami was with Sri Bhagavan. When I made my usual request Sri Bhagavan laid aside the newspaper he was reading and sat in *padmasana*, quite absorbed. I then recited a general hymn of praise to the Guru in Telugu and also "Aksharamanamalai" in Telugu (the hymn on Sri Arunachala by Sri Bhagavan). Sri

Bhagavan turned to Madhava Swami and said, "She has prayed to Sri Arunachala." This struck me as meaning that Sri Arunachala will give the initiation and also that Sri Bhagavan and Sri Arunachala are not two. Sri Bhagavan resumed his state of absorption and I had my persistent request for *upadesa*. But he continued to sit motionless. Finally I begged of him, "Am I not a competent person to receive *upadesa*? Sri Bhagavan should himself tell me about this. Even if Sri Bhagavan confirms this how is it that I adopted him as my Guru immediately on hearing of him (she was just told that a *rishi* lived at the foot of the Hill)? Will it all be in vain?" Immediately on my speaking thus I found a bright light emanating from Sri Bhagavan's holy face, and the effulgence filled the whole Hall. I could not see Sri Bhagavan's body but only the brilliance. I shed tears in

profusion. The whole incident could have lasted just two seconds! I prostrated to Sri Bhagavan. There was a smile on his face but no movement otherwise. After a while Sri Bhagavan turned to me as if to ask, “Are you rid of your mania?” Yes, I was. He then took a piece of paper, wrote a sloka (verse) on it and gave it to me saying, “You can make use of it in meditation.”

This is the sloka: “I adore Guha the Dweller in the Cave of the Heart, the Son of the Protector of the Universe, the Pure Light of Awareness beyond thought, the Wielder of the weapon of Jnana Sakti and the Remover of the ignorance of blemishless devotees.”

And again he smiled graciously.

This was wonderful *upadesa* indeed by a Master rare to see. My Master taught me the great truth that there is only ONE. The proper Guru is one who shows what is. This was but a practical demonstration of the saying

“The Master’s face reveals Brahman. You attain Brahman through Grace.”

—from *The Silent Power* (see page 7)



How I Came to Bhagavan

We have all read stories written by devotees who came to the Maharshi when he was physically living in his Ashram or on the slopes of the holy Arunachala Hill. Reading these we feel the tangible effect of his grace penetrating the hearts of seekers and guiding them to deeper faith and experience. In the following article we read how time and the dissolution of the Maharshi’s body have failed to stem the profusion of grace extended to seekers. The guidance and the palpable presence once experienced by an earlier generation of disciples and devotees can be experienced now. Certain events often cross the borders of simple coincidence; inner experiences transform our whole perspective on life and turn our attention to the one, underlining Reality. The author, a devotee in the USA, wishes to remain anonymous.

First Contact

I first learned about Bhagavan around 1980-81, when I picked up a book on his teachings at Weiser’s Bookstore in Greenwich Village in New York City. Although I was motivated to buy the book because of the pure Vedantic teachings it contained, I also remember being impressed by the photograph of Bhagavan in its frontispiece. At the time, however, I had already been involved in the teachings of J. Krishnamurti and remained so for some years thereafter.

Visit to Sri Ramanasramam

Around 1989-90, I began reading more about Bhagavan’s life and teachings and was drawn to him. Bhagavan’s pull increased to a point where I decided to visit Sri Ramanasramam. I thus made my first visit to Sri Ramanasramam on September 4, 1994. I remember the date well because it followed my daughter’s third birthday, which we had celebrated at a hotel in Bombay. I had not known then how to contact the Ashram and made my travel and lodging arrangements

through a relative in Bombay. After being informed that there were no rooms available at the Ashram, she made reservations for two nights at a good hotel in Tiruvannamalai. She also arranged to have a taxi available to me for the entire trip.

The taxi picked me up at Madras airport on the morning of September 4th for the three-hour journey to Tiruvannamalai. I still remember sitting in the taxi and wondering why I was making this trip since Bhagavan was no longer there, and further rationalizing that at least Arunachala, the holy hill that Bhagavan so adored and identified with, was still there. I arrived in Tiruvannamalai around noon and went directly to the hotel. It was not, as I had been given to believe, a three or four-star hotel. My room was small and bare with just some rudimentary furniture. This was bit of a surprise, and I certainly had not come prepared with the things I might need for such accommodations such as bed sheets, pillow cases, etc. In any event, I left my bags in the room and, feeling hungry, decided to go and eat in a nearby restaurant. I

sat down at an empty table in the restaurant and waited to be served. After a few minutes, a man came in a hurry from the rear of the restaurant and slid into the bench across from me. He proceeded to lean forward with his elbows on the table and subjected me to an unblinking, cockeyed stare. He did not say a word. I ignored him initially but after about five or ten minutes of such silent treatment and no service, I got a bit unnerved and decided to leave the restaurant without eating anything.

