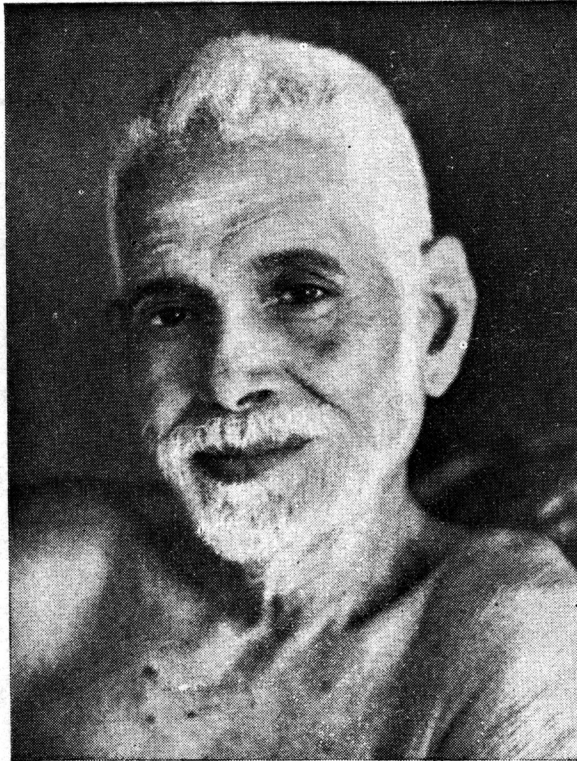




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SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

JAYANTI SOUVENIR-1965



**85TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION OF
SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI**

at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpatty, Bombay
at 5-45 p.m. on Tuesday, 23rd February 1965.

President :

His Excellency Dr. P. V. Cherian,
Governor of Maharashtra

Address by :

Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar,
Vice-Chancellor, Annamalai University

Chief Guest : Kulapati Shri K. M. Munshi

SRI RAMANA JAYANTI CELEBRATION COMMITTEE
10/155, Adarsha Nagar, Worli, Bombay 18-WB.

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FOREWORD

By

MRS. MANI SAHUKAR

NO account of the religious and philosophical tradition of Bharat can be complete without reference to the contribution of Shri Ramana Maharshi to the evolution of our spiritual culture.

India, this holy motherland of ours, has ever given birth to a galaxy of incarnations and sages in fulfilment of Shri Krishna's promise that when a need of a saviour is emergent, then once again such an Avatar appears for the redemption of man. The descent of God into humanity is for the ascent of man into Godhead. Among such transcendental appearances Shri Ramana of Arunachala fame stands out as a stately tower of light and inspiration.

It is Moha or a false sense of attachment to fleeting values that acts as a check to an outlook of expanded vision. But if a hunger to grow in spiritual grace manifests itself in the human heart, God steps in in the form of a Guru, sometimes within the heart, but more often in the form of another personality to awaken the intellect and illumine it with a sense of discrimination. The path of knowledge thus comes into its own. Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi had this definite spiritual message for man. The task undertaken by him was to re-open the Gnan Marg to seekers of Truth. In actual fact the self inquiry—"Who am I?"—advocated by Bhagawan Ramana gave a new impetus to the ancient path of knowledge trodden by the Rishis of the Upanishads. But whereas the call of the Upanishads was for realizing Brahma Vidya, the Maharshi's emphasis was on the understanding of the Self. 'The source of one's being is also the source of the universe', declared the great one, and it is when in one's being illusions, confusions and contradictions take to flight that illumination comes flooding in.

Though Shri Ramana is known pre-eminently as the greatest Apostle of Gnan Yoga, his heart was full of deep devotion and compassion. The exquisite hymns he composed on Arunachala are

so full of tender sentiments and resignation to the Divine that they may well be termed a lyrical thesis on Bhakti. He was one of those Advaitins who gave to the Impersonal Reality a warm and emotional content.

Not all, however, can go to Bhagawan to learn the difficult path of self analysis. Bhagawan understood this, and his greatness lies in the way he adapted his help and grace to the needs and swabhav of those who sought him as a refuge. He combined in his charming personality a rare fusion of sweetness and light.

The Birthday of a saint is a holy and an auspicious occasion. This Souvenir gives us the privilege and the opportunity of laying at his lotus feet our garlands of loving thoughts. Shri Ramana's silent transmission of love and grace is still there. It is for us to cultivate a sensitive awareness for these great and generous gifts, for his birth, no less than his passing, is a resurrection.

“THE MOUNTAIN PATH”

(A Quarterly, issued from Sri Ramanasramam)

‘The Mountain Path’, a quarterly journal is issued from this Ashram as one means of maintaining the high spiritual and intellectual level that Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's teaching demands. The aim of this journal will be to set forth the traditional wisdom of all religions and all ages, especially as testified to by their saints and mystics, and to clarify the paths available to seekers in the conditions of our modern world.

We hope that devotees of Sri Maharshi and others also who are drawn to the perennial spiritual wisdom will lend us their support.

We also find that many devotees who are able to come to Tiruvannamalai only rarely or not at all, are eager for Ashram news. For their benefit we shall issue an Ashram news bulletin as a supplement to each issue. Usually this will be a small part of the journal.

Annual Subscription : Rs. 5; Life Subscription : Rs. 100.

REFLECTIONS

By DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

THE SAGE OF ARUNACHALA

TIRUVANNAMALAI (Arunachala in Sanskrit) is one of the most sacred places of pilgrimage for the Hindus, as God is worshipped there in the form of Light. Once in a year the holy beacon is lit on the top of the hill; and thousands of people go thither to see the light and adore it. But all through the year, the place has now become an international port of call for spirituality, because Maharshi Ramana lived there for over half a century shedding the flame of God-realization.

As a young lad in his teens, he went to Arunachala, and since then he made it his life-abode. The very name 'Arunachala' served as an imperious call from the Divine, and he simply obeyed the call. The exalted state of egolessness came to him; and once it comes, it never goes. Strictly speaking, it is not one state among other states of experience; it does not come nor occur in a given moment of time. It is the eternal status (sahajasthiti). Because of avidya (nescience) one does not recognise it. And when avidya is made to disappear, the self-luminous nature of the spirit shines. This is what is called 'moksha' in Vedanta. It is not an after-death experience. The continuance of the body is not inconsistent with release. It is only identification of the Self with the ego, etc., that is an obstacle to realization. When that obstacle has been removed, one becomes a jivan-mukta, free while living. We hear of many such great souls in our scriptures. But in the Maharshi we had a contemporary jivan-mukta, a living commentary on the most sublime texts of the Vedanta. Many a statement of the scriptures, like the one in the Bhagavad-Gita about seeing inaction in action and action

in inaction, will remain obscure and unintelligible unless one comes into contact with sages like the Maharshi. Apparently, Sri Ramana seemed to take interest in things that happened around him. He recognised people and sometimes talked to them. Even creatures belonging to the sub-human species claimed his attention. He used to lend a helping hand even in the kitchen by dressing vegetables for cooking. But all these modes of action were performed without the least attachment to them. In truth, they were no actions at all, since they were void of egoity. The core of activity had been removed; only the shell remained; and that too for us, the onlookers. Nothing seemed to affect this Rock of Ages. He stood as a witness to all phenomena. The distinctions of high and low had no meaning for him. The stranger and foreigner who visited him felt absolutely disarmed and free even at the first sight. One may be foreign to another or look strange; but how can one be alien to oneself? The Maharshi who had crossed the boundaries of individuality naturally and effortlessly felt — if we may use such a poor word — one with all. Like the pandita (the wise one) of the Gita, he looked upon all as the same — the high-born and lowly of birth, the cow and the elephant, the dog and the dog-eater — these classifications may have meaning for us who are caught in the net-work of difference. To him who had seen the non-dual Brahman which is Sama, the same, there was no plurality, no difference.

