

At the Feet of Bhagavan

Leaves from the Diary of
T. K. SUNDARESA IYER

Edited by

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PREFACE

Sri Bhagavan, while defining what *Upadesa* is, says: “*Upadesa* means showing a distant object quite near. Brahman (God), which the disciple believes to be distant and different from himself, is near and not different from himself.”

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi’s life itself is *Upadesa*. His every action, His every movement was the eternal *Upadesa* — the Golden Silence. Though His written teachings are themselves standing monuments of Truth, yet, for those who could not have direct access to His teachings through the privilege of living with the Master — what is the next best recourse?

The seeker if sincere and earnest to tread the direct path of *Vichara* as taught by Sri Ramana, will find it easier to attach himself to the older devotees who have lived with the Master and directly imbibed His words of nectar. Thus the writings and reminiscences of older devotees of Sri Bhagavan assume great importance.

Precious indeed are the records left by those to whom the Master showed His Grace. Fortunately for us, such sincere devotees have come forward to share their experiences with their Master, by putting them down in words. Posterity owes a deep debt to the blessed memory of these old devotees.

It is my proud privilege to write about my teacher, Sri T.K. Sundaresa Iyer. He was not only a *bhakta* of the highest order but also an erudite scholar, though he did not possess any academic qualifications. His knowledge of English, Sanskrit and of course Tamil, was vast and deep. Added to these, Sri T.K.S., as he was addressed affectionately by all, acted as an interpreter to English-speaking visitors in their conversations with Sri Bhagavan. He also replied to correspondence received by the Ashram on spiritual matters, consulting Sri Bhagavan every time he had to reply to specific spiritual questions. Thus he acquired a full and comprehensive knowledge of Sri Bhagavan's teachings which have been incorporated in this book. His reminiscences of the Master portray the beauty, tenderness and compassion of Sri Bhagavan's personality. The narration of Sri Bhagavan taking care of the cracked egg is, perhaps, the standing example for this. His language is simple but in content its richness does not lag behind any similar spiritual literature.

Sri T.K.S.'s life itself is a dedication to the spiritual quest and as such, is worth emulating by earnest seekers. He paid his first visit to Sri Bhagavan in 1908. Having once seen Him, he became His ardent devotee. He was also one of those captivated by the magnetic personality of Sri Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni. When the Muni left for Belgaum in 1926 he remained in Tiruvannamalai and practically made the Ashram his home. Although materially poor, Sri Sundaresa Iyer had ample spiritual wealth, which he shared with fellow-devotees, devoting much of his time

in service to the Ashram. For quite a while before his death he remained permanently in the Ashram precincts, as a living example of humility and devotion. In February of 1965, after being a close devotee of Sri Bhagavan for nearly fifty years, at the age of 68, he passed away peacefully, conscious to the very end, in Sri Ramana Nagar, thus ending a lifetime with Bhagavan.

He has helped many seekers, including myself, in clarifying the path of Ramana. There are still many who would unhesitatingly express their deep debt to Sri T.K.S. for their spiritual maturity. I can, without hesitation, affirm that he was not only a *Rishi* in appearance but also in experience.

By odd circumstances the manuscript of this book, which was so well edited by no less a scholar-devotee than Mr. Duncan Greenlees, as far back as December 1962, was lost in the Ashram archives. It was brought to light recently, thanks to Sri Jim Grant and Sri David Godman, who are doing yeoman service by classifying the Ashram archives and rearranging the whole Ashram Library.

Now it is available to every one of us. I treat this as an act of Sri Bhagavan's Grace! I request fellow-devotees and earnest seekers to possess this book and thereby benefit themselves spiritually.