I then went to Sri Ramanasramam. There, I wandered around the Ashram, visiting the Matrubhuteshwar Temple and sitting for quite a while in the Samadhi Hall. I also spent some time on the lower slopes of the hill just behind the Ashram. While on the hill, I made a decision to return to Madras the same day. I was tired and hungry. I was not comfortable with the hotel accommodations and was not sure where I could have my meals. Before leaving, I visited the Ashram bookstore and purchased some books. It was there that I first learned of the existence of Arunachala Ashram, the Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center in New York. I thought to myself then that I would like to visit this Center but did not think it would likely be possible in the foreseeable future. After spending about three hours at Sri Ramanasramam, I returned to the hotel, checked out, and drove back to Madras. I flew to Bombay the same night.

In retrospect, I don't know why, but I believe that this first visit to Sri Ramanasramam was destined to be brief.

Visit to Arunachala Ashram

I was scheduled to return home to South Florida a few days later in the company of my brother and his family. The day before our scheduled departure, we called the airline to confirm our reservations. We were shocked to find out that we had lost our seats because we were supposed to reconfirm our reservations seventy-two hours prior to departure and had neglected to do so. We rushed to the airline office and managed after some trouble to get a different flight itinerary. We were originally scheduled to fly Bombay-Frankfurt-Miami. Our revised itinerary had us flying Bombay-London-New York-Miami. Moreover, we had to overnight in New York and were booked on the next morning's flight to Miami. Upon our arrival at John F. Kennedy airport in New York, we looked for the least expensive

hotel we could find. When we got to the hotel, I had a brain-wave—the next day anyway was a Sunday and I did not need to be back at work till Monday. I could then take an evening flight home, allowing me to visit Arunachala Ashram in the morning! I checked on the Ashram's address and found that it was relatively close to the hotel! I immediately changed my flight and the next morning went and visited Arunachala Ashram, meeting and having tea with Arunachala Bhakta Bhagawat.

Little did I know that the wish I had in the bookstore at Sri Ramanasramam of visiting the New York Center would come true in just a few days time! To me, this serendipitous turn of events was Bhagavan's way of drawing me into his fold.

Although I had spent a few scant hours in my first visit to Sri Ramanasramam, over the subsequent months my faith and devotion deepened and I began to experience the grace and sweetness of Bhagavan's presence.

Darshan

Some months after my first visit to Sri Ramanasramam, while sleeping one night, I had a wonderful dream or vision. Bhagavan appeared before me, smiling and vigorously nodding his head up and down. Surprised in the dream itself, I thought to myself that this can't be real; it must be a dream. As if to refute that thought and vouch for the authenticity of the experience, a smiling Bhagavan again vigorously nodded his head up and down.

The scene immediately changed. I now found myself walking alone up the slope of an arid dirt path of a mountain when, ahead and to the left of this path, I beheld the Lord Shiva seated and looking downward with eyes semi-closed in what appeared to be deep meditation or contemplation. He was sitting in the pose that I now recognize as similar to that of the Dakshinamurti Shiva, with his left foot resting on his right knee; and in his lap, on his left thigh, sat the Bal Ganapati (Baby Ganesha). Radiating from the Lord Shiva was the sensation of immense power and energy, with absolute and perfect control. The closest image I can conceive of to describe it is that of a nuclear reactor with the tremendous power that it harnesses and controls. In the dream, however, I was not particularly moved by this sight and continued on to walk past the Lord, observing Him with a sort of neutral objec-

tivity and mild curiosity. The next thing I knew, in an instant, I found myself involuntarily thrown flat on the ground with my body prostrated full-length at His feet. The Lord then brought his right arm around and down in a very slow, deliberate, controlled motion and touched me on the top of my head. At His touch, I felt a mild current pass through my head and on into my body. I then awoke.

A Photograph of Bhagavan

In early 1995 there arose in me a desire to have a life-size photograph of Bhagavan. I called Arunachala Ashram and was told that they did not have a photograph of that size and that the largest photograph they had was, as I recall it, around 8.5 by 11 inches. I anyway asked for and received this smaller photograph.

