



# Saranagathi

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Memorial Day, 2008.

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# INTRODUCTION

This booklet is being released to commemorate the Saranagathi 2008 function at Hartford, CT, USA. These articles were selected from the archives of *The Mountain Path* and other Sri Ramanasramam publications. They describe the life and experiences of a few devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

We would like to acknowledge our grateful thanks to Sri V.S. Ramanan, President of Sri Ramanasramam for allowing the use of its copyrighted material. It's our hope that this booklet will help us dwell on Sri Bhagavan's Grace and Compassion, be an aid to ones 'sadhana' and lead to 'surrender' to Him...*Saranagathi* at His Feet.

Sri Bhagavan was the embodiment of love and affection to one and all. He would weep with devotees hearing their grief, consoling them with His compassionate look and soothing words, while putting them firmly on the path to 'atma vichara'.

There was nothing pretentious about Him, everything natural. The incident below gives a glimpse of what it was like to be in the presence or 'sannidhi' of Sri Bhagavan and sets the tone for the entire booklet.

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## The Sannidhi of Sri Bhagavan

By Sri G. Ramaswami Pillai

In the presence of Sri Bhagavan actions took place spontaneously of their own accord. Now when we think of them after a lapse of years we find them to be 'natural miracles'. It was as if Bhagavan himself unmoving held us as captives and allowed us all to play, as if He were the screen and we the figures on it.

Once, Sri S. Doraiswami Aiyer, Dr. Srinivasa Rao and others were going by car from Bangalore to Pondicherry and they stopped at Sri Ramanasramam to have darshan of Bhagavan. They were to stay only for a few hours; their

car too had some minor repairs to be done and it was sent to the town. When Sri Doraiswami Aiyer was talking to Bhagavan I was present in the Hall. He was recounting how when they passed through Chengam (20 miles from Tiruvannamalai) their car had grazed an old woman who then fell down, and that this had caused some delay. Then Bhagavan asked with some concern: "What is her condition now? Has she been attended to?" I, who was merely a silent listener, immediately felt that I should go to Chengam. Without telling anyone, (not that I did not want to tell, but the thought never occurred) I took my cycle and went to Chengam and on enquiry at the hospital there, found out that there was no injury to the old woman and that she was attended to and sent home. I was satisfied. I returned cycling, came to the Ashram and reported everything to Sri Bhagavan.

The party, who could not have their car repaired, had meanwhile gone to the Railway Station to catch a train for Pondicherry. Presuming they would go only after the car came back, Sri Niranjanananda Swami had prepared dosais for them to eat and he was expressing disappointment that they had left without eating them. I volunteered with joy to take the eatables to the station. I had just then returned after cycling nearly 45 miles. I took the dosais and eatables, gave them to the party and after telling them about the satisfactory condition of the woman, returned to the Ashram.

The point to note here is this. Bhagavan did not ask me to do anything, but He impelled me from within to do all this. This is the miracle. To cycle nearly 50 miles without anyone's prompting, and without any urgent need for it and even without any personal satisfaction (the party was not close to me) to do all this without thinking why, means that it was done in the presence (sannidhi) of the Master! His concern for the old woman and solicitude for his devotees made me do all this with no strain and no thought of myself.

Bhagavan used to perform many such miracles and play with His devotees, especially those close to Him!



# FIRST AMONGST ALL DEVOTEES

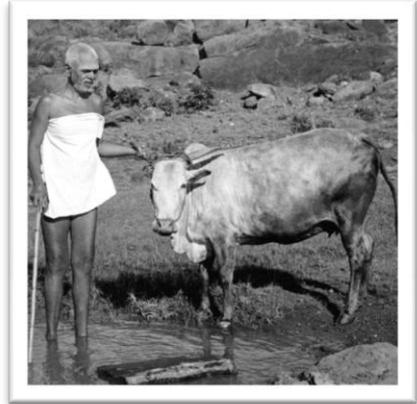
# COW LAKSHMI'S DEVOTION

Sometime in 1926, four years after Sri Bhagavan had come to live at the foot of the Holy Hill beside the samadhi of the Mother, one Arunachala Pillai of Kumaramangalam, near Gudiyatham, entered the Ashram with a cow and her young female calf and offered them to Sri Bhagavan in token of his devotion. Bhagavan tried to dissuade him, pointing out that there were no proper facilities at the Ashram for looking after the cow and calf and telling him that since he had already presented them to Bhagavan, that it was enough and he could now take them back with him and look after them not as his but as

Bhagavan's. All this persuasion, however, was lost on the devotee who insisted on leaving the two animals with Sri Bhagavan and exclaimed: "I have made my humble gift and would not take it back even if my throat were to be cut."

Seeing his insistence and the devotion behind it, one

Ramanatha Dikshitar who was then living near Sri Bhagavan and who passed away a few years before him after some forty years of his gracious company, declared energetically: "I will look after the cow and the calf." Now this Dikshitar was a frail, puny, insignificant looking man from whom one would normally never expect any vehemence, but on this occasion he seemed like one inspired and cried out, smiting his chest: "Here I am! I make myself responsible for the upkeep of these animals." So it was that, owing to the insistent devotion of Arunachala Pillai and the unusual vehemence of Ramanatha Dikshitar, the cow and her calf came to live at the Ashram. Ramanatha Dikshitar tended the animals carefully and with great kindness for some three months, after which they were given into the care of one Pasupathi Aiyar who lived in the town and kept a dairy. They



were well cared for by him. About a year later he set out one day to bathe in Pallitirtham Tank and to have darshan of Bhagavan and brought the cow and her calf with him to show to Bhagavan.

The calf seems to have noted the road and the layout of the Ashram, because next morning she came again by herself and appeared before Sri Bhagavan. Such was the attraction that Sri Bhagavan had for her, that from that day onwards she used to come alone from the town every morning, spend the day at the Ashram, and find her way back to Pasupathi Aiyar's house in the town in the evening. Moreover, while at the Ashram, her attraction to Sri Bhagavan was so strong that she would scarcely leave His presence. He, for his part, treated her very graciously and with his own hands gave her plantains or any delicacy that was brought to him. Thus passed several happy years of almost continuous satsang (association) with Sri Bhagavan, during which time she came to be known affectionately at the Ashram as Lakshmi.

In 1930, Lakshmi gave birth to a calf and she and her young one were brought to live permanently at the Ashram. Thereafter she remained one of the most prominent of the Ashram residents.