It was a delightful and unique experience to sit in the presence of the Maharshi, and look in the full glare of his beatific eyes. One might go to him with a medley of doubts and questions.

But very often it happened that these upsurgings of the mind died down and were burnt to ashes as one sat before the sage. One had a pretaste of that pristine state, of which the Upanishad speaks, when the knot of the heart is cut and all the doubts are dispelled. One stepped back and watched how the turbulent mental stream quietened down and received an undisturbed reflection of the self-luminous Spirit. What one might succeed in attaining after a prolonged course of Yogic discipline, one got with perfect ease and effortlessly in the proximity of the Maharshi. True, this experience might not stay for long. One might get back to the world and wallow again in the dirt of worldliness. But still, the impress of spirituality that had been gained was never lost. Seldom was one, the depths of whose soul had been stirred by the sublime look of the Sage, without the desire to go again to him and receive fresh intimations of the eternal. People sometimes went to him in the hope that by his darsana (look) their earthly wants would be fulfilled. But very soon they discovered their own foolishness in asking for fleeting pleasures, when the imperishable bliss awaited them. Instead of getting dissatisfied that their cravings went unfulfilled, they would feel thankful that they had been saved from a delusion and a snare. Naciketās of the Kathopanishad was offered by Yama all the pleasures of all the worlds in lieu of Self-knowledge for which he had asked; but the true son of spirituality that the boy was, he refused to be tempted into accepting the pleasant in the place of the good. The Maharshi who to us was the personification of the supreme Good transmuted our lower passions and desires into moksha-kama, an intense longing for release.

Some went to the Maharshi with a curiosity to get from him a cure-all for the world's ills. They used to ask him what solution he had for the problems of poverty, illiteracy, disease, war,

etc. Social reform was their religion; a reordering of society was what they sought after. They framed their questions in different ways. What message had the Maharshi to give to the social reformer? Was it not the duty of every enlightened citizen to strive for bettering the lot of his fellowmen? When misery and squalor were abroad, how could anyone who had a feeling heart keep quiet without exerting himself in doing his bit for world-welfare? The invariable answer that the Sage gave to all those who put such questions was: 'Have you reformed yourself first?' Very often it happens that so-called social service is a self-gratification of the ego. In much of what passes for altruism, there is a core of egoism. Such service blesses neither the server nor the served. The former's pride increases, and the latter's demoralization is made complete. It is only such service as that which contributes to the reduction of the ego that is the harbinger of good. And the influence of the ego cannot be lessened unless one knows, however remotely, that the ego is not the Self, that it is only the pseudo-self, responsible for all the evil and misery in the world, and that the final and lasting felicity could be realized only when the root-cause of the ego, viz. ignorance, is dispelled. And so, unless one seeks to know the true Self, one cannot do real service to society. Reform must begin with oneself. He who is on the path renders service to fellow-beings so that his ego may be cleansed and become attenuated and ready to be discarded. And he who has realized the End and has become a jivan-mukta performs work — or more correctly appears to us to perform work — in order that the world may be saved (lokasangraha). So self-inquiry is the basis of true service; and self-knowledge is its culmination.

The sage of Arunachala had no new message for humanity. What he taught through silence

more than through words was the ageless gospel of the Vedanta. Sankara cites in his Sutrabhasya a text from the Smṛti in which it is stated that when approached by Badhva for instruction, Sage Baskali kept quiet, and, on being questioned again and again, said 'We have declared the truth already, but you have not understood: the Self is peaceful, quiet (upasanta).' The Maharshi's teaching was exactly the same as that of the Upanisadic sage. He seldom spoke. It is in the stillness of silence that the depths of the spirit are reached. Words and thoughts cannot lead us far enough. Even the words of scripture help us only up to a point; and there they must stop. It is said of young Dakshinamurti that he taught his elderly disciple in the language of silence. It is true that only a few can understand what is taught in silence. And so, sometimes the Maharshi used to talk. But he warned his interlocutors at the same time that both questions and answers belonged to the realm of avidya (nescience), though the latter did serve as signposts towards the light of wisdom. Doubts would assail the mind so long as the mind lasted. It was only when the eternal state of mindlessness (amanibhava) was realised that all doubts of the mind and questionings of the heart would roll away like mist before the rising sun.

The Maharshi's teachings may be stated aphoristically thus: Seek to know the Self; and the knowledge will make you free. The Chandogya records the story of Narada, master of many sciences and arts, going to Sanatkumara and confessing that he was sorrow-stricken, though he was very learned. He knew that all his learning would be of no avail and that Self-knowledge alone could save him. So he approached Sanatkumara with the request 'Help me across the ocean of sorrow' and received from him the wisdom about the great, the true Self. The supreme commandment of scripture is 'Know

the Self' (atmanam viddhi). The Maharshi has said over and over again that atma-vichara is the one sure and inescapable path to liberation or release. Other sadhanas may help in this process more or less remotely. It is jnana alone that is the direct means to moksha.

This is essentially the view of Advaita Vedanta. And the reason for it is that moksha is the eternal nature of the Self, and not something which is to be newly acquired or accomplished. No operation, either of the body or of the mind, can bring about release. The ever free status of the Self is not recognized because of the ignorance which veils the true and projects the untrue. When this ignorance is removed, one realises one's eternal nature as the non-dual, unconditioned Self. That which effects the removal of ignorance is wisdom. And what paves the way for wisdom is atma-vichara.

The enquiry 'Who am I?' is not to be regarded as a mental effort to understand the mind's nature. Its main purpose is 'to focus the entire mind at its source'. The source of the psychosis 'I' is the Self. What one does in self-inquiry is to run against the mental current instead of running along with it, and finally transcend the sphere of mental modifications. It is comparatively easy for us to disentangle ourselves from wrong identification with the physical body and material objects. But the identification with the ego is hard to get over. As the Panca-padika, a commentary on Sankara's Sutra-bhasya, says, 'The conceit "I" is the first super-imposition on the Self.' The outer layers of ignorance may fall easily. The last one, however, is difficult to tear. The best way to remove it is to track it down to its source. When there is awareness of the source which is the Self, the ego vanishes. And when the 'I' has been crossed out through Jnana, there is no more bondage and consequent sorrow.