September 1, 1980
 Holy Day of Sri Bhagavan's
 Advent at Arunachala

V. GANESAN
 Managing Editor
The Mountain Path
 Sri Ramanasramam

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PART ONE

GURU'S GRACE

1. INTRODUCTION

BY T. K. SUNDARESA IYER

'A LIFETIME WITH BHAGAVAN'

IN 1908, when I was 12 years old, Bhagavan was still in Virupaksha Cave. My cousin, Krishnamurthy, used to go to Bhagavan every day and sing songs of devotion and worship before him. One day I asked him where he went daily. He told me: "The Lord of the Hill Himself is sitting there in human form. Why don't you come with me?" I too climbed the hill and found Bhagavan sitting on a stone slab, with about ten devotees around him. Each would sing a song. Bhagavan turned to me and asked, "Well, won't you sing a song?" One of Sundaramurthy's songs came to my mind and I sang it. Its meaning was: "No other support I have except Thy Holy Feet. By holding on to them, I shall win your grace. Great men sing your praise, Oh Lord. Grant that my tongue may repeat Thy Name even when my mind strays." "Yes, that is what must be done," said Bhagavan, and I took it to be his teaching for me. From that time on I went to him regularly for several years, never missing a day.

One day I wondered why I was visiting him at all. What was the use? There seemed to be no inner advancement. Going up the hill was meaningless toil. I decided to end my visits on the hill. For one hundred days exactly I did not see Bhagavan. On the hundred and first day I could suffer no longer and ran to Skandasramam, above Virupaksha Cave. Bhagavan saw me climbing, got up and came forward to meet me. When I fell at his feet, I could not restrain myself and burst out in tears. I clung to them and would not get up. Bhagavan pulled me up and asked: "It is over three months since I saw you. Where were you?" I told him how I thought that seeing him was of no use. "All right," he said, "maybe it is of no use, so what? You felt the loss, did you not?" Then I understood that we did not go to him for profit, but because away from him there was no life for us.

Whenever I went up the hill to see Bhagavan, I used to buy something to eat and take it with me as an offering. One day I had no money. I stood before Bhagavan in a dejected mood and said: "This poor man has brought nothing." Bhagavan looked at me enquiringly and remarked: "Why you brought the main thing. All else is unimportant." I wondered, not knowing what I brought. "Don't you understand? You brought yourself," laughed Bhagavan!

Years passed. I was married and led a well-ordered family life as laid down in the scriptures, studying the Vedas, worshipping ancestors and deities in the prescribed way, and feeding the five kinds of living beings. I was

associated with political and religious activities and used to go from village to village teaching the *Periya Puranam*; but I would find time to visit Bhagavan quite often.

About 1920 Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni came to reside at Tiruvannamalai. Everyone used to address him as 'Nayana' (father). He was already a dear disciple of Bhagavan. He became the president of the Tiruvannamalai Town Congress Committee. From my early days I was in Tilak's movement and did not see much future in Mahatma Gandhi's programme. One day I said to Nayana: "I do not expect much from political activities; without God's grace no action will prosper. To ask for grace is our main task. People like you, who are blessed with grace in abundance, should use your spiritual powers for the uplift of the world and liberation of the country and not waste your time on speeches." He liked the idea and asked me to stay with him and pray to God for grace. He made me study the Vedas and taught me verses from the Rig-Veda, with their meaning. Mahendra Societies were started all over India and I was made the General Secretary. Their object was to win freedom for our country by purely devotional means, like rituals, prayers, and personal and collective penance. We managed to register about ten thousand members.

Nayana mainly stayed in the Mango Tree Cave on Arunachala and used to visit Bhagavan off and on. Nayana used to discuss shastras with him and get his doubts cleared. He was a mighty scholar, while Bhagavan was just literate, yet he would say: "Without Bhagavan's grace, the

intricacies of the scriptures are beyond one's power of understanding. One word from him makes everything clear." When Nayana would see someone sitting in front of Bhagavan, meditating with his eyes closed, he would scold the devotee, saying: "When the Sun is shining in front of you, why do you need to close your eyes? Are you serious or do you want only to show what a pious fellow you are?" Those were happy days indeed, and I was blessed with many visions of deities and divinities.

At Skandasramam a peacock would follow Bhagavan everywhere. One day a huge black cobra appeared in the Ashram and the peacock attacked it fiercely. The cobra spread its hood and the two natural enemies were poised for a fight to the death, when Bhagavan came quite near the cobra and said: "Why did you come here? That peacock will kill you. Better go away at once." The cobra immediately lowered its hood and slithered away.