Sri Bhagavan has recounted a number of incidents in the life of Lakshmi testifying to her almost human intelligence. She used to come to Sri Bhagavan regularly at meal-time and accompany him to the dining-hall. Indeed, so punctual was she that if Sri Bhagavan was engaged in anything and had forgotten the time, he would turn and look at the clock when he saw Lakshmi come in and would see that it was just meal-time. She would go straight up to Sri Bhagavan, as though her devotion gave her a special right to him, taking no notice of the Ashram inmates or visitors.



At that time a garden was being made at the Ashram with some difficulty owing to water shortage, and vegetables were grown for the kitchen. It sometimes happened that Lakshmi broke in and made havoc of the young

plants and those in charge of the garden would come and complain to Sri Bhagavan. He, however, always took her side and defended her: “She is not to blame. She went where she found good food. If you didn’t want her to go there you ought to have fenced the garden in properly to keep her out.” Now that there were Ashram workers in charge of



the cattle and garden, they no longer allowed Lakshmi to go to Sri Bhagavan so frequently or spend so much time with him, but whenever she could slip away she would go to him, be greeted and patted by him, receive some bananas or whatever else was available and then go back.

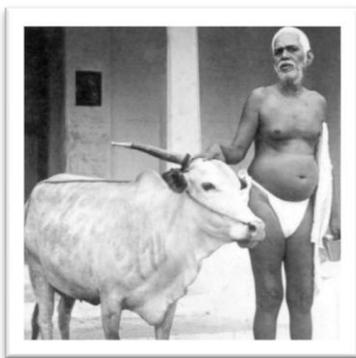
As the Ashram grew the number of cattle kept by it increased and a fine stone cow-house was built. On the day of the laying of the foundation stone Lakshmi walked into the presence of Sri Bhagavan shortly before the time fixed for the ceremony and led him back there, she going first and Sri Bhagavan following. On the day of the ceremonial opening of the cow-house it was decided that she should be the first to enter. She was bathed and decorated for entering her new abode, but then she slipped away and went to Sri Bhagavan and sat down before him. She would not budge until he went too, so that he was the first to enter her new house and she stepped in behind him.

As the Ashram grew its cattle population also increased. Lakshmi herself added nine of her progeny to the number, and it is remarkable that no less than three of her calves were born on the exact day of Sri Bhagavan’s Jayanthi (birthday according to the Hindu calendar). Thus Lakshmi continued through the years as one of the favoured devotees of Sri Bhagavan. As with many human devotees, the constant association of the early years gradually became unnecessary and occasional visits sufficed to sustain the flow of his Grace. Whenever she visited him he would pay attention to her, pat her, stroke her and feed her with plantains, rice cakes and sweet rice. She was particular about her food. She did not much like ordinary plantains, so when she came Bhagavan would show great solicitude

and say, “Go and see if there are not any hill-fruit”; and the attendants would run about attending to the needs of his devotee. Her great devotion and the possessive way in which Lakshmi would always approach Sri Bhagavan, and the great kindness and attention he showed her, convinced many of the devotees that there was some special bond between them and that although Lakshmi now wore the form of a cow, she must have attached herself to Sri Bhagavan and won his Grace by love and surrender in her previous birth. It seemed hard to explain in any other way the great solicitude and tenderness that Sri Bhagavan always showed in his dealings with her, because, although he was all love and kindness and had solicitude for all, he was normally very undemonstrative and the open expressions of his Grace that Lakshmi used to receive from him were quite exceptional.

Indeed, many of those who had been for a long time in close touch with Sri Bhagavan and with the life of the Ashram believed that Lakshmi was a reincarnation of Keeraipatti, the ‘Old Lady of the Greens’, who had known Sri Bhagavan from his earliest days at Tiruvannamalai and had shown very great devotion to him during the years at Virupaksha Cave. She served him in such ways as she could and occasionally prepared food for him almost up to her death in 1921. Sri Bhagavan never definitely stated that Lakshmi was this old lady; nevertheless, the belief was supported by various remarks he made spontaneously or in unguarded moments when the circumstances gave rise to them. His constant insistence that the Self is neither born nor reborn and his injunction to realise the Self behind the illusion of birth, death and rebirth explains why he would never say openly that such and such a person was reborn. It is, therefore, not surprising that no one can quote any open statement by Sri Bhagavan about Lakshmi and the ‘Old Lady of the Greens’, although many who heard Sri Bhagavan refer to the two on various occasions felt almost certain that they were the same and that the great devotion of the old lady had caused her to return in this humble guise to work out her remaining karma at the feet of Sri Bhagavan. On January 26<sup>th</sup> 1946, Sri Bhagavan was in a reminiscent mood and gave the following account of the old lady to his devotees: “Keeraipatti was already living at the big temple in the town when I first went there. She stayed at the Subrahmanyam shrine in the temple and used to feed the sadhus. Later she began bringing food to me from a kammala (blacksmith

caste) lady, but after some time the kammala lady began to bring the food herself instead of sending it through Keeraipatti. At that time Keeraipatti had matted locks. Later, when I went to live at the Virupaksha Cave, she was staying in Guha Namasivayar Temple and had shaved off her hair. She lived in the mantapam and used to worship the image of Namasivayar and other images carved on its walls and pillars. The priest would come and do puja to the image in the temple, but she used to worship the images on the walls of the mantapam where she stayed and offer food to them. When she got up in the morning she would go out for a walk on the small hill and from there to where our Ashram now is and then on to Skandashram and back to where she was staying. On the way she would collect fuel and cowdung and carry them in a bundle on her back and hip. She would also gather all kinds of green leaves for cooking. She had only one pot and she would first boil the water for her bath in it and then cook her rice and the sauce for it. Then she would prepare some dish out of the leaves she had gathered, all in the same pot. She would offer the food to the images on the walls and pillars and then come and give it to me, and only afterwards would she go and eat some herself. In the evening she would go into the town to beg, and there was not a house in the town she did not know.”



“She would come to me and say: ‘A generous woman has given me a handful of broken rice and I have made gruel out of it.’ But if we went to see there would be a big pot full of broken rice and various other provisions. That was the sort of person she was. She was very much attached to me. I sometimes used to go with her and help her gather her leaves and vegetables, for instance from the drumstick tree. Sometimes also I helped her in cleaning and preparing the vegetables for cooking, and then I would stay and eat with her. She died before we came here, that is before 1922. She was buried just near here, under a tamarind tree opposite the Dakshinamurti shrine.”

On June 17<sup>th</sup> 1948, Lakshmi fell ill and on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> it seemed that her end was near. At about 10 o'clock in the morning Sri Bhagavan went to her. He caressed her and said, "Amma, do you want me to be near you now?" He looked into her eyes and placed his hand on her head as though giving diksha. He put his hand over her heart also and then caressed her, placing his cheek against her face. When he had convinced himself that her heart was pure, free from all vasanas entailing rebirth and centered solely on Bhagavan, he took leave of her and returned to the hall.