The cessation or non-cessation of the body has nothing to do with release. The body may continue to exist and the world may continue to appear, as in the case of the Maharshi. That makes no difference at all to the Self that has been realized. As Sankara says, 'There is no need to dispute, whether the knower of Brahman bears the body for some time or not. How can another object to one's own experience, realized in the heart, of Brahman-knowledge as well as continuance of the body?' In truth there is neither the body nor the world for him; there is only the Self, the eternal Existence (sat), the self-luminous Intelligence (cit), the unexcellable Bliss (ananda). Such an experience is not entirely foreign to us. We have it in sleep, where we are conscious neither of the external world of things nor of the inner world of dreams. But that experience lies under the cover of ignorance. So it is that we come back to the phantasies of dream and the world of waking. Non-return to duality is possible only whennescience has been removed. To make this possible is the object of Vedanta. To inspire even the least of us with hope, and help us out of the slough of despond, is the purpose of such illustrious exemplars as the Maharshi.

Sri Ramana's example is unique because he did not first read and then experience. Experience came to him first; and only later he found corroborative evidence in the scriptural texts. To an unbelieving world which is impatient and wants to burn its sacred books, Sri Ramana has this message to offer, viz., that the real book of life is within, and that if we but turn to it and consult its pages, it will open up undreamt—of vistas leading to limitless felicity and bliss.

II — DAKSHINAMURTHI, SANKARA AND RAMANA

In the Sankaravijaya of Madhavacarya there is a verse which says that the image of Siva in

the form of Sankaracharya goes about in the world, having emerged from the seat under the banyan tree giving up the attitude of silence, in order to save all beings that are fallen into the deep pit of ignorance and are being scorched in the flames of transmigration, by imparting to them the teaching about the Self.

Siva, as Dakshinamurti, is the world-teacher, who sitting underneath the banyan tree, teaches the supreme truth through silence. He is pictured as a youth dispelling the doubts of aged disciples without the aid of words. But all cannot comprehend the language of silence; nor is it given to all to go to the banyan tree where the Lord is seated. So, the need arose for Sankara Incarnation came as the jagat-guru (world-teacher); only, here, instead of the jagat (world) going to the guru (teacher), we have the guru coming to the jagat. In the short span of thirty-two years that constituted Sankara's earthly life, a revolution was effected in the then known India through almost incessant travel and unsparing exertion on the part of the Master. It seemed as though the Lord rose from his seat under the banyan tree leaving off His silence, and moved and mingled with the multitudes in order to enlighten and save them. In the place of the unmoving (acara) Dakshinamurti, we have Sankara moving (cara); and in the place of silence (mauna), we have auspicious speech (sankari-vak). This change or transformation was required to meet the challenge of the time in which the Sankara-Incarnation took place.

Our age, the era of machinery and speed, has its own problems. One finds almost everyone moving without purpose. A good volume of talking goes on every minute — much of it without sense. In such an atmosphere of speed and sound it is no wonder that silence and stasis are often mistaken for spirituality. This age demands on the part of a world-teacher neither absolute silence nor much speech, neither total stasis nor

constant movement. We had such a teacher in Bhagavan Sri Ramana who was both *acara* (unmoving) and *cara* (moving), who taught both through silence and speech. Leaving Madurai as a boy of seventeen, Sri Ramana went to Tiruvannamalai and never left that sacred place thereafter. His movement was confined to the environs of Arunachala. To his devotees he was the moving Arunachala. For many years after his arrival at Tiruvannamalai, he did not speak; people used to refer to him as the Mauna-svami (silent ascetic).

But his silence was not part of any discipline. He found no use for words. When at long last he was discovered, and a few ardent seekers of Truth approached him for instruction, he did speak. In short, Sri Ramana played the roles of Dakshinamurti and Sankara to suit the exigencies of our age. If Sankara may be described as the later Dakshinamurti, Sri Ramana, it seems to me, may rightly be regarded as the later Sankara (*apara-Sankara*). In the Guruparamparastotra composed by a devotee of Sri Ramana the following lines occur:

*dakshinamurti-sarambham
sankaracha-ya-madhyamam
ramanacharya-paryantam
vande guru-paramparam.*

‘Obeisance to the line of preceptors with Dakshinamurti in the beginning, Sankara in the middle and Ramana in the end!’

It is significant that Sri Ramana has rendered into beautiful Tamil verse Sankara’s Hymn to Dakshinamurti, adding his own invocation to Sankara at the beginning.

‘That Sankara, who appeared as Dakshinamurti to grant peace to the great ascetics (Sanaka, etc.), who revealed his real state of silence, and who has expressed the nature of the Self in this hymn, abides in me.’

Isvara (God), *Guru* (Preceptor) and *Atmam* (the Self) are but different names for one and the same reality. Dakshinamurti, the south-facing Deity, Sankara, the peripatetic Teacher of humanity, and Ramana the Sage of Self-inquiry are expressions of the same principle. In the introductory verse to his verse-rendering of Sankara’s *Atmabodha*, Sri Ramana declares his identity with Sankara thus:

‘Is the teacher Sankara, who grants the knowledge of the Self, other than the Self? Remaining in my heart as the Self, he who utters the Tamil today — who is he other than that one himself?’

III RAMANA-EXPERIENCE

He alone can be said to have known Sri Ramana, that has had the Ramana-experience. And, he that has had that experience will not know him, remaining outside of him. To know Ramana is to be Ramana. To be Ramana is to have the plenary experience of non-duality. In the absence of that experience, we can only seek to know him by ‘description’. This itself is not without its value. Through knowledge by description we may succeed in gaining knowledge by identity. It is a *sadhana* (discipline) of supreme potency, therefore, to be constantly aware of one’s acquaintance with Sri Ramana.

To meet a sage and be acquainted with him is not an ordinary occurrence. It must be the result of a good stock of merit. I consider myself extremely fortunate, therefore, to have had the privilege of meeting the Master, when I was barely eighteen. As I recall those three days I spent basking in the sun-shine of Sri Ramana’s Glorious Presence, I have no word to express the benefit I derived from that experience. To sit before him was itself a deep spiritual education. To look at him was to have one’s mind stilled. To fall within the sphere of his beatific vision was to be inwardly elevated.

The most remarkable feature about the Master that struck even a casual visitor was his beaming face. There was no need, in his case, to frame the head in a halo. Such an enchantingly bright face with a soothing look and never-failing smile, one can never forget having seen it even once. The brightness remained undiminished till the very end — even when the Master's body bore the cross of the last illness. A few days before the mahasamadhi when I went into the room where he lay and touched his feet with my head and quickly saw the condition in which his body was, on the point of shedding tears. But immediately I saw his face and he made kind inquiries in his usual inimitable way, all sorrow left without a trace, and there was Eternity looking on and speaking.

