



The Maharshi

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A DAY WITH BHAGAVAN

S. Mohan and his wife Nirmala were on a visit to Connecticut this year and, hearing of the Maharshi's Aradhana Program on May 3 in New York City, made a two-day trip to the Ashram to attend it. Soon after arriving, S. Mohan told us the following interesting story of his father-in-law, and he was later requested to repeat it to the devotees and guests at the Aradhana function.

SRI V. N. Srinivasa Rao (VNSR), my father-in-law, received his M. A. in law from both the Madras Presidency College and the Wadham College, Oxford, England. For many decades he utilized his highly refined intellect, astute insight and noble instincts to prosecute injustices and defend the innocent as a respected advocate of the High Court of Madras. He was a tall, stately person, very meticulous in his research work and of considerable eminence. He was not exactly an iconoclast, but he was not orthodox either. He liked to look at things from an independent, objective, logical viewpoint.

My wife and I had once attended a function at the Ramana Maharshi Centre at Lodhi Estate in Delhi when the Shankaracharya of Sringeri inaugurated the Library. This was our first introduction to Bhagavan and we had liked the unique ambience at the Centre. We thought this might be a nice place to take Sri VNSR.

In 1979 when VNSR was visiting us at Delhi, the Lodhi Estate area near the Ramana Kendra was still in an early stage of development. The road near the Kendra was quite craggy and rough.

As we approached, Sri VNSR seemed excited. He was normally a very quiet person and we could sense a change in him. "Mohan! Where are you taking me? Be careful!" he exclaimed.

We soon reached the Center. He was very quiet. When we returned home to Greater Kailash, he just said, "You took me back years and years!"

It was not until 1983 that he finally clarified this statement by narrating his experience of being engaged by client to sue Sri Ramanasramam and then meeting Sri Bhagavan.

He told us:

It was late December, perhaps 1943 or so. It was raining heavily and I was sitting in my office room at Krishna Vilas, about to close up, when there was a knock on the door. A lady holding a dripping umbrella stood at the door. She was bespectacled and looked slightly forbidding.

I rose from my desk. "Yes, madam?" I said.

"Mr. Srinivasa Rao?" she queried.

"Yes, that is my name. How can I help you?"

"You are a lawyer, I gather!"

She spoke English quite fluently. She leaned the umbrella on the door.

"Yes, madam," I replied.

She made a move to enter.

I said, "You see, I have finished for the day. Could you come tomorrow?"

She stopped and said, "All right, goodnight!" and left with her umbrella.

My father had advised me to test clients out to find out the really serious ones. The next evening, she was there again. After she had seated herself near my table she said, "I want you to file a suit for me."

"What is the issue and whom do you want to sue?" I asked.

"The Ramana Ashram," she replied.

"What is the Ramana Ashram?" I asked.

"It is in Tiruvannamalai. They are not allowing me entry. They call me mad!" she exclaimed.

I pondered. She was certainly intimidating. She spoke English quite well. I gathered her mother tongue was Telugu.

"Who is in charge of Ramana Ashram?" I asked.

"Ramana Maharshi, I suppose" she replied.

"Who is Ramana Maharshi?" I asked.

She looked surprised. "Don't you know Ramana Maharshi?" she asked, quite agitated. She then told me something about him, of her devotion to him and how the Ashram authorities were preventing her from entering the Ashram.

She had by then become considerably excited and I could imagine how she might be a difficult person to handle.

"I cannot file a suit just like that," I said. "I will need to meet Ramana Maharshi and get clarifications."

"You are a lawyer, right? Why do you need to meet the Maharshi?" she asked heatedly.

I was firm. "I am not just a lawyer, madam. I am a barrister. I do not take action without understanding the situation. I cannot take any action in your case unless I meet the Maharshi and get things clarified."

She seemed to think it over, and finally said, "Then you will have to go to Tiruvannamalai!"

"If you arrange for it, I will," I rejoined.

So that is how I landed early one wintry morning at the Tiruvannamalai Railway Station. Hardly anyone got down at this stop. I approached the Station Master. "Can you please direct me to the Ramana Ashram?" I asked.