In 1929 I got tired of the relative shapelessness of my inner life and asked Bhagavan to give me some clear instructions as to what direction I should proceed in my spiritual practice. He gave me *Kaivalyam* to read and explained to me the inner meaning of some sacred verses. From that time on I gave myself completely to spiritual life. I did my duty at school and supported my family, just as something that had to be done, but it was of no importance to me. It was wonderful how I could keep so detached for so many years; it was all Bhagavan's Grace.

One Amavasya (new moon day) all the Ashram inmates were sitting down for breakfast in the dining

room. I was standing and looking on. Bhagavan asked me to sit down for breakfast. I said that I had to perform my late father's ceremony on that day and would eat nothing (Usually the ceremonies are done to enable the ancestors to go to heaven). Bhagavan retorted that my father was already in heaven and there was nothing more to be done for him. My taking breakfast would not hurt him in any way. I still hesitated, accustomed as I was to age-old tradition. Bhagavan got up, made me sit down and eat some rice cakes. From that day I gave up performing ceremonies for ancestors.

Once Chinnaswami got very cross with me and I felt quite nervous about it. I could not eat my dinner and the next morning, feeling unreconciled and yet hungry, I told Bhagavan, who was preparing rice cakes, that I was in a hurry to go to town as some pupils were waiting for me. "The cat is out of the bag," said Bhagavan. "Today is Sunday and there is no teaching work for you. Come, I have prepared a special sambar for breakfast and I shall make you taste it. Take your seat." So saying, he brought a leaf, spread it before me, heaped it with iddilies and sambar and, sitting by my side, started cutting jokes and telling funny stories to make me forget my woes. How great was Bhagavan's compassion!

My wife used to prepare some food every afternoon and bring it to the Ashram. Bhagavan often asked her to break this habit, but she would not. One day he said: "This is the last time I am eating your food. Next time I shall not." The same day Bhagavan was telling us how a

certain dish should be prepared. The next day my wife brought it all ready. Bhagavan remembered what he had told her, but what could he do against her imploring look? He tasted her food and said that it had been prepared very well. Such was his gracious courtesy to his devotees.

My second son was lazy and not at all good at school. The time for his final high school examinations was rapidly approaching and the boy's sole preparation was the purchase of a new fountain pen! He brought it to Bhagavan and asked him to bless the pen with his touch so that it would write the examination papers well. Bhagavan knew his lazy ways and said that having hardly studied, he could not expect to pass. My son replied that Bhagavan's blessings were more effective than studies. Bhagavan laughed, wrote a few words with the new pen and gave it back to him. And the boy did pass, which was a miracle indeed!

In those days I was attending to the foreign correspondence of the Ashram. I used to show Bhagavan the draft of every reply, get his approval, give it the final shape and despatch it. We used to receive some very intelligent and intricate questions. These questions and the answers would have formed a very enlightening volume.¹

Once I got a job offer in another town which carried a good pay. I intimated my consent and received an appointment order by wire. I showed the wire to Bhagavan. "All right, go," he said. Even before I left the

¹ Some of these have been included in Part Three, under the title: 'Questions and Answers'.

hall, I felt gloom settling over me and I started shivering and complained in my grief: “Forty years I have been with Bhagavan and now I am going away. What shall I do away from Bhagavan?”

“How long have you been with Bhagavan?” Bhagavan asked.

“Forty years.”

Then, turning to the devotees, Bhagavan said, “Here is someone who has been listening to my teaching for forty years and now says he is going somewhere away from Bhagavan!” Nevertheless, the job fell through.

Once I wrote two verses in Tamil, one in praise of the Lord without attributes, the other of the Lord with numberless forms. In the latter I wrote: “From whom grace is flowing over the sentient and insentient.” Bhagavan asked me to change one letter and this altered the meaning to: “who directs his grace to the sentient and the insentient.” The idea was that grace was not a mere influence but could be directed with a purpose where it was needed most.

Bhagavan gave us a tangible demonstration of God’s omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Our sense of ‘I’ would burn up in wonder and adoration on seeing his unconditional love for all beings. Though outwardly we seemed to remain very much the same person, inwardly he was working on us and destroying the deep roots of separateness and self-concern. A day always comes when the tree of ‘I’, severed from its roots, crashes suddenly and is no more, this is Guru’s Grace!