Even when I first saw the Master, his head had begun to nod. The shaking head seemed to me to be saying 'neti', 'neti' (not this, not this). And, all on a sudden the nodding would stop, the vision of the Master would become fixed, and the spirit of silence would envelop everyone present. In the stillness of the Heart, one would realize that the 'Self is peaceful quiet' (santoyam atma). Many of those who came with long lists of questions used to depart in silence after sitting for a while in the Master's presence. When some did put questions to him, they received the replies they deserved. It was evident that many could not even frame their questions properly. In such cases Sri Ramana himself would help in the framing of questions. When he chose to answer questions or instruct through words, it was a sight for the gods to see. Each sentence was like a text from the Upanishad so full of meaning that it required calm silent pondering over in order to be understood. Sri Ramana's answers never remained on the surface. He would go straight to the root of a question and exhibit to the wondering questioner the implica-

tions of his own question which he could not even have dreamt of. Not unoften would the Master make a questioner resolve his own doubts. But each time, the supreme Lord would gently guide the seeker to the state of inner silence where all doubts get dissolved and all questionings cease.

There was no occasion when I experienced the manifestation of supernormal powers sometimes attributed to the Master. He seemed to me to be perfectly normal. It is we that were abnormal by contrast. We have our own tensions and mental tangles. As for the Master there was no ruffle — not even the least agitation. The storms of the world never reached him.

Sitting or reclining on the couch in the Asrama Hall, he appeared to be 'the still point of turning world'. There was not the least suggestion of his appearing to be other than normal. His mode of referring to his person as 'I' and not as 'this' was itself significant. He did not want to appear distinct from the rest of us with regard to empirical usage. Yet, there was no doubt about the fact that there was not the least adhyasa present in him. His last illness quite clearly demonstrated this. What complete and utter detachment from the body he manifested in order to teach the world that the body is not the Self!

Having been a student of the Gita from childhood, I saw in the Bhagavan a vivid and living commentary on that great Scripture. When I was asked to address a meeting held in the local High School during one of my early visits to Tiruvannamalai, this is what I said: 'If anyone wants to understand the inner meaning of the Gita, he must come to your town and meet the Maharshi'. In 1948-49, when I was in the United States lecturing on Vedanta, many friends asked me if there was anyone living in India answering to the truth of the Vedanta. My reply

invariably used to be 'Ramana'. On my return to India when I went to the Asramam, the Master expressed a wish that I should give an account of my American visit to the devotees gathered at the evening worship. I repeated to the gathering what exactly I had told American friends; and it was a pleasant experience to find a few Americans there.

The critics of Advaita usually say that the Advaitin is an austere intellectual in whom the wells of feeling have all dried up. Those who have seen the Master will know how unfounded such a criticism is. Sri Ramana was ever brimming with the milk of divine kindness. Even members of the sub-human species had their share of the unbounded love of the Master. He was a consummate artist in life. Anything that he touched became orderly and pleasant. Sweet and firm was his person even as the sacred Arunachala is. Why should I say 'was'? Even now he is and ever will be the light that never fades, the sweetness that never surfeits, to those who desire wisdom and eternity.

IV — SALUTATIONS TO SRI RAMANA

Those who have had the privilege of meeting Bhagavan Sri Ramana even once will ever remember the reposeful form, the benign face and the bewitching eyes. As a lad of seventeen, he heard the Divine Call and went from the City of the Fish-eyed Mother (Madurai-Minekshi) to the Hill of the Holy Beacon (Arunachala) where the World-Father presides, only to be transported into the realm of transcendent Bliss, where all forms vanish and distinctions disappear. From 1896 when Sri Ramana arrived in Arunachala (Tiruvannamalai) to 1950 when he shoved off his physical frame, he did not move from the precincts of the Sacred Hill, but remained there even as an open book from which any one that had the requisite inclination could learn the way to everlasting life. Countless people in their thousands went to him, some in quest of worldly

success and some in search of the eternal Self. While the Master pitied the plight of the former, he knew that they too would eventually join the ranks of the latter. He shed his lustre on all alike: his eyes showered their blessings on high and low without any difference. Many a spiritual aspirant found solace in his presence and illumination in his silence. He taught through words too; but those words were so designed as to lead the hearer to the region of silence which is the Self.

Sri Ramana did not found any new school of thought or cult. He taught the ageless truth of Vedanta which is not sectarian but universal. Even to call that truth Advaita (non-duality) is only a concession to the inherent limitations of language. The Master blazoned forth anew the path of self-inquiry through which every one can attain Advaita-experience. None was too low for it, and none too great. Everyone can take it, no matter what his cult, creed or caste is. Even a sceptic or agnostic, an atheist or anti-theist may follow it and come to good. As Sri Ramana's presence was accessible to all without let or hindrance, so was his teaching meant for the good of the entire world.

As the night drew in on Friday the 14th of April 1950, Bhagavan Sri Ramana chose to leave his body. But he has not gone anywhere. There is no departure for a Jivanmukta. And the Master's Mission can end only with universal salvation. Of course, he knows what instruments to choose and in which ways to fulfil his task. Those of us who have had the rare good fortune of association with his embodied form have a sacred duty to ourselves, which is to meditate on him and his teachings, and share with others the precious legacy we have received from him.

(From the book "Ramana Maharshi and his Philosophy of Existence" by Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan, published by Sri Ramanasramam).

REMINISCENCES

The following are extracts from the book "LETTERS FROM SRI RAMANASRAMAM" written by Suri Nagamma to her brother D. S. Sastry published by Sri Ramanasramam. (Price Rs. 4/-)

INTRODUCTION

SRI RAMANASRAMAM is an unique institution. Its inmates are not given specific instructions as to what they should do or should not do; they are left to fend for themselves and to absorb whatever they can from the calm and peaceful atmosphere of the Asramam.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi preached silence by observing it himself. At sunrise and at sunset every day, Vedic hymns were recited in his presence ending with "*Nakarmana Naprajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amrutatvamanasuh*", which means that *moksha* (deliverance) is attained, not by *karma* or *praja* or *dhana*, but by renouncing every one of them. Asramites aspiring for spiritual advancement were thus taught to learn and practice self-enquiry and renunciation. They sat in silence at the holy feet of Bhagavan, imbibing the lessons of silence. Bhagavan spoke occasionally to the Asramites and also to casual visitors on spiritual matters. On

such occasions, a few devotees recorded whatever he spoke; and amongst them, Nagamma was one.

Namma had no school education worth mention and does not know any language other than her mother tongue, Telugu. During her early years, owing to domestic calamities and consequent enforced solitude, she studied books of ancient lore and thereby acquired some literacy knowledge which resulted in her writing a few books in prose and poetry. When, however, she became as Asramite, she renounced everything including her literary activities. Sitting at the feet of the Master, day in and day out, she felt an irresistible urge in her to record the discussions devotees were having with Bhagavan and as she began recording them found that, that work was a sort of *sadhana* for herself and so began writing them in the shape of letters to her brother in Madras. About 300 letters were thus written.