He looked up at me. I was dressed in Western clothes with a hat.

"Why do you want to go there?" he asked.

"I am a lawyer. I have business with Ramana Maharshi," I replied.

He looked bemused, and then burst out into a laugh.

"You want to do business with him?" he asked.

I felt a little resentful. "Please show me how to get to the town," I said, with a little anger.

"Look, sir," he said, "If you want to go to the Ashram, there is no need to go to the town. In fact, I don't advise it. There is an epidemic in Tiruvannamalai. Come, I will show you to a horse cart. The driver knows the Ashram well and he will directly take you there!"

So I got into the horse cart. The driver was a Muslim with a beard.

"Don't worry, Saab!" he exclaimed, "I will take you safely to the Ashram."

The path was craggy and the road was rough. Many times doubts assailed me. "Where are you taking me?" I shouted. The driver would simply look back and laugh.

"Don't worry, Saab! I will take you there safely. I know the way!"

So we ultimately reached the Ashram. I paid off the cart driver and approached a building. Someone showed the way and I reached a large room.

I took off my shoes and entered. There was no one there, I think, except the Maharshi. He sat near a brazier and was warming his hands. He looked up and smiled pleasantly.

I was about to speak when he called someone and gave him some instructions. The person beckoned me and took me to a dining hall. He then placed a leaf-plate in front of me and I was served iddies and sambhar. I can never forget the taste of those delicious iddies and sambhar.

When the breakfast was over, I was taken to a room. I washed and changed into more comfortable clothes.

When I returned to the hall again I found many people seated there. The Maharshi was seated on the couch. He again saw me enter and beckoned me to sit at a place near the couch. I sat down.

Someone then got up and addressed me.

"I gather you are a lawyer, sir, and you have come to represent Mrs. _____," he said.

I then also stood up and, with much dignity, said, "Yes, sir, my name is V. N. Srinivasa Rao, Barrister. May I know your name?"

He replied, "I am Dr. _____. We gather that you are planning to take legal action on behalf of Mrs.

_____.”

I said, “Yes, sir, that is correct.”

He said, with some impatience, “She is mad!”

I looked at him severely. “You said you are a Doctor, sir. Are you prepared to give me a certificate in writing that she is mad?”

He looked seriously at me. Then he just shrugged his shoulders and sat down.

I turned back to see the Maharshi beckoning me.

When I approached him, he asked me details about myself. I spoke to him of my credentials and stated that I had come on behalf of Mrs. _____.

He smiled and pointed to a particular place near the wall.

“Is she the one who used to sit there?” he asked.

I was confused. I just remained silent.

He then asked me, “Where is she?”

I said, “She should be at the gate of the Ashram.”

“Are you sure?” he queried.

“I am quite sure. That was our agreement.” I replied.

He then pointed to the door. “Bring her,” he said.

I went out to the gate. Sure enough, she was standing there, complete with her spectacles and umbrella.

I told her, “The Maharshi has asked me to bring you in ... no melodramatics please. Promise me you will behave yourself.”

She shook her head in assent.

“Follow me,” I said, and turned and came to the hall. She followed meekly.

Just as we stepped into the hall, she threw down the umbrella and crying “Bhagavan! Bhagavan!” ran up to him and fell at his feet.

It was then that I realized the significance of the Maharshi’s earlier query. I went up to her and said, “Madam, you promised me you would control your-

self. Please come and be seated.” I pointed to her old place. She went quickly and sat down.

I turned to the Maharshi. He gave me a brilliant smile. He pointed to a place quite close to the couch. I sat there the whole morning. He made someone bring a photo album and made me go through it, pointing out various people and mentioning names. At this length of time, I only remember the photo of a cow. He said, “That is Lakshmi.”

He later arranged for me to be shown all over the Ashram. He particularly asked my guide to show me Paul Brunton’s cottage.

The rest of the day passed like a dream. We had lunch and he again made me sit near his couch.