Shortly before the end she licked up a little sweet rice that was placed before her. Her eyes were calm and peaceful. She was conscious up to the end and left her body at 11.30 a.m. quite peacefully.

Those who were in close contact with Sri Bhagavan and who observed carefully his treatment of Lakshmi before her death and noted what he said about her, have no doubt at all that he gave Moksha, Deliverance, to her as he did to his mother. She was buried with proper funeral rites and with great ceremony in the Ashram compound near the graves of a deer, a crow and a dog already buried there on Sri Bhagavan's instructions. A stone tomb was built over her grave, surmounted by a likeness of her. On the tomb was engraved an epitaph by Sri Bhagavan which makes it quite clear that she attained Liberation. "On Friday, the 5th of Ani, in the bright fortnight, in Sukla Paksham on Dvadasi in Visaka nakshatra in Sarvadhari year, that is on 18-6-48, the cow Lakshmi attained Mukti."

On my next visit to the Ashram after the tomb was finished, I read the stanza and asked Bhagavan whether the use of the word vimukti in it was just conventional, as when we say that someone has attained samadhi, meaning that he has died, or whether it really meant Nirvana, and he replied that it meant Nirvana.



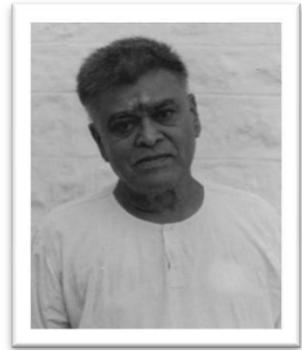


# SRI BHAGAVAN'S COMPASSION

# SRI M.C. EKANATHA ROW

Sri M. C. Ekanatha Row is a well-known devotee. His father Dr. M. C. Nanjunda Row was a popular figure in Madras connected as he was with various religious, social and philanthropic activities.

Sri Ekanatha Row was a supervisor of Industries of the Madras Government and has been visiting the Ashram since 1933. The Ashram, whenever it needed anything, would write to him (particularly while he was at Madras) and he would with enthusiasm comply with the request. When he was at Vellore, he used to bring vegetables every weekend in liberal quantities to prepare aviyal, an Ashram speciality. Besides his general help and keen interest in Ashram affairs, his services have been available in specific jobs such as supervision of the Veda Patasala (after the demise of Major Chadwick) and general assistance to the resident doctor at the Dispensary. Also in the early years during water-scarcity he helped in water exploration attempts (by digging a bore-well).



Having lost his wife early in life he brought up his sons himself without assistance, managing even the cooking.

From his early years he had a liking for the company of sadhus. In fact, when on official tours he used to stay not at the official inspection bungalow but in a nearby mutt or religious institution. Such was his liking for sadhus! His father had the privilege of coming into contact with Swami Vivekananda and of receiving Sri Narayana Guru in his house. At his invitation sadhus of the Ashram also used to stay with him. While he was at Cuddalore water scarcity was experienced at Tiruvannamalai, so he took Sri Kunju Swami and others to his place and made their stay there comfortable.

He came to Sri Bhagavan on the sage advice of Sri Munagala Venkataramiah (Sri Ramanananda Saraswati, author of *Talks*). He had

then lost his wife and in that moment of grief, sought the grace of the Master. His experience is best described in his own words: “I bowed to Sri Bhagavan and told him of my forlorn condition. He said nothing about it, but only mentioned the visit of my parents’ years earlier. I stayed at the Ashram for the night and had darshan of Sri Bhagavan again, early next morning. He asked me if I had slept well and I replied in the affirmative. He then asked if I felt grief then, but I said nothing. Sri Bhagavan then explained that grief is absent during sleep and comes up only when one wakes up. That is to say, grief is experienced only along with body - consciousness. As long as one identifies oneself with the body there will be some trouble or other. ‘Find out if you are the body’, he said. ‘Enquire Who am I?’ With this upadesa of Sri Bhagavan my sorrow melted away.”

Sri Row was a resident of the Ashram for a continuous period of more than ten years. He used to attract the attention of other devotees by his active habits and lively conversation.

He now lives in Guntur with his son, devoting his time to sadhana and constantly recalls happy days spent in Sri Bhagavan's proximity. He clearly sees that the Presence of Sri Bhagavan is unlimited by space and time and therefore he feels no difference whether he stays at the Ashram or outside. We wish this great devotee many more years of life of devotion to his Master!

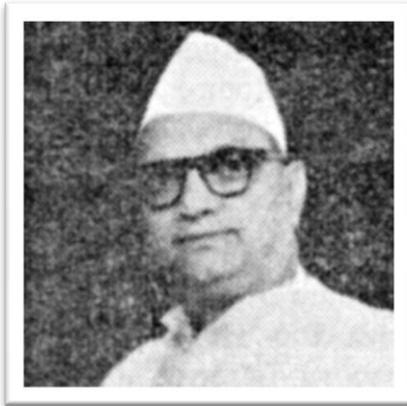
## SRI JAYADEVLAL DAVEY

Sri Jayadevlal Davey, banker, comes of a pious family of Gujarati Brahmins. This is how he came to Sri Bhagavan. When he was about twenty his mother sent him one day with biksha (food offered in alms to sanyasins) to Sri Dandapaniswami, who was then living in the Ekambareswara temple situated in Sowcarpet, Madras. This Swami, a devotee of Sri Bhagavan, showed Davey a photograph of Him, and strongly advised him to go to Sri Ramanasramam and meet Sri Bhagavan. Accordingly Sri Davey soon proceeded to Tiruvannamalai taking with him a garland of roses and some sweets. When he entered the Ashram he saw Sri Bhagavan and His

attendant, Sri Madhavaswami, coming towards him. He placed the garland and the sweets in Sri Bhagavan's hands and paid his obeisance to Him, and then followed Him into the Hall. Sri Bhagavan's presence and the peaceful surroundings had a remarkably soothing effect upon him.

This first visit was made in 1928. Thereafter Sri Davey began to visit the Ashram frequently, very often bringing his wife, Rajibai, with him, for darshan of Sri Bhagavan. He once prayed to Sri Bhagavan to give him some upadesa (spiritual instruction). Upon this Sri Bhagavan asked him whether he was practising any sadhana. When he replied that he was repeating the Gayatri Mantra daily Sri Bhagavan said: "The word dhimahi occurring in the mantra means 'I meditate'. Now, do you know who is this 'I' who

meditates? If you do not, you must find him out." From this time onwards Sri Davey began to love Sri Bhagavan with the love of a son for his father.