THE FIRST BIKSHA

30th December 1945

ONE afternoon, during casual conversation, Bhagavan got into a reminiscent mood and began telling us as follows:

"There used to be in Gopura Subrahmanyeswara Temple, a Mowna Swami (a silent sadhu). One morning when I was going about the Thousand-Pillar-Mandapam, he came with a friend. He was a Mowna Swami and so was I. There was no talk; no greetings. It was soon

mid-day. He made signs to his friend to mean: "I do not know who this boy is, but he appears to be tired; please get some food and give him it." Accordingly they brought some. It was boiled rice. Each grain was sized. There was sour water underneath. There was a bit of pickle to go with it. That was the first bhiksha given to me by Sri Arunachaleswara. Actually there is not an iota of pleasure in what I eat now. All the meals and sweets (puncha bhakshya paramanna) are nothing compared to that food," said

Bhagavan. "Was it on the very first day of Sri Bhagavan's arrival in that place?" someone asked.

"No, no, the next day. Taking it as the first bhiksha given me by Ishwara, I ate that rice and pickle and drank the water given to me. That happiness I can never forget," remarked Sri Bhagavan.

"I believe there is some other story about Sri Bhagavan going to the town for the first time for bhiksha," said one devotee.

"Yes, there used to be one lady devotee. She very often used to bring me some food or other. One day she arranged a feast for all the sadhus and pressed me to dine along with them. I signed her to say that I would not do so and

that I would be going out begging. I had to sit and eat with them all or I go out for bhiksha. Yes, it was God's will, I thought, and started out for bhiksha. That lady had doubts as to whether I would go out for bhiksha or join the feast. She sent a man behind me. As there was no escape, I went to a house in the street to the left of the temple and standing in front of it, clapped my hands. The lady of the house saw me and, as she had already heard of me, recognised me and called me in. 'Come in, my son, come in.' She fed me sumptuously saying, 'My boy, I have lost a son. When I see you, you seem just like him. Do come daily like this, my boy.' I subsequently learnt that her name was Muthamma," said Bhagavan.

LEOPARDS AND SNAKES

1st January 1946

THE other day I learnt of one more incident in Bhagavan's life on the hill and so I am writing to you about it. When Bhagavan was living in Virupaksha cave, the roar of a leopard was heard from the place where drinking water was available nearby. By the time the scared devotees had gathered some plates and drums in order to make a noise and drive the leopard away, it had drunk water it required and gone away with one more roar. Bhagavan looked at these frightened devotees and said to them in an admonishing tone, "Why do you worry so much? The leopard intimated to me by the first roar that she was coming here. After drinking water she told me by another roar that she was going. She went her own way. She never meddled with your affairs. Why are you so scared? This mountain is the home of these wild animals, and we are their guests. That being so, is it right on your part to drive them away?" Perhaps with the intention of relieving them of their fears, Bhagavan added, "A number of siddha purushas

live on this mountain. It is perhaps with a desire to see me that they come and go, assuming various shapes. Hence, you see it is not right for you to disturb them."

From that time onwards, the leopard used to come frequently to that place to drink. Whenever the roar was heard, Bhagavan used to say, "There you are! The leopard is announcing her arrival." Then again he used to say, "The leopard announces her departure." In this manner he used to be quite at ease with all the wild animals.

One devotee asked Bhagavan whether it is true that, when living on the mountain, he was friendly with snakes, and one snake crawled over his body, one climbed up his leg and so on. In reply Sri Bhagavan said:

"Yes, it is true. A snake used to come to me in all friendliness. It used to try to crawl on my leg. At its touch my body used to feel as though it was tickled, so I withdrew my leg; that is all. That snake used to come of its own accord and go away".

WON'T YOU PLEASE HEAR MY SPEECHLESS APPEAL?

2nd January 1946

YOU have seen Jagadeeswara Sastri, haven't you? When he was here, a dog used to go into the hall with him. It was a particularly intelligent dog. When Sastri or his wife came into Bhagavan's hall, it used to come in and sit like a well-behaved child and go out along with them. It was very keen on living in the house. People did whatever they could to prevent it entering the hall but it was no use.

Once the old couple entrusted it to somebody when they went to Madras and did not return for 15 days. At first, during the first four or five days, it used to search in the hall, go round the hall, and go about all the places which they used to frequent; and then, having got tired, perhaps disgusted, with those fruitless efforts, one morning at about 10 O'clock, it came to Bhagavan's sofa and stood there, staring fixedly at Bhagavan. At that time I was sitting in the front row. Bhagavan was reading the paper. Krishnaswamy and others tried to send the dog out by threats but in vain. I too asked it to go out. No, it wouldn't move. Bhagavan's attention was diverted by this hubbub and he looked that way. Bhagavan observed for a while the look of the dog and our excitement. He then put the paper aside and, as if he had by his

silence understood the language of the dog, waved his hand towards it and said, "Why, what is the matter? You are asking where your people have gone? Oh, I see, I understand. They have gone to Madras. They will be back in a week. Don't be afraid. Don't be worried. Be calm. It is all right? Now, go."

Hardly had Bhagavan completed his instructions, when the dog turned round and left the place. Soon after that Bhagavan remarked to me, "Do you see that? The dog is asking me where its people have gone and when they are returning. However much the people here tried to send it away it wouldn't move until I answered its questions."

Once, it seems, the lady of the house punished the dog with a cane for something it had done and locked it up in a room for half a day. After it was let out, it came straight to Bhagavan as if to complain against her and stayed at the Asramam without going to their house for four or five days. Bhagavan arranged to feed the dog and admonished the lady thus: "What have you done to the dog? Why is it angry with you? It came and complained to me. Why? What have you done?" Finally she admitted her fault in Bhagavan's presence and, with a good deal of cajoling, got the dog to go home.

A SQUIRREL

3rd January 1946

Do you know how much liberty our brother squirrel has with Bhagavan? Two or three years back, there used to be one very active and mischievous fellow amongst the squirrels. One day it so happened that when he came for food, Bhagavan was reading and otherwise occupied

and so delayed a bit in giving him some. That mischievous fellow would not eat anything unless Bhagavan himself held it to his mouth. Perhaps because of his anger at the delay he abruptly bit Bhagavan's finger, but Bhagavan still offered him food. Bhagavan was amused and said, "You are a naughty creature! You have bit my finger!

I will no longer feed you. Go away ! So saying he stopped feeding the squirrel for some days.

Would that fellow stay quiet ? No, he began begging of Bhagavan for forgiveness by crawling hither and thither. Bhagavan put the nuts on the window sill and on the sofa and told him to help himself. But no, he wouldn't even touch them. Bhagavan pretended to be indifferent and not to notice. But he would crawl up Bhagavan's legs, jump on his body, climb on his shoulders and do ever so many things to attract attention. Then Bhagavan told us all. "Look, this fellow is beg-

ging me to forgive him his mischief in biting my finger and to give up my refusal to feed him with my own hands."

He pushed the squirrel away for some days saying, "Naughty creature ! Why did you bite my finger ? I won't feed you now. That is your punishment. Look, the nuts are there. Eat them all." He would not give up his obstinacy either. Some days passed and Bhagavan had finally to admit defeat because of his mercy towards devotees. It then occurred to me that, that was the way devotees attain salvation through pertinacity.