Later that evening I realized I had to catch a train back to Madras. I thought it would be appropriate to take leave of the Maharshi after all the kindness he had bestowed on me. I went up to him to inform him.

He looked surprised and said, “But you have to eat dinner. You can leave after dinner.”

I went and packed all my belongings and made my way to the dining hall. Orthodox brahmins were seated in a long row. I slowly went somewhere to the end of the row and sat opposite a leaf-plate.

Someone suddenly came to me.

“Please get up and come!” he said.

I thought that I might have sat down at a wrong place.

“This is perfectly OK,” I said, getting up awkwardly.

“Bhagavan is calling you,” he said. “Please follow me.”

We went right up and there was the Maharshi seated in front of a leaf. Another leaf was laid near his.



“For whom do you think this has been laid?” he asked affectionately.

I was taken aback and slowly sat down. We began to eat.

As I was an irrepressible young man then, I looked up at him and asked, “Is it permitted to speak?”

“Of course,” he replied, “Ask anything you want.”

We actually had quite a long conversation between mouthfuls. I asked him many questions and he answered all of them. I remember vividly one particular question I asked and the answer he gave me.

“Please tell me,” I asked him, “Is Mrs. _____ really mad?”

He smiled and replied: “Some people come here a quarter mad, and they go back half mad! Some people come here half mad, and they go back fully mad! Some people come here fully mad, and I don’t know what happens to them! Is it not all so wonderful?”

After dinner was over, I washed and went and prostrated to him.

I then left for the station. The same horse cart was there.

“So did you see the Maharshi?” asked the cart driver.

“Yes-s-s,” I replied pensively.

When the train came, I got into my compartment. Someone opened the door and came in.

It was the Station Master. His eyes were bright with excitement.

“We heard all about it! You are a very fortunate young man!” he said and shook my hands eagerly.

* * * * *

Many years later, Sri VNSR was attending a marriage, when an old man who was seated on a chair there beckoned him.

“You are the lucky person who spent a whole day with Bhagavan, aren’t you?” he asked. Sri VNSR admitted it was so.

It was the Station Master.

Sri VNSR continued his advocacy into old age. He helped many causes. Once when we were visiting Madras, he called us to him and said, in a very matter of fact manner, “Nirmala and Mohan! Yesterday I managed to completely eliminate the mind!”

We were much moved.

One day in 1993, he said to his wife, “Lakshmi, I am very satisfied!”

That night, quietly, he slipped away from his body in his sleep and reached Bhagavan’s Lotus Feet.

53RD ARADHANA PROGRAMS IN THE USA AND CANADA

There were a number of gatherings held to observe Sri Bhagavan’s Mahanirvana Day across North America that attracted scores of devotees. In Toronto, Canada, a hundred devotees flooded into the house of Padma and Krishna Sastri; at Usha and Dr. Krishnan’s home in Ottawa and at the Nova Scotia Arunachala Ashrama, more modest numbers assembled, though the genuine fervor and dedication remained constant. Growing in both devotion and numbers, devotees met in other homes throughout the USA – in Michigan, California, Florida and Georgia.

In the New York and Washington, D.C. regions, devotees observed the occasion in the Ganesha and Siva-Vishnu Temples, respectively. At the Siva-Vishnu Temple program in Maryland, Dr. Shanta Ramachandran, the daughter of the late Prof. K. Swaminathan, recounted her visits to Bhagavan in the late 1940s while she was a school girl, and later as a medical student when she was permitted to observe the doctors changing Bhagavan’s bandages during his last illness. The scenes were forever imprinted on her heart and, by her graphic description, she projected the same on to the hearts of all those present. At the New York City program in the Ganesha Temple, Sri S. Mohan related a most interesting encounter his father-in-law had with Bhagavan (see page 1). Also, with deep devotion, Chris Kelly thrilled the devotees by recounting the experience of his first pilgrimage to Arunachala in December 2002.

At all the programs Bhagavan’s works were recited and prasad (meals) was served, while the continued power and presence of Sri Bhagavan was intensely felt.