A few months later, I was travelling on business in Brazil. One day I was in the business district in downtown Rio de Janeiro, rushing to an important meeting for which I was a bit late. Walking rapidly past one of the many roadside vendors, I was completely amazed to see a life size photograph of Bhagavan! I promised myself that I would return there after my meeting, which I did. This roadside bookseller had a number of blown-up and framed photographs on display but every single one of them was of movie stars such as Marilyn Monroe or of famous scenes such as the New York City skyline. The sole exception was this life-size photograph of Bhagavan! I, of course, bought the photograph, considering it a further manifestation of Bhagavan's grace to me.

Who could have imagined that I would find the photograph I had sought in this way—on the road, in the middle of a bustling business district, in a foreign land, at the opposite end of the world from India! Today, it is the centerpiece of my personal meditation area at home.

Bhagavan's Nectarous Grace

In the summer of 1997, I made my second visit to Sri Ramanasramam. It was the first visit I stayed in the Ashram. I stayed for three days and was given the room where Sadhu Arunachala (Major Allan Chadwick) once resided.

One evening around 7 PM, I was meditating in the Old Hall. I was sitting next to the doorway, across from the foot of Bhagavan's couch. There must have been no more than four or five other devotees in the room. All of a sudden I was shocked and astonished to feel emanating from the direction of Bhagavan's couch what I can only describe as a nectarous grace. This nectarous grace was like the ocean—I sensed it rolling toward me in a continuous series of successive waves, drenching and saturating every pore and fiber of my being. It inundated my entire being with a concentrated and intense sensation of bliss. Wave after wave of this

nectarous grace kept rolling toward me and engulfing me from some inexhaustible, unfathomable source. This must have continued for at least 10 or 15 minutes. Upon the ringing of the dinner bell at 7:30 PM, I wondered if I should go to dinner or continue to sit and let these nectarous waves of grace inundate me. I decided to go to dinner. I prostrated, stood up and left for the dining hall, my skin slightly numb and tingling, my

nerves in a heightened state of sensitivity, a trifle unsteady on my feet, and with my entire being and body feeling like it was completely soaked and dripping with this bliss-laden, nectarous grace.

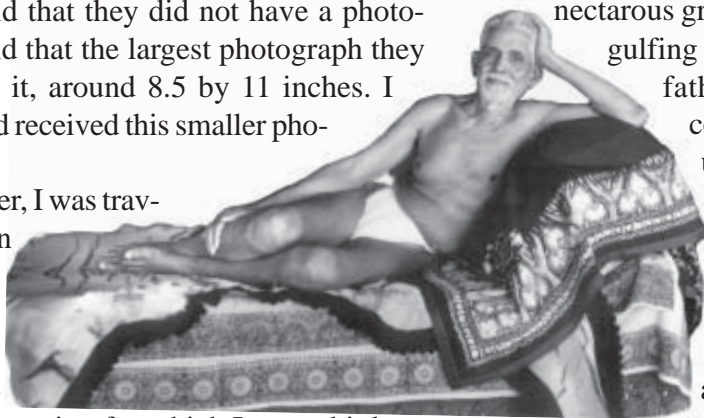
This experience was particularly memorable and noteworthy because it occurred when I was in the waking state, fully alert and aware; because of its extended duration and the saturating intensity of its blissfulness; and because of its origin from the direction of Bhagavan's couch in the Old Hall.

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

87. Only the one, whose mind is ripened by supreme devotion to Him, can attain deliverance through zeal for the Quest of the Self and inward turning of the mind.

88. The might of God's grace and the Quest of the Self in the form of (the question) 'Who am I?'—these two together lead the seeker to the Heart and give him the Supreme State, which is the state of (his own) Real Self.

—Guru-Ramana-Vachana-Mala, Chapter II, "The Quest," by "Who"



Abhyasa (Practice)

Devotee: What is the method of practice?

Maharshi: As the Self of a person who tries to attain Self-realization is not different from him and there is nothing other than or superior to him to be attained by him, Self-realization being only the realization of one's own nature, the seeker of liberation realizes without doubts or misconceptions his real nature by distinguishing the eternal from the transient, and never swerves from his natural state. This is known as the practice of knowledge. This is the enquiry leading to Self-realization.

D. Can this path of enquiry be followed by all aspirants?

M. This is suitable only for ripe souls. The rest should follow different methods according to the state of their minds.

D. What are the other methods?

M. They are *stuti*, *japa*, *dhyana*, *yoga*, *jnana*, etc.

Stuti is singing the praises of the Lord with a feeling of great devotion.