A PAIR OF PIGEONS

17th January 1946

One morning in or about September or October 1945, a devotee from Bangalore, by name Venkatswami Naidu, brought a pair of pigeons and gave them to the Asramam as an offering. Seeing that, Bhagavan said, "We have to protect them from cats etc. is it not ? Who will look after them ? A cage is required; food must be given. Who will do all that here ? It is better for him to take them away."

The devotee said he would make all the required arrangements and requested that they should be kept in the Asramam. He placed the pair of pigeons in Swamiji's lap. With overflowing affection and love, Bhagavan drew them near him, saying, "Come dears ! Come ! You won't go back ? You wish to stay on here ? All right, stay on; a cage will be coming." As he thus patted them with affection, they remained absolutely quiet, closed their eyes as if they were in samadhi, and stayed on there without moving this way or that. Bhagavan thereupon stopped patting them, and keeping them on his lap and with his gracious eyes fixed on them, sat in silence, deeply immersed in samadhi.

It took nearly an hour for the devotees in the Asramam to find and bring a cage for them. The beauty of it is, all through that one hour, the pigeons sat in Bhagavan's lap without moving this side or that as if they were a pair of Yogis in samadhi. What could we say about their good fortune ? Is it not the result of their punya in previous births that this great sage should seat them on his lap, cajole them, bless them by patting them from the head down to the feet with his hands and thereby bestow on them divine bliss ? Not only that; when the cage was brought in, Bhagavan patted them cajolingly and put them in the cage, saying, "Please go in. Be safe in the cage". Then Bhagavan said, "In Bhagavatham, pigeons also are stated to be in the hierarchy of Gurus, in the chapter relating to Oadu Samvadham. I remember having read that story long back."

While the pigeons were in his lap, one devotee came and asked: "What is this ?" Bhagavan said, without attachment but assuming responsibility, "Who knows ? They come and decline to go back. They say they will stay on here only. Another family has come on me, as if what I already have is not enough."

Dear Brother, it is very interesting to witness these strange happenings. It is said that in olden days Emperor Bharatha renounced the world, and performed great tapas (meditation) but towards the end of his life, he thought of his domestic deer and so was born a deer in his next life. In Vendanta sastras, in Bharatham and Ehaṅavatham, there are many stories like this. Bhagavan had told us long back. "Any living being comes to me only to work out the balance of its karma. So don't prevent anyone from coming to me." When I looked at those pigeons,

it occurred to me that they might be great saints who had fallen from their austerity in meditation; otherwise how could they get on to the lap of Bhagavan, a privilege which is impossible to get for ordinary people? In Canto V of Bhagavatham there is a verse which says that people born in Bharatavarsha are blessed, since Hari has come there a number of times as an avatar and blesses them by His precepts, help and guidance. The above incident is an illustration of this, is it not? What do you say?

BABY CHEETAHS

18th January 1946

About a year ago, some person who was rearing two baby cheetahs, brought them into Bhagavan's presence. When they were fondled by being given milk, not only did they move freely amongst the people in the hall, but they got on to the sofa with Bhagavan's welcome and slept soundly thereon. One of the Asramam devotees took a photo of that unusual group. From about 1 to 3 p.m., Bhagavan confined himself to one end of the sofa keeping the cubs on the sofa in the same position all the time. They got up afterwards, and were there till about 4 p.m., moving about freely in the hall. Once again, before Bhagavan went up the hill at the usual time, photos were taken with the cheetah cubs on the sofa and also on the table in front of the sofa. They were published in the 'Sunday Times' later.

The wonder of it was that even the cheetah cubs lay down happily on the sofa, overpowered by sleep induced by the touch of Bhagavan's hands. While they were there, the squirrels came and ate nuts and the sparrows came and ate broken rice, as usual. In olden days, when animals and birds of all sorts moved about together without enmity in any place, people

used to think that it was perhaps a Rishi Asramam. They are stories related in the puranas. But here we see the same thing before our very eyes. When I read out to Bhagavan yesterday's story about the pigeons, and the worship of the cow, Bhagavan said, "Many similar things often happened here previously. But who was there to record them at the time?"

When the first edition of this book* came out and was being read in the presence of Bhagavan, one of the devotees who heard the above story said, addressing him, "Is it a fact that when you were in Pachiamman Koil, somebody got frightened and ran away from an approaching tiger there?" Bhagavan said, "Yes, yes! When I was there, Rangaswami Iyengar used to come off and on. One day, when he went to answer calls of nature it seems he saw a tiger in a bush. When he tried to drive her away by shouting, she replied by a mild roar. His body shook with terror and getting up involuntarily from where he sat, he began running towards me, grasping for breath, shouting, at the top of his voice, "Oh, Bhagavan! Ramana! Ramana! I happened to come out for some work and so met him. When I asked him what all his fright was about, he said imploringly, 'Ayyo, tiger, tiger!

Come, Swami, we shall get into the temple and close all the doors, otherwise she will come in. Why don't you come?" I said, laughing, 'Let us wait and see. Where is the tiger? It is nowhere.' Pointing towards the bush he said, 'There it is in that bush.' I said, 'You wait here. I shall go and see.' When I went there and saw, there was no tiger. Even so, he could not shed his fear. I assured him that it was a mild animal and there was no need to be afraid but he would not believe me. Another day, while I was sitting on

the edge of the tank opposite the temple, that tiger came to drink water, and without any fear, roamed about for a while looking at me, and went its way. Iyengar, however, observed all this, hiding himself in the temple. He was afraid of what might happen to me. After the tiger left, I went into the temple and relieved him of his fear saying, 'Look ! What a mild animal it is ! If we threaten it, it will attack us. Not otherwise.' I thus dispelled his fears. We too were not there for long after that," said Bhagavan.

THE BLACK COW

27th April 1946

For the last three days the black cow in the Gosala was suffering from some ailment, so she was tied to a tree near the shed built for the calves. Though she was suffering for three days, Bhagavan did not go to that side to see her. Yesterday she was in the last throes of death. Though she was suffering like that since morning, she did not breathe her last till 5 p.m. Bhagavan got up at 4-45 p.m. to go behind the Gosala as usual. While returning, he turned towards the place where that cow was, stopped at the shed constructed for the calves and watched for a while her agony. As Bhagavan is the embodiment of kindness, it is natural that his heart should melt with pity. He favoured the cow with a look of deliverance from bondage, came back and sat as usual on the sofa.

After his benign look fell upon her, the *jiva* remained in the body for only five minutes. It was waiting and waiting for his benevolent look and as soon as that was obtained, it left the body. It is said that if a person can think of God at the time of death, that person gets freed from bondage. How fortunate should that cow be that she could get freed from bondage at the time of her death by Bhagavan's holy and benevolent look ! Bhagavan told us several times that though several animals suffered for days together, it never used to occur to him to look at them and that in some cases, it suddenly occurred to him to look at them in their agonies of death. He added that in such cases, the animals pass away peacefully immediately after. I have just seen an instance of this.