FORTY VERSES IN PRAISE OF SRI RAMANA

By Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni

translated by Dr. Anil K. Sharma

(continued from May/June 2003 issue)

janmasthānamavāpya guptamahamo yo bheda-
mādhūtavān bhūtanām caratām pṛthag-
vidhadhiyām ātmaiva yo bhāsate |

deham sarvam idam jagacca vibhavādākramya
yaḥ prollasa-tyekastaṁ gurumurtimānamata re
lambodarabhrātaram | | 21 | |

janmasthānam - place of birth, *avāpya* - having obtained, *gupta* - secret, *mahamo* - great, *yo* - who, *bhedam* - dualism, *ādhūtavān* - shook off, *bhūtanām* - of beings, *caratām* - (of) moving, *pṛthag* - several, different, *vidha* - kind, sort, *dhiyām* - in the intellect, *ātmaiva* - very self, *yo* - who, *bhāsate* - shines, *deham* - body, *sarvam* - all, *idam* - this, *jagat* - world, *ca* - and, *vibhavād* - with might, glory, *ākramya* - having pervaded, *yaḥ* - who, *prollasaty* - shines, *ekastaṁ* - that one, *gurumurtim* - form of the guru, *ānamata* - salute, *re* - oh!, *lambodarabhrātaram* - brother of Lambodara (Ganapati)

He who has shaken off all duality, having obtained the great secret of the place of birth (of the 'I - thought'), and who shines as the very Self in the various intellects of sentient beings, he who having pervaded the world and all bodies, shines forth with his glory, oh men! salute that one, in the form of the Guru, the brother of Ganapati!

antaryaśca bahirvidhūtatimiraṁ jyotirmayam
śāśvataṁ sthānaṁ prāpya virājate vinamatām
ajñānam unmūlayan |

paśyanviśvam apīdam ullasati yo viśvasya pāre
paraḥtasmai śrī ramaṇāya lokagurave śokasya
hantre namaḥ | | 22 | |

antar - inside, *yaś* - who, *ca* - and, *bahir* - outside, *vidhūta* - removes, *timiraṁ* - darkness, *jyotirmayam*

- made of light, *śāśvataṁ* - eternal, *sthānaṁ* - state, *prāpya* - having obtained, *virājate* - shines, *vinamatām* - of devotees, *ajñānam* - ignorance, *unmūlayan* - uprooting, destroying, *paśyan* seeing, *viśvaṁ* - universe, *api* - also, even, *idam* - this, *ullasati* - sports, *yo* - who, *viśvasya* - of the universe, *pāre* *paraḥ* - higher than, beyond, *tasmai* - to him, *śrī ramaṇāya* - Sri Ramana, *lokagurave* - to the Guru of the world, *śokasya hantre* - the destroyer of sorrow, *namaḥ* -salutations

He who removes the darkness from within and without, having obtained that eternal state made of light, who uproots the ignorance of his devotees, who though seeing and sporting in this universe is beyond the universe, to him, Sri Ramana, the Guru of the world and destroyer of sorrow, salutations!

prasaratāditaḥ śubhivilokitam |
ramaṇa te sakṛtphalatu me kṛtam | | 23 | |

prasaratāditaḥ - by the flowing forth, *itaḥ* - now, *śubha* - splendid, *vilokitam* - gaze, *ramaṇa* - O Ramana, *te* - your, *sakṛt* - at once, immediately, *phalatu* - may it bear fruit, may it bless, *me* - me, *kṛtam* - done

O Ramana, now, by the flowing forth of your splendid gaze, may I at once be blessed!