On another occasion Sri Davey's wife, Rajibai persuaded him to ask Sri Bhagavan to bless them with a child. All their four children had died in infancy and they were therefore anxious to

have a child who would not meet with premature death. Sri Bhagavan thereupon explained to them that just as all the flowers of a mango tree do not produce fruits and as all the fruits do not become ripe, so also all the children who are born do not live to a ripe old age and that people must put up with their losses, consoling themselves with the thought that everything happens according to the will of God. This explanation consoled the husband and wife and thereafter they never felt any grief over the loss of their children or longed for another child.

In 1937, Sri Davey took a photographic film of Sri Bhagavan. This film is of immense interest and is even now exhibited to the devotees who gather on occasions like the Jayanthi. Sri Davey was also in a way responsible for

bringing out the valuable *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* by Swami Ramananda Saraswati, a well-known and important publication of the Ashram, by offering to get the manuscript in form of a diary typed out.

At the time of the Kumbhabhishekam of the Mathrubutheswarar Shrine in 1949 he placed his spacious house in Madras at the disposal of the Sarvadhikari, to whom he was devoted, the latter's visit being for the purpose of collecting stores and materials required for the ceremony. Although there were numerous devotees who came to see the Sarvadhikari all of them always enjoyed Sri and Smt. Davey's generous hospitality.

Sri Davey and his wife were present at the Ashram at the time of the Mahanirvana of Sri Bhagavan. They first saw a bright light come out of Sri Bhagavan's body and, like a mist, cover the whole Ashram and every one in it. They next saw (like others) a bright star-like object in the sky which started to move northwards at the precise moment of the Mahanirvana. They continue to visit the Ashram regularly even after the Mahanirvana rarely missing any important function like the Jayanthi or the Aradhana.

## SMT. KAMAKSHI RAMACHANDRIAH

Srimati Kamakshi is so well known as an ardent devotee that hardly any introduction is necessary, at any rate to the older section of devotees. She came under the influence, loving guidance and paternal care of Sri Bhagavan in her childhood. In fact she and her brother in the earlier years had the privilege of sleeping in Sri Bhagavan's Hall along with other close devotees.

She came to Sri Bhagavan through her father Sri Munagala Venkataramiah, later known as Sri Ramananda Saraswati. One cannot imagine a greater service to devotees than that rendered by this scholarly devotee who had recorded the contents of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* and thus been instrumental in opening up a channel for the Master's Grace.

Thus growing up in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan, Kamakshi and her brother Krishna had plenty of opportunity to do service to the Ashram. They used to pick flowers for puja at the Mother's Shrine and help in whatever way they could in the daily chores. They did their chanting and devotional singing right before Him. She does this singing even now which is one reason why devotees know and like her.

After marriage she had to live in Andhra and perhaps as a preparation for this Sri Bhagavan had her well trained in the Telugu language. Her marriage with Prof. O. Ramachandriah was settled at Tiruvannamalai and the husband also hails from a family of devotees. This was great luck, a further opportunity for spiritual growth, though many material problems confronted the family and Kamakshi had her own share of them. Yet,



throughout, the one dependable, constant element was Sri Bhagavan's Grace and the opportunity for regular visits to the Ashram.

The earlier forties were a critical period in Kamakshi's life. Her husband was then in Rajahmundry undergoing training for the teaching

profession. Her father-in-law, a freedom fighter, was in jail at Vellore. The mother was at Sholavandan, their native village. And she herself had to look after her old and weak mother-in-law at Nellore. This was too much of a load and Sri Bhagavan Himself intervened on her behalf and asked her father to bring her to Tiruvannamalai.

Kamakshi as well as other members of the family have kept up their visits to the Ashram without break and they have also taken an active part in all important functions in the Ashram. Her husband, Dr. O. Ramachandriah, a scholarly and genial personality, rose to the position of Professor and Head of the Department of History and Archaeology of the Andhra University, Waltair. He has since retired from service. A good Telugu poet and a

member of the Andhra Sahitya Academy he had courted imprisonment in earlier years in the cause of Indian Independence. His recent contribution in the cause of the Ashram is his translation of Sri Bhagavan's *Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala* into Telugu verse. In this he has been ably helped by his wife. A brother of his, late Sri Venkateswara Sarma, was Sri Bhagavan's first biographer in Hindi; the book is entitled *Ramana Charitamrit*. Another brother of his, Krishna Bhikshu (Venkatakrishniah), a well-known devotee and the author of *Ramana Leela* (Sri Bhagavan's biography in Telugu), now resides in the Ashram.

The couple has since settled in Tiruvannamalai and live close to the Ashram. Kamakshi, a good conversationalist, almost dominates the Ashram scene sometimes. But this is prompted by warmth, genuine affection and goodwill towards all on her part.

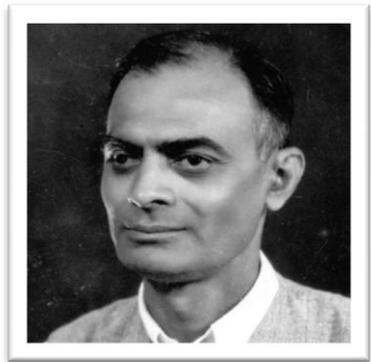
It is our wish and prayer to Sri Bhagavan that she be restored to normal health from her present state of illness, live long with her husband and continue to serve his devotees and be the affectionate 'aunt' of all the youngsters.

## SRI CHAGANLAL V. YOGI

It was in the darkest period of my life that I first heard of Sri Ramana Maharshi. At that time, I seemed to be heading swiftly towards skepticism. The world appeared to me full of injustice, cruelty, greed and hate and other evils, the existence of which logically led me to a strong disbelief in God. For, had He truly existed could anything dark or evil ever have flourished, I questioned. Doubt upon doubt assailed me to lose whatever reverence I might have had for *sadhus* and *sanyasins*. One day, while travelling on an electric train to the office, I suddenly happened to meet a friend who had spent over a decade in Europe and America. I had not met him for quite a while and sometimes used to wonder where he had disappeared to. He said that he had been to Sri Ramanasramam, and while trying to describe to me his experience of the darshan of the Maharshi, he drew out from his pocket a small packet which he offered me. He explained

that it contained something extremely precious -- some *vibhuti* (*ashes*) brought from the Ashram. He insisted on my accepting it, but I was amused and scornfully waved it aside. He felt insulted. I said "Well, if that be so, to please you, I will take a pinch of the ashes". He insisted that Sri Ramana Maharshi was not one of those 'so called' saints, but an 'authentic' Sage, acknowledged all over the world, and gave me a book, to start with, *Sri Maharshi*, by the late Sri Kamath of *Sunday Times*.