AN UNKNOWN DEVOTEE

16th August 1946

Amongst the letters received by the Asram today, there was one in English from an unknown devotee from Czechoslovakia. Seeing it Bhagavan affectionately told us all about it and had it read out in the hall. The gist of it is: "Though my body is actually at a great distance from Arunachala, it is at the feet of Bha-

gavan from a spiritual view point. I believe that fifty years will be completed by this 1st of September from the time when the little Ramana reached Tiruvannamalai. I seek your permission to celebrate the occasion in the belief that it is the real birthday of Bhagavan. I shall celebrate the festival with an endeavour to submerge my mind in the dust of the feet of Bhagavan with

limitless devotion, faith and regard, and with my heart dwelling on Bhagavan's voice."

While all of us were expressing our delight on hearing the contents of that letter, Bhagavan said with a face radiant with benevolence, "We do not know who he is, and what his name and his native place are. He never came here. How has he managed to know that it is full fifty years since I came here? He has written a letter full of devotion. From what he has written, it looks as if he has read about my life and understood it. Devotees have been looking forward to an

article from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, but it has not been received so far. If received, it is the intention of these people to print it as the very first article. When S. Doraiswamy was asked, he said, 'Oh no. I cannot do it. I prefer to be silent.' D. S. Sastri also said the same thing. This letter has come unexpectedly. That is how things happen. These people are awaiting articles from others, especially from Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. See the peculiarity! Where is Czechoslovakia and where is Tiruvannamalai? What are we to say when a person who has never seen me has written thus?"

ANECDOTES REGARDING LIFE AT VIRUPAKSHA CAVE

25th January 1947

Vasudeva Sastry who used to look after the routine work while Bhagavan was in Virupaksha cave, came to the Asramam the other day and sat down in the presence of Bhagavan. After the preliminary enquiries about mutual welfare, Bhagavan told us that it was this Sastry who started the *Jayanthi* celebrations. A devotee asked, "Is he the person who got frightened, and hid when a tiger appeared?" "Yes. It is he," Bhagavan replied, "During our stay in Virupaksha cave, we were all seated on the front verandah one night when a tiger appeared in the valley below. We put a lantern outside the railings of the verandah as we thought that the tiger would not approach us because of the light. Sastry however was very afraid. He therefore crept into the cave and asked us also to do likewise: but we refused. After entering the cave, he bolted the iron-barred door and from there tried to frighten the tiger, like a great warrior, saying, "Look! If you come this way, take care. Take care of what I will do. Yes! What do you think! Bhagavan is here! Take care." All these heroics were from inside the cave and were like those of

Uttarakumara (in the *Mahabharata* story). The tiger loitered about for a while and then went its own way. Sastry then ventured to come out—"a very brave man indeed," said Bhagavan.

Sastry took up the thread of the conversation and said, "That was not the only occasion. Another time, in broad daylight, Swamiji and I were seated on a rock outside the cave. In the valley below, a tiger and a leopard were playing with each other and Bhagavan was smiling as he watched the friendly movements of the two animals. I was however in a terrible fright and requested Bhagavan to come into the cave. He was adamant and sat there motionless. As for myself, I sought the shelter of the cave. The two animals played about for a while, looked at Swamiji, in the same way as pets do, and without any fear or expression of anger, went their own way, one going up the hill and the other down. When I came out of the cave and asked, "Swamiji, weren't you afraid when the two animals were playing about so close to you?" Bhagavan said with a smile, "Why have fear? I knew as I saw them that, after a while, one of them would go up the hill and the other down.

And they did. If we get frightened and say, 'Oh! A tiger!', they will also get frightened and say, 'Oh! A man!' and will rush forward to kill us. If we do not have that fear, they too will not have any fear, and will then move about freely and peacefully." "In spite of all that Bhagavan said to me," Sastry added. "my fear never left me."

"It was Sastry who embraced me and wept when my heart stopped beating," said Bhagavan and narrated the incident thus. "One day I went to the tank in front of Pachiamman Koil with Vasu and others for a bath, and we were returning by a short cut, when as we approached the tortoise rock, I felt tired and giddy and so sat down on the rock. My experience at that time have been recorded in my biography,* as you all know," said Bhagavan. Taking up the thread of the conversation, Sastry said: "Yes. While all else stood at a distance weeping, I suddenly embraced him. I was a bachelor at the time and had the liberty to do so. No one else used to touch Swami's body. He was in that state for about ten minutes, I think, and then gained consciousness. I jumped about with joy. 'Why this weeping? You thought I was dead? If I am to die, will I not tell you before hand?' Bhagavan said, consoling us."

* Relative extracts from the biography are given below:

The tortoise rock was a huge boulder lying in the way. Bhagavan's experiences near that rock were narrated by him in these words:

"Suddenly the view of nature in front of me disappeared and got covered up like a sheet of white cloth. But the disappearance of one, and the appearance of the other was gradual so that part of the one and part of the other appeared before me the same time. But soon after, the view

of nature disappeared completely and I stopped walking. I resumed the walk as the sight of the whiteness disappeared completely. It happened a second time and my physical weakness increased. I had therefore to lean on the tortoise rock for support. As it happened again a third time, I sat on the rock. All around me was the view of the white cloth. My head was reeling. The circulation of blood and the beating of the heart stopped, and my body began to get dark in colour, same as what happens to a dead body, and as that slowly increased, Vasu thought that I was really dead and began to weep, and embraced me. The change in my body's colour, Vasu's embrace, the shivering of his body, and the talks of the others around me — I was conscious of all these. I was also conscious of my hands and feet getting chill, and the stopping of the beats of my heart, but I had no fear in me. The flow of my thoughts and the consciousness of my self were not lost and I was not worried about my body's condition. I sat cross-legged in the *padmasanam* pose. I was not leaning on the rock behind. The circulation of blood stopped but the *Asanabandha* (sitting posture) remained intact. All that lasted for about fifteen minutes."

"Suddenly energy permeated throughout my body. The circulation of blood and the beating of the heart commenced. The black colour of my body disappeared. I began to perspire profusely from all pores in my body. I opened my eyes, got up and said, 'Come on. Let us go.' We then reached the Virupaksha Cave without any further incidents. Only on that occasion did my heart and breath stop functioning at the same time. I did not bring the state on me wantonly; nor was it a desire on my part to see how the body would like after death. I had such experiences before. It was more virulent that time. That is all."

AADARANA (Regard)

10th February 1947

At noon today three French ladies arrived here by car from Pondicherry; one was the Governor's wife, another the Secretary's wife and the third was someone connected with them. They rested for a while after food and reached the hall by about 4-30 p.m. Two of them could not sit on the floor and they sat on the window sill opposite to Bhagavan; the third somehow managed to sit on the floor. They took leave of Bhagavan at about 3 p.m. and left. When I saw them I remembered some other incidents connected with the visit of an American lady to the Asramam, how she sat with legs stretched out, and was advised by the inmates of the Asramam not to do so, how Bhagavan admonished them by narrating the stories of Avvayar and Namdev. I wrote to you about all that long back. I shall now write to you two more incidents of similar type.