Japa is uttering the names of the gods or sacred mantras like Om either mentally or verbally.

Dhyana: When one is in *dhyana* the mind does not contact the objects of the senses, and when it is in contact with the objects it is not in *dhyana*. Therefore those who are in this state can observe the vagaries of the mind then and there and by stopping the mind from thinking and fix it in *dhyana*. Perfection in *dhyana* is the state of abiding in the Self.

Yoga: The source of breath is the same as that of the mind, therefore the subsidence of either leads to that of the other. The practice of stilling the mind through breath control is called yoga.

Fixing the mind on psychic centres such as the *sahasrara* (lit. the thousand petalled lotus) *yogis* can remain any length of time without awareness of their

bodies. As long as this state continues they appear to be immersed in some kind of joy. But when the mind emerges (becomes active again) it resumes its worldly thoughts. It is therefore necessary to train it with the help of practices like *dhyana* whenever it becomes externalised. It will then attain a state in which there is neither subsidence nor emergence.

Jnana is stilling the mind and realizing the Self through the constant practice of *dhyana* or enquiry (*vichara*). The extinction of the mind is the state in which there is cessation of all efforts. Those who are established in this spontaneous effortless state have realized their true nature, the Self. The term 'silence' (*mouna*) and inaction refer to this state alone.

All practices are followed only with the object of concentrating the mind. As all the mental activities like remembering, forgetting, desiring, hating, attracting, discarding, etc., are modifications of the mind they cannot be one's true state. Simple changeless being is one's true nature. Therefore to know the truth of one's being and to be it, is known as release from bondage and the destruction of the knot (*granthi nasam*). Until this state of tranquility of mind is firmly attained the practice of unswerving abidance in the Self and keeping the mind unsoiled by various thoughts is essential for an aspirant.

Those who follow the path of enquiry realize that the mind which remains at the end of the enquiry is Brahman. Those who practice meditation realize that the mind which remains at the end of the meditation is the object of their meditation. As the result is the same in either case it is the duty of aspirants to practise continuously either of these methods till the goal is reached.

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D. Why do thoughts of many objects arise in the mind even when there is no contact with external objects?

M. All such thoughts are due to latent tendencies. They appear only to the individual consciousness (*jiva*) which has forgotten its real nature and become exter-

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nalized. When particular things are perceived, the enquiry 'Who is it that sees them?' should be made; they will then disappear at once.

D. Since the Self is free from the notion of knowledge and ignorance how can it be said to pervade the entire body in the shape of sentience or to impart sentience to the senses?

M. Wise men say that there is a connection between the source of the various psychic nerves and the Self, that this is the knot of the heart, that the connection between the sentient and the insentient will exist until this is cut asunder with the aid of true knowledge, that just as the subtle and invisible force of electricity travels through wires and does many wonderful things, so the Force of the Self also travels through the psychic nerves and pervading the entire body, imparts sentience to the senses, and that if this knot is cut the Self will remain as it always is without any attributes.

D. What is *dhyana* (meditation)?

M. It is abiding as one's Self without swerving in any way from one's real nature and without feeling that one is meditating. As one is not in the least conscious of the different states (waking, dreaming etc.) in this condition, the sleep here is also regarded as *dhyana*.

The excellence of the practice (*sadhana*) lies in not giving room for even a single mental concept (*vrutti*).

D. What are the rules of conduct which an aspirant should follow?

M. Moderation in food, moderation in sleep and moderation in speech.

* * * *

M. In the question 'Who am I?' by 'I' is meant the ego. Trying to trace it and find its source, we see it has no separate existence but merges in the real 'I'.

D. Should I go on asking 'Who am I?' without answering? Who asks whom? What is 'I', the Self or the ego?

M. In the enquiry 'Who am I?' the 'I' is the ego. The question really means, what is the source or origin of this ego?

* * * *

M. Yes, any *puja* is good! 'Om Ram' or any other name will do. The point is to keep away all other thoughts except the one thought of Om or Ram or God. All mantras or *japa* helps that.

The mind turned inwards is the Self, turned outwards, it becomes the ego and all the world. But the mind does not exist apart from the Self, i.e., it has no independent existence. The self exists without the mind, but never the mind without the Self.