From another friend, I borrowed a copy of *Self Realization*. My interest grew even without my being aware of it. Something made me write to Sri Ramanasramam for all the literature on the Maharshi available in English. I studied it with great avidity and found that my outlook on life and the world began to undergo a subtle transformation; yet at the back of my mind there still lurked the old skepticism, which would not yield place so easily to the new faith. I argued with myself that while so many books were wonderful to read, their authors, more often than not, were not so wonderful to know. It was possible for men to teach truths which they could not live themselves. What then was the use of books? I decided to correspond with the Maharshi, which I did for a few months with more and more frequency. Answers to my letters reached me with rare punctuality. But they hardly gave me a glimpse into the nature of the daily life lived by Him. An inexplicable desire to visit the Asramam and see things for myself began to haunt me.



To fulfil that desire, I paid my first visit to Sri Ramanasramam in the Christmas of 1938. When I arrived at the Asramam I met with terrible disappointment. The Maharshi was seated on a couch, as quiet as a statue which did not move or speak. Neither did His presence seem to convey anything unusual. I was very sad when I noticed how indifferent towards me His whole attitude was. I had expected warmth and intimacy, yet now, I

seemed to stand before somebody who lacked both. From morning till evening, I sat waiting to catch a glimpse of His grace, but He seemed cold and unaffected. My mind became a vacuum, my heart nearly broke in despair. I decided to leave that very night, more sceptical than before. The Veda Parayana chanted every evening in His presence and which many considered the most attractive item in the daily programme of the Asramam, fell flat on my ears. The sun was setting and darkness slowly crept on the Hill and over my heart. I could not bear the stuffy atmosphere. I walked out of the Hall to breathe fresh air outside.

Just then a young boy came up to me and asked me where I had come from. 'Bombay' I said. And had I been introduced to the Master, he asked. I said 'No'. He was surprised. Immediately he led me to the office and introduced me to the *Sarvadhikari*, Sri Niranjanananda Swami, and proceeded with me to the Hall, where he introduced me to the Maharshi. When the Maharshi heard my name, His eyes looked straight into mine and twinkled like stars. With a smile beaming with Grace, He asked me if I was a Gujarati. I said, I was. Immediately He sent for a copy of the translation by Sri Kishorelal Mashruwala of the '*Upadesa Sar*', a few copies of which had only just then arrived. He then asked me to chant the Gujarati verses from the book. "I am not a singer", I said, and for a moment I hesitated. But soon I got over my hesitation and began to chant verses from the book, fifteen of which I had hardly completed when the bell for the evening meal rang. While I was chanting, I could feel Sri Bhagavan keenly observing me; the light of His eyes, as it were, suffused my consciousness, bringing about a subtle but certain transformation within me. The darkness, which a few moments before had seemed heavy and unbearable, gradually lightened and turned into a warm glow. I felt in my heart an inexplicable joy.

I sat at the evening meal close to Sri Bhagavan and while I ate every morsel seemed to have an unusual and ethereal taste. This was an actual experience, of which I had not had a glimpse either during the morning tiffin or the lunch at noon. Literally I felt that I was sharing some heavenly meal in the very presence of God. The thought of leaving the Asramam that night

vanished. I stayed on for three days longer in order to enjoy the experience of divine grace.

During my three days near the Master, I found my whole outlook entirely changed. I began to see the folly and the futility of seeing only the dark side of life and of the world.

The divine magician had wrought a miracle and transformed the world for me. It was now full of hope and joy. His presence on earth was promise of a better future for suffering humanity. For the first time then, I understood the meaning and purpose of *Darshan*.

While I lay in bed in the guest-room of the Asramam, I recalled the entire scene on the electric train in Bombay. I saw that *prasad* from the Master was a gift of Grace which no wealth could buy. What a miracle of transformation! Why did it take half a lifetime before I could meet my Master? In the following years, visit after visit seemed to be miraculously arranged by the Maharshi who knew my need to be close to Him physically from time to time. Every succeeding visit deepened the light and joy within me.

## MRS. ELEANOR PAULINE NOYE

Mrs. Eleanor Pauline Noye having reached a crisis in her life in 1939 decided to leave her home in California to make a trip around the world in search of mental peace. In poor health and almost a nervous wreck due to continuous mental anguish and sleepless nights she was in no position to face the hazards of a long voyage. Much against the advice of her doctor to abandon the trip she braved it saying, "I want to find myself." No wonder when the ship approached the Indian peninsula, something made her change her mind and she got off at Madras instead of going on to Calcutta as originally envisaged. Being unable to bear the heat of Madras, she left for Kodaikanal next morning on the advice of the proprietor of the Connemara Hotel. First day at this hill station, while conversing with some residents,

she asked them if they knew any “Seers”? They mentioned to her Sri Ramana Maharshi as the greatest Seer in India. She left for Tiruvannamalai the next day. Travelling by car and train and then by bullock cart from the railway station, she reached the Ashram where she was cordially received by Sri Niranjanananda Swami. Bhagavan was on the hill at that time and on his return Mrs. Noye was taken to the hall.

As she entered it, to quote her own words in an article contributed by her to the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, she “felt that the atmosphere was filled with Bhagavan's purity and blessedness. One feels a breath of the Divine in the Sage's Presence.” She was immediately drawn to him. To quote her again: “As I looked upon Bhagavan's serene face and into His eyes, so full of grace and mercy, my soul was stirred.” It was after the evening meal that

she got an opportunity to speak a few words to Sri Bhagavan about her journey.



Later she went to the Travellers' Bungalow in the Town, as ladies were not allowed to stay in the Ashram at night. Mrs. Noye, who was suffering from sleeplessness for years, slept profoundly that night and arose next morning

feeling quite refreshed. There was no more trouble with sleeplessness on subsequent nights too, though she lacked the many comforts she had been accustomed to in her home in North Hollywood!

After spending some months at the Ashram, she took leave of Bhagavan to return to America. When Bhagavan saw her shedding profuse tears, He consoled her saying that He would always be with *her wherever she went*. Before proceeding to Calcutta to sail home, she made a trip to Srinagar, and then having reached Calcutta, as though beckoned back by Bhagavan, she changed her plans and entrained for Tiruvannamalai which was “like returning home” to her. This time she spent eight months at the Ashram, basking in the sunshine of Bhagavan's presence. On the day she was to leave, she had a picture taken with Bhagavan and other devotees and had

her supper with Him as a special case, as already stated ladies were not allowed to remain on the Ashram premises at night.