About ten months ago, an old European lady came here along with another European called Frydman and stayed here for about twenty days. She was not accustomed to squatting on the ground because of her Western style of living. Besides, she was old. So she used to suffer considerably, being unable to sit down, and if she sat down finding it difficult to get up. The gentleman used to help her to get up, by holding her hand. One day when I reached the hall by about 8 a.m. I found them both seated in the front row in the space allotted for ladies. The other ladies were hesitating to sit nearby, and so I signed to him to move a bit further away, which he did immediately. Bhagavan got annoyed and looked at me but I did not at the time know why. I was standing near the sofa talking to somebody. Frydman suddenly got up and also

helped her to get up; her eyes were filled with tears and most reluctantly she took leave of Bhagavan. Bhagavan as usual nodded his head in token of permission. As soon as they left, Bhagavan looked at me and said, "It is a pity they are going away." I felt that I had committed a great crime and said, "I am sorry. I did not know they were leaving." Bhagavan felt that I had realised my mistake and that I was repenting for it and so said, "No. It is not that. They suffer a lot if they sit on the ground. That is why so many who are anxious to come here stay away. They are not accustomed to squat. What can they do? It is a great pity."

Some time ago, a very poor old lady came here one morning with her relatives. All except she made their *pranams* to Bhagavan and sat down. She however remained standing. Krishna-swamy, the attendant, requested her to sit down but she did not do so. Her relatives called her to come away but she did not do that either. I too advised her to go to them and sit down but she did not take any notice. Someone there said, admonishing her, "Why don't you listen to the advice of all the people here?" I looked at her relatives to find out the reason of her obstinacy. They said that she was almost blind and so wanted to go near Swami to see him at close quarters. I got up, took her hand and led her to the sofa where Bhagavan was seated. Shading intently and said, "Swami! I can't see properly. Please bless me that I may be enabled to see you in my mind." With looks full of tenderness, Bhagavan nodded his head by way of assent saying, "All right."

As soon as they left, Bhagavan told us, "The poor lady can't see properly and so is afraid of coming near to see me. What can she do? She merely stood there. To those who have

no eyes, the mind is the eye. They have only one sight, that of the mind, and not many other sights to distract their attention. Only the

mind should get concentration; when once that is obtained they are much better than us.' What a mild and soothing admonition !

SELF (Atman)

25th February 1947

This morning a Gujarati lady arrived from Bombay, with her husband and children. She was middle-aged, and from her face she appeared to be a cultured lady. The husband wore khaddar, and therefore appeared to be a congressman. They seemed respectable people, the way they conducted themselves. They all gathered in the Hall by about 10 a.m., after finishing their bath etc. From their attitude it could be seen that they intended to ask some questions. Within fifteen minutes or so they began asking as follows:

Lady: Bhagavan! How can one attain the Self?

Bhagavan: Why should you attain the Self?

Lady: For SHANTI (peace).

Bhagavan: So! Is that it? Then there is what is called peace, is there?

Lady: Yes! There is.

Bhagavan: All right! And you know that you should attain it. How do you know? To know that, you must have experienced it at some time or other. It is only when one knows that sugar cane is sweet, that one wishes to have some. Similarly, you must have experienced peace. You experience it now and then. Otherwise, why this longing for peace? In fact we find every human being is longing similarly for peace, peace of some kind. It is therefore obvious that peace is the real thing, the reality; call that 'shanti', 'soul', or 'Paramatma' or 'Self' — whatever you like. We all want it, don't we?

Lady: Yes ! But how to attain it ?

Bhagavan: What is to be said if some one asks for something which he has already got? If it is anything to be brought from somewhere, effort is required. But what has been brought on is the mind and its activities. What you have to do is to get rid of that.

Lady: Is living in seclusion necessary for *sadhana*? or is it enough if we merely discard all worldly pleasures? Bhagavan merely answered the second part of the question by saying, 'renunciation means internal renunciation and not external,' and kept silent.

The dinner gong sounded from the dining hall.

What can Bhagavan reply to the earlier part of the last question of this lady who has a large family? She is also educated, and cultured. Bhagavan used to speak similarly to householders; and there is a ring of appropriateness about it. After all, is internal or mental renunciation so easy as all that? That is why Bhagavan merely replied that renunciation means internal renunciation and not external. Perhaps the next question would have been, "what is meant by 'internal renunciation'?" and there would have been a reply if the dinner gong had not intervened and the gathering dispersed. I returned to my abode where I lived a lonely life. You see God has allotted to each individual what is apt and appropriate.

Did Bhagavan ever ask me, "Why are you living alone?" Or did he mention it to anybody else? Never. If you ask why?, it is because this is appropriate to the conditions of my life.

BIRTH

27th February 1947

Yesterday a lady devotee showed Bhagavan her notebook in which she had copied out the five verses of '*Ekatma Panchakam*'. Bhagavan saw in that note-book two verses composed by him for his devotees when they first started celebrating his birthday, and told us the following incident:

"On one of my birthdays while I was in Virupaksha cave, probably in 1912, those around me insisted on cooking food and eating it there as a celebration of the occasion. I tried to dissuade them, but they took no notice. They rebelled saying, 'What harm does it do to Swamiji, if we cook our food and eat it here?' I therefore left it at that. Immediately after that they purchased some vessels. Those vessels are still here. What began as a small function has resulted in all this paraphernalia and pomp. Everything must take its own course, and will not stop at our request. I told them at great length, but they did not listen. When the cooking and eating were over, Iswaraswamy who used to be with me in those days, said, 'Swamiji! This is your birthday. Please compose two verses and I too will compose two.' It was then that I composed these two verses which I find in the note-book here. They run as follows:

(1) You would intend to celebrate the birthday, first ascertain as to whence you were born. The day that we attain a place in that everlasting

life which is beyond the reach of births and deaths is our real birthday.

(2) Even on these birthdays, that occur once a year, we ought to lament that we have got this body and fallen into this world. Instead we celebrate the event with a feast. To rejoice over it is like decorating a corpse. Wisdom consists in realising the Self and in getting absorbed therein.

"This is the purport of those verses. It appears that it is a custom amongst a certain section of people of Malabar to weep when a child is born in the house and celebrate a death with drums, pipes, etc. Really one should lament having left one's real state, and taken birth again in this world, and not celebrate it as a festive occasion." I asked, "But what did Iswaraswamy write?" "Oh! He! He wrote, praising me as an *Avatar* (incarnation of God) and all that. That was a pastime with him in those days. He used to compose one verse and in return I used to compose one, and so on, we wrote many verses, but nobody took the trouble to preserve them. Most of the time we two were alone in those days; there were no facilities for food etc. Who would stay? Nowadays all facilities are provided, and so many people are gathering around me and sitting here. But what was there in those days? If any visitors came, they used to stay for a little while, and then go away. That was all."

On my request to give me a Telugu translation of those birthday verses, he wrote one and gave it to me.