MAHANYASA PURVAKA RUDRABHISHEKAM ON GURU PURNIMA DAY

at Arunachala Ashrama, New York City

led by Sri Chalapati Sharma

Sunday 13 July 2003

9:30 AM - 10:30 AM Arunaprashna Parayanam

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM Mahanyasa Parayanam

11:45 AM - 1:30 PM Rudrabhishekam

followed with prasād (meals)

Arunachala Ashrama

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center

66-12 Clyde St., Rego Park, NY 11374

(718) 575 - 3215

Henri Cartier-Bresson



IN the photography of Henri Cartier-Bresson, we see an intuitive instinct for capturing decisive moments. His striking photographs thrust him to the forefront of leading photographers of the 20th Century, and now in his 95th year he remains the same reserved, astute observer,

shunning the limelight. A recent retrospective of his work at the French National Library in Paris coincided with the creation of the Henri Cartier-Bresson Foundation, the first private foundation dedicated to photography in France.

His obsession with 'decisive moments' took him to the funeral of Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi in 1948 and to the Mahasamadhi of Sri Ramana Maharshi in April, 1950. Working as a press photographer he traveled throughout Asia and apparently made at least one earlier visit to Sri Ramanasramam in 1948.

It was he who Arthur Osborne coolly recalls in his *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge*:

For a few moments people stood bewildered. The singing continued. The French press-photographer came up to me and asked at what precise minute it had happened. Resenting it as journalistic callousness, I replied brusquely that I did not know, and then I suddenly recalled Sri Bhagavan's unfailing courtesy and answered precisely that it was 8.47. He said, and I could hear now that he was excited, that he had been pacing the road outside and at that very moment an enormous star had trailed slowly across the sky. Many had seen it, even as far away as Madras, and felt what it portended.

It passed to the northeast towards the peak of Arunachala.

Not only did Cartier-Bresson have the privilege

of observing this light, which appeared at the moment of the Maharshi physical demise, he is distinguished for taking the last photos of the Master. This photograph (below), along with another of the Maharshi's body the morning after the Mahasamadhi, appears in his collection of Indian photographs, titled *Henri Cartier-Bresson In India*. Three other photos of Sri Ramanasramam appear in this volume.

His two visits to the Ashram suggest both an insight into the Maharshi's place in history and an understanding of the Sage's sublime spiritual personality. It certainly would be interesting to speak with him on this matter and browse through the numerous photos he must have taken during these visits.

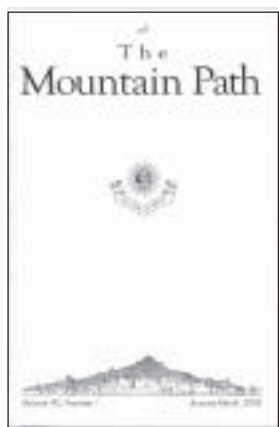


A Downfall and Break

D.: When an endeavour is made to lead the right life and to concentrate thought on our Self, there is often a downfall and break. What is to be done then?

M.: It will come all right in the end. There is the steady impulse of your determination that sets you on your feet again after every fall or breakdown. Gradually the obstacles disappear and your current gets stronger. Everything comes right in the end. Steady determination is the thing required.

—Talks, No. 29



The Mountain Path

With a new editor the Mountain Path magazine from Sri Ramanasramam has returned to the old scheme of four issues per year. It has also taken on a new look, a new layout and a fresh approach that we believe should generate

greater interest of this highly-acclaimed spiritual journal founded by Arthur Osborne.

In addition to Sri Ramanasramam, Arunachala Ashrama in New York will now provide annual subscriptions or individual copies.

Annual Subscription \$15.00

Individual copies are \$4.00

Price includes postage costs

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The Last Word

DEAR READER

The Mountain Path welcomes feedback from readers and devotees. Letters selected for publication may be edited for clarity and space.

"The Last Word" is a new feature expressing personal views, anecdotes or experiences of the writer and should be about 400 words.

We are especially keen on hearing from those devotees who had the good fortune to see Bhagavan while he was in the physical form. Any information or impressions, be it just a sentence or a paragraph, is precious.

Everyone has a story and we invite readers to share their account of how they came to Bhagavan. Even if you think that you can't write, we'll help you. Thank you!

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Ramana Satsangs

Satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation have been going on in a few places near or in large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these and meet followers of Sri Ramana Maharshi in your area, please contact 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 Adiseshan (703-502-4892 / adiseshan@worldnet.att.net)

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