On her return to California she kept in continuous touch with the Ashram by correspondence. As she cherished meeting devotees of Sri Bhagavan, an opportunity arose in the year 1946 when Sri K. K. Nambiar, a prominent devotee, was touring that part of America. The Ashram authorities wrote to him to pay a visit to Mrs. Noye at her home in San Fernando Valley, North Hollywood. A detailed account of two visits he made to her home is given in an article contributed by Sri Nambiar to the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* (second edition) with the caption *My experiences of Maharshi*. To quote Sri Nambiar's words "From my hotel in the centre of Los Angeles, I went to Van Nuys, where Mrs. Noye awaited me with her automobile. Clad in a simple ochre coloured frock and looking for me eagerly, she burst into profuse tears as soon as she saw me. She could hardly speak a few words of welcome, for such was her emotion on seeing one who had come from Sri Bhagavan!"

She lives with her married twin sister, Betty, in a quiet house in San Fernando Valley where many of the Hollywood stars have their residences. Difficulties in getting a visa, on account of more stringent travel restrictions had prevented her from coming to India again. When the Ashram authorities and Sri Nambiar helped her to secure the visa she visited the Ashram again in 1950 during Sri Bhagavan's illness. After His *Mahasamadhi* in the month of April, she returned to Madras and before sailing home, stayed for about six weeks with Sri Nambiar and family at their residence, *Ramanalaya*, in Gandhinagar, Adyar, where Smt. Janaki Nambiar looked after her comforts.

During the two decades that have elapsed since then, she has been keeping in touch with the Ashram by correspondence. Though living so far away, she is feeling Sri Bhagavan's Presence there even today, for, hasn't He told her that He would be with her wherever she went?



SRI BHAGAVAN'S  
EQUANIMITY & ALL-  
EMBRACING LOVE

# SRI S.S. COHEN

*I thought of Thee and was caught in Thy Grace; and like the spider in his web didst Thou Keep me captive to swallow me at Thine own hour.*

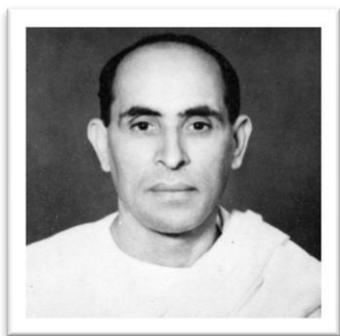
*(AksharaManamalai of Sri Bhagavan)*

The builders have put the finishing touches to my small mud-wall hut in Palakottu Garden on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1936, and although its walls and lime plaster were still wet I decided to enter it the very next day.

Palakottu is a large garden of about ten acres of ground granted by the Government over eighty years ago to a Vira Shaiva Community for the purpose of growing in it flowers for the famous big Arunachaleswarar temple in the township of Tiruvannamalai. It lies on the western boundaries of Ramanasramam and has a clean and well-preserved deep tank seasonally fed by the rain water which falls down the slopes of the sacred Arunachala hill, apart from two or three natural springs at its bottom. Around the huge century-old trees of this garden, devotees of Ramana Bhagavan since many years had built their small kutirs, in which once lived many famous ones: Paul Brunton, Yogi Ramiah, B. V. Narasimha Swami, the author of *Self Realisation*, Muruganar Swami, the Tamil vidwan and poet (who filled a bulky tome of songs in praise of Sri Bhagavan) and many others, and where some devotees still live. In Palakottu, then the only available place within a mile radius from the Ashram, I chose for my hut a lonely site to the north-west of the tank, edging the shady foot-path over which Sri Bhagavan took his midday walk, so that he daily saw the progress of the work during the construction of my hut, till the fourth of April, when I informed him of my decision to start living immediately in it. Bhagavan had known of my chronic asthma and probably thought it foolhardy on my part to live in a place which would take two to three weeks to dry up. I noticed his hesitation in uttering his usual "Yes, Yes", but being very pressed for accommodation, and very reluctant to leave his sacred feet even for a day, I completed my arrangements for the warming-ceremony, known here as grihapravesham to take place the next day.

However; on the fifth of April devotees gathered in my hut, and about noon Sri Bhagavan himself strolled in on his way back from his usual walk, and refusing the special chair I had made ready for him, he squatted like the others on the mat-covered floor. Ceremony over, Bhagavan left. I followed him from a distance, waited till the devotees cleared away and approached him. "Bhagavan", I said, "you have given a home for my body, I expect your Grace to give the eternal home to my soul, for which I closed my business and broke all my human relationship." He stopped in the shade of a tree, gazed silently on the calm water of the tank for a few seconds and replied: "Your firm conviction brought you here; where is the room for doubt?" Where is the room for doubt indeed!

Three years rolled by and Bhagavan continued to pass daily by my hut. In the beginning he used to take shelter, from the midday sun on my verandah for about five minutes, during which I made myself scarce in order not to inconvenience him, till one day I foolishly placed a chair, quietly, for his use, which made him once for all boycott my verandah. Despite his full knowledge of our adoration of and utter self-dedication to him, he was



extremely sensitive to the slightest suggestion of trouble which might ensue from him to us, or for the matter of that to anyone thus placing a special chair for him, in expecting him every day at a fixed hour he interpreted as interfering with my rest - hence the boycott.

Three years have passed since that grihapravesham day, years of great soul-searching, of almost incessant attempts to penetrate the Master's mind through practising his teaching and method of approach, of earnest efforts to adjust oneself to the entirely new conditions of life, and strange environments of physical and psychical strain and stress. They were admittedly intense years, in fact, so intense that I then felt that I must either quit immediately or burst, and I chose the former. "Bhagavan", I said one day then, near my hut, "I feel a strong urge to go on a yatra

(pilgrimage) to the south: Chidambaram, Srirangam, Rameshwaram . . .” but stop! A look on Bhagavan's face struck me forcibly with the thought: “Yatra, what for? Are you still doubting?” Whence is this thought, and why should it now come after these years of intimate contact with him, and of many private talks wherein I had laid bare my soul before him, where not a vestige of doubt remained lurking? . . . Oh, now I got it I remembered his words of long ago: “where is the room for doubt?” and as if to reply a verbal question from him, I continue: “No Bhagavan, I was a new-comer when I once asked for Bhagavan's grace, I had not yet known it to be perpetually flowing as much to those who ask as to the wise ones who do not ask for it. But now I feel I need a change for about six months as well as visiting places holy to Hindus.” He smiled approval and enquired when I was starting and whether I had made any arrangement for my stay in the various places I was to visit - your compassion, beloved Bhagavan, is infinite! I answered with tears in my eyes that I was going as a sadhu, mainly trusting to chance for accommodation.