D. When we enquire within 'Who am I?' who enquires?

M. It is the ego. It is only that which makes the *vichara* also. The Self has no *vichara*. That which makes the enquiry is the ego. The 'I' about which the enquiry is made is also the ego. As a result of the enquiry the ego ceases to exist and only the Self is found to exist.

M. Everything we see is changing, always changing. There must be something unchanging as the basis and source of all this. It is the Self.

— *The Mountain Path*, April 1972

Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs and meditation have been going on in a few places near large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these and meet followers of Sri Ramana Maharshi in your area, please call or write the individuals below for more information.

Boston Area — David & Anna Klegon (617-928-1487 / dklegon@rcn.com)

Detroit, Ann Arbor Area — Prashanth & Shobana (734-327-0109 / prashvis@hotmail.com)

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-423-7324) / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

Washington, D.C. Area — Prakash & Mamtha Adishesan (703-502-4892 / adishesan@worldnet.att.net)

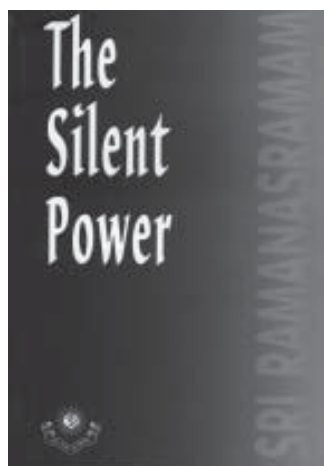
Miami, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Robinson (954-755-4758 / Arunahill@aol.com)

San Francisco Area — Swaminathan & Sangeeta (510-324-1160 / Nachiketas@hotmail.com)

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

Ottawa, Canada — Anantha Padmanabhan (padmanabhan_ananth@hotmail.com)

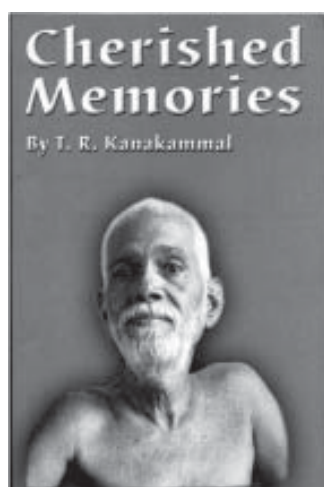
New Releases



The Silent Power

\$9.00, pages 229

Buried in time, Sri Ramanasramam has unearthed these long-forgotten wealth of articles from the *Call Divine* and early issues of the *Mountain Path* magazine. Within the 229 pages are found engaging reminiscences and reflections by esteemed devotees and writers such as Paul Brunton, Sunyata, T. M. P. Mahadevan, Om Sadhu, Maurice Frydman, Swami Mahadhavanda, Mouni Sadhu and numerous others whose inspiration awakened while basking in the Divine presence of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

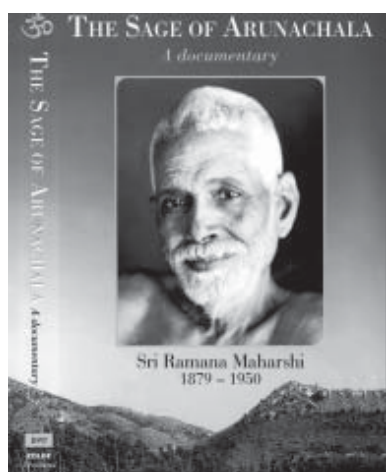


Cherished Memories

by T. R. Kanakammal

\$9.00, pages 217

Kanakammal is one of the few devotees still with us who was drawn to Sri Bhagavan at a young age and came under his watchful eye while pursuing her sadhana at Arunachala. In this English rendering of her Tamil *Ninaivil Niraindavaai*, Kanakammal not only tells of her own personal experiences of the Master, but many other incidents that were narrated to her by eminent devotees like Muruganar, of whom she served and studied under. *Cherished Memories* is a valuable new edition to Sri Ramanasramam storehouse of literature.



The Sage of Arunachala, A Documentary

Now in DVD, and enhanced, \$29.00

During the last decade, this highly-acclaimed documentary on the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi has been a source of inspiration for thousands of seekers worldwide. After considerable digital enhancement, it has now been produced in DVD format and exquisitely packaged.

“Travel with him as he quietly leaves home and makes his way to the holy Arunachala Hill. Stand with him in exaltation before his Father Arunachala. Hear the unique teachings that clarified the straight path to Self-realization...Discover the Divine attraction of his personality in this chronology of photographs, restored film footage, interviews, narration and music...”