For three months I lay on a mat in Cape Comorin, extremely relieved of the mental tension which the physical form of Bhagavan had caused me. I lay in solitude plunged in thoughts of his blissful silence and calm repose. The stillness of his heart followed me everywhere - in the beautiful, gem-like temple, in the vast blue ocean before me, in the sand dunes, the fishing villages, and the endless stretches of coconut groves which run along the sea-shore and the interiors of the Cape. Oh Bhagavan! How mighty you are, and how sublime and all-pervasive is the immaculate purity of your soul! With what tender emotions do we, your devotees, think now of your incomparable qualities - divine in their beauty - your gentleness, your serene, adorable countenance, your cool, refreshing smiles, the sweetness of the words that came out of your mouth, the radiance of your all embracing love, your equal vision and treatment of one and all -your devotees or total strangers, and even diseased stray animals which come within that vision.

I still feel the same peace and stillness in his Ashram; in the hall where I and lakhs of people so often met him, and where at least for three nights in 1937 I slept; in the Nirvana room where he discarded his body. My

physical eye does not see Bhagavan's form, but my spirit constantly feels the spirit here and everywhere, although much more here than elsewhere.



# HOW I CAME TO THE MAHARSHI

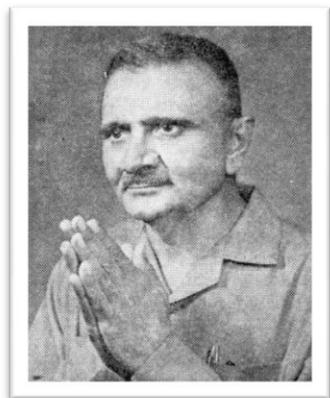
# SRI M.L. BHATT

I am an individual from the common lot with not much of religious or spiritual background by way of environment or education. Brahmin by birth, brought up to an unrigid, flexible way of life, I developed a broad, even indifferent way of looking at things religious.

I was staying at Matunga (Bombay). In the building known as Tejoo Kaya Park, the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Sri Ramana Maharshi (in 1947) were being celebrated with great éclat. Few of us went there and we humorously named the celebrated one “Madrasi God Ramana”.

I cannot describe how and why, but the word “Ramana” got planted in me somewhere there and then and grew within me. Four years passed by. I visited a relation's office in November, 1952 at Ahmedabad. He had put on exhibition many books of a famous Indian Ashram and invited me to have a look and purchase some books which were brought to his office by an inmate of the ashram. Books were lying on the long table. I went through the line of them and at the end of it saw six books published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai. I forgot about the other books I had intended to get and instead picked out all the six and went with them to my brother's house. I was fully engrossed, you could say buried, in the currents flowing without knowing or understanding what electric charge was developing within me. On my return to Delhi, I requested a learned friend to help me understand the spirituality I was being pushed into by my new books. He invited me to his residence. At 4 p.m., I started to read and he to guide me, or cross-examine my understanding.

We were going through the Gujarati book, *Ramana Vani* (Maharshi's *Gospel*, in English) and Swami Madhavtirth's *Ramana Maharshi*. I must have lost all outward consciousness, as, when I finished the reading, I asked the time, saying my wife must be waiting for dinner. My friend, Sri Mohanbhai Shah,



who must have been watching me with the utmost patience for the last few hours, told me very kindly that it was 11 p.m. He added: "You have had your meal already at 9 p.m. with me, and, look, my wife and children are already asleep." They were fast asleep on beds made up on the floor.

I was fully unaware when I took my meal or when the beds were made up. My friend added "Ramana Maharshi has possessed you." My eyes became wet and I went home. Since that day, I have never for a day forgotten Ramana, the God. I have had living experience of HIM. I am narrating these episodes after GOD RAMANA has left his body at Tiruvannamalai. I had not the privilege to see him in his physical body.

Since then, I have visited the Ashram twice. It became my habit when travelling to recite "Ram" "Ram" "Ramana" "Ramana" with the running of the moving train. I felt the vibrations in my veins. Sometimes, I felt his presence and one day (to be exact at 7 p.m. on 18-12-1952), while travelling by train from Modinagar to Delhi, a poem came to me.

Let me remember you  
God Ramana  
A hundred times in a day.

You came as a flash  
Once in my life and OM Ramana  
Current flowing ceaselessly  
By your grace LORD RAMANA.

I close my eyes and you come  
And keep the current flowing.  
I pray now, come,  
In recesses of my sleep, and  
Give me your benevolent flash  
Let me remember you GOD  
Within my heart LORD RAMANA  
In my dreams.

My narration will be incomplete if I do not give the vivid experiences I have had of HIS presence felt and my prayers miraculously answered.

1. I was serving a big textile group and suddenly resigned on a question of prestige in July, 1955. Mental depression followed: “who will give you employment, you fool, now at the age of 47?” I prayed and got the answer “Why worry” “Be STILL”. I cannot say why but I decided that I would not make any frantic efforts or seek influence but wait for the call from unknown quarters. I pledged myself to stay at home for 30 days and seek help only from prayer to the master. I do not do any *puja* or ritual of any sort; my *puja* is only mental remembrance of HIM, by rhythm of which life may come and go at HIS WILL.

Twenty-nine days passed, my courage diminishing day by day. But not my faith. Exactly on the thirtieth day, a casual acquaintance came to my house, seeking me and bringing an offer of a better job. I thanked the Master.

2. I had another vivid experience in 1964. By now I had become a confirmed *Prarabdhavadi* (or believer in destiny) according to my friends. Once again when I resigned at the age of 55 in similar circumstances another position came of its own accord; my colleague, Sri Gulabchand Jain, exclaimed: “It is a miracle; Ramana Maharshi is protecting you.”

3. There have been more such happenings in my life, some are very personal and it is not my intention to narrate my own life.

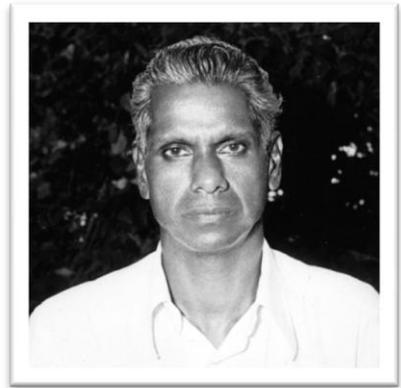
In conclusion, most humbly, I say that my prayers to the Master have been amply rewarded, that I have been a chosen one for such blessing. I am all submission to Him, trying to propagate his teachings in my humble way.

Let me Remember you  
GOD RAMANA,  
A hundred times a day,  
Let me.

# SRI R. CHANDRASEKHAR

*(Visitors to the Ashram would not, have failed to notice a young inmate enthusiastically mingling with all, though he could not speak. It is our Chandrasekhar. He is very efficient in his work and totally devoted to Bhagavan. He assists the Ashram in the Book Depot, packing section. His efficiency in packing has received unanimous recognition. We are happy to publish here his account of how he came to Bhagavan).*

My father, Sri K. Ramachandra of Colombo (editor of The Religious Digest) is one of the oldest devotees of Bhagavan Ramana, who, by his books and articles contributed to weeklies and newspapers, has made known the Sage and His teachings in South India and Ceylon, even from the year 1934. The small size framed photo of Bhagavan sitting on a tiger-skin, brought by him as a memento of his pilgrimage all over India, aroused my curiosity. Though I was only a boy of 12 then, I felt that He was a great Sage with divine powers. I admired His having stuck on to the holy hill Arunachala, ever one with it.



A few years later - in January 1940 - I was able to visit Arunachala in the company of my father. I was introduced to Sri Bhagavan by my father. I was thrilled to see the Sage face to face at his Abode of Grace. The whole place breathed an air of sanctity and serenity. I was also amazed to see that all the visitors who came for Bhagavan's darshan were taken care of and treated most hospitably. Staying at the municipal bungalow, near the railway station, we went to the Ashram daily to have Bhagavan's darshan and - His prasadam for nearly a week.

Bhagavan was sitting on His couch, reading letters received and writing something in a note-book now and then. He had a bookshelf by his side. We had no conversation with Bhagavan; only prayed to Him for His blessings and we had it in abundance in gracious Silence, the Language of

the Infinite. Is that not the basis of His teachings to understand once forever?

In 1946, I came again in the company of my father and after a week's stay at the Ashram we put up in our own cottage, newly built nearby and stayed on for several months. It was really thrilling to sit in front of Bhagavan and meditate. Bhagavan sat on the sofa almost in silence and the atmosphere in the Hall was radiant and full of spiritual fragrance. The Sage thus blessed all who sat before Him in silence. He was gazing and gazing, spreading divine Grace all around. I was fortunate to receive such a look of Grace from Him, full of compassion. I felt blessed. It is the greatest and the most important moment and event of my life.

Those months of the year 1946 at the Ashram were never to be forgotten, for I had an insight of the mysterious spiritual power that had struck and laid my father bed-ridden for several months and made myself pulled here to stay along with him, suffering severe physical pains and shivers and experiencing a lot of untold troubles; all through this we had sought spiritual solace alone and with Bhagavan's Grace gained strength to overcome them all. Thus stricken souls survive purely by His Grace, when all medical treatment fails! Such physical debility and suffering did lead us in the end to spiritual redemption. So the invisible power of Grace had indeed showered its blessings on us all even without our knowing it.

I was moved to notice the attention bestowed by Bhagavan on animals as well. He was daily feeding squirrels at noon time, and was giving fruits to monkeys whenever they came to the Hall. Bhagavan was particularly fond of his Cow Lakshmi which used to come to the Hall daily and eat plantain fruits given by Him. The fortunate Cow was under His loving care right up to its last moments in 1948 and there is a likeness of her in stone in a specially built samadhi over her grave. I had the privilege of witnessing its burial with due religious rites in the presence of Bhagavan. He was visibly moved as the body of the Cow was lowered into the samadhi pit. Thus the noble Cow got absorbed in Holy Arunachala by His Grace.

Though I had worked elsewhere between 1946 and 1949, I managed to spend one year or so here again, doing sadhana and studying yoga. The Hill

has always its attraction for me. Going round the Holy Hill was a regular feature of my sadhana and I have come to realise the deep significance of this circumambulation. I have come for good to this Abode of our Master and I am happy doing my bit of service and sadhana and meeting devotees coming with great spiritual fervour and devotional surrender to Bhagavan.

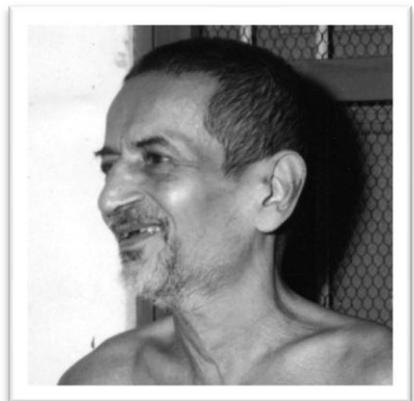
## SRI JAGADISH SWAMI

The attention of visitors to the Ashram is immediately drawn to a slender figure, clad in loincloth, walking carefree in and around the Samadhi of Sri Bhagavan, murmuring the japa of Arunachala-Ramana: he is Sri Jagadish Swami.

Jagadish often came to Sri Bhagavan along with his father Sri Ishwarbhai B. Dantania, and his mother and brothers from Bombay in the forties for shorter or longer periods. Sri Ishwarbhai was instrumental and helpful in the purchase of the house at the birthplace in Tiruchuzhi (Sundara Mandiram). And when Sri Matrubhuteswara Shrine was completed, Sri Ishwarbhai not only supplied all the materials needed for the electrification of the Shrine, but personally supervised the electrical installations, having expert experience in the line. Such was his deep devotion and service to Sri Bhagavan.

So this is a case of intense devotion of the parents blossoming in one of the children as a life of utter renunciation and sadhana.

After finishing his college course, Jagadish started on a pilgrimage, during which he visited the Anandashram of Sri Swami Ramdas and some other places as well. It was two or three years after the Brahma Nirvana (1950) of Bhagavan that he arrived at



Arunachala. Suddenly he felt the urge to renounce everything and take to tapascharya. He had his head shaven and wearing only a kaupina, he began to stay for shorter or longer periods in all the places hallowed by Bhagavan. The temple premises of Arunachaleswara, Patala lingam, Gurusmurtam, Pavalakunru, Virupaksha Cave and Skandashram, engaged all the time in meditation and living on alms (bhiksha) or whatever food he chanced to get.

When he came to live in the proximity of the present Sri Ramanasramam, he learnt Tamil and with the help of co-devotees studied and learned all the original works of Bhagavan in Tamil - the Five Hymns to Arunachala, Upadesa Saram, Ulladu Narpadu and others. Upadesa Saram, he knows in all the four languages in which Sri Bhagavan himself has composed it, viz., Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam.

For the past few years he has been an inmate of Sri Ramanasramam. His daily programme is to meditate, to recite the works of Bhagavan and to learn some new hymns in praise of Bhagavan. He goes round Arunachala whenever he feels the urge.

He is a perfect sanyasi, with nothing as his own, absolutely free from any worldly attachment. Above all his childlike simplicity, purity and self abnegation are really charming.

May this impersonal personality continue to radiate his silent influence and be of help to fellow-devotees in the Master's abode.

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Sri Ramanarpanamastu

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