2. THE MAHARSHI'S GREATNESS

BHAGAVAN Sri Ramana Maharshi's greatness needs no recapitulation here. He was a knower (*Jnani*) by birth, like Suka and Vamadeva. In His teens He woke up to the reality of the Self not apart from the Divine (*Brahman*) — the Fourth State — *turiya*; the shock of death brought it about. The Grace of Minakshi and Arunachala were there and showed Him that State. He was drawn to Arunachala, the mountain-magnet attracting souls to It; there He shone as Dakshinamurti, by explanation through Silence proclaiming the Divine Reality; He shone as the One Self that projects from Himself both Maya and the world. In His Presence, peace and the experience of nectar were enjoyed by all beings, including birds and beasts. For almost forty years His soothing voice, silvery radiance and golden touch were the solace of thousands and thousands of pilgrims from East and West.

He shed His physical frame in 1950, but He Himself ever IS — in His transcendental state. Even though we can no longer hear that voice or see that shining face, we find ever more as the long years roll by that He is still with us in our midst, still able to guide His pupils who come to Him from distant places to the Light of true and eternal wisdom. There is nought that is not He. Let us put aside the ego, or surrender it to Him, and He will fill us with His being and sweeten our lives, helping us to be He Himself.

3. A VOICE FROM THE HILL OF THE HOLY BEACON

A certain Mysorean, well-built and short in stature, presents himself before Sri Bhagavan and puts a question on a familiar yet enigmatic subject. He asks: “Bhagavan, what is this thing they call ‘*Guru-kripa*’ (Guru’s grace)?” All the devotees sitting there are expectantly watchful for the answer that will come from the statue-like figure seated on the divan, utterly unswayed by the happenings around Him, with His eyes gazing into somewhere — the depths of which we know not — with an expression whose simple placidity catches even those with a superior air of their own. Unassuming He is, yet His authority tells; naked in every sense of the word, yet He is clothed in all that is wholly divine; poor, yet possessing and claiming by right all the Cosmos as His own; simple, yet a problem and a marvel for all who come to study Him. He is the One Man to whom real India, nurtured on her glorious traditions of the great past, looks for light and life.

This Sage of Arunagiri was one who burned His boats even at the age of seventeen, while He was a student in Madurai. This was so that He might be drowned in the Ocean of Arunachala and dissolved in It, so that there might be no trace of His little ‘self’ and He be only the One Self that is, was, and shall ever be. This is to Him

‘Arunachala’ — the one resplendent and immutable Truth, which is the substratum of all that is, was and shall be. For *aruna* means red, radiant, and *achalam*, the changeless rock-bottom of Truth. To Him life in the wakeful stage is as good as a moment of dream. According to Him, the one problem of life is how to wake from this perennial dream. For when we awaken from life’s dream, aware of the One Seer and of all that passes before His gaze, painful and pleasurable, we shall abide ever as the unaffected witness, immortal and infinite.

What is the Guru’s Grace? Well, this is exactly the word that awakens us from this dream life of ours, to which we cling so hard until the tiger of death pounces on us and proves that it is ephemeral, unreal.

What is this wonderful power the True Guru holds? Man is accustomed to dope himself in sorrow with more and more palliatives; so he finds the more he tries to escape from the quagmire, the deeper into it he is drawn. Out of sheer despair, he goes to some Enlightened Man and asks for help.

The Master says: “You feel unhappy because you do not know your Self”.

“How strange!” thinks the bewildered soul. “Do I not know myself? Here I am, and yet I am in sorrow!”

“But sorrow and wandering is not your real nature,” the Illuminate replies, “really you are Being and Blissfulness.”

“How so?” asks the yet more bewildered soul.

With one meaningful look the Master sees deep into the soul of the enquirer. And lo! What a trance of joy,

what a blissful existence, and what a calm this is! The agitated soul is stilled, silent; he sits and sits and sits. Gazing at the Master before him the minutes and hours are hardly noticed gliding softly away. In this way days and months are condensed into a few moments of blissful life. The wanderer has found his harbour; he is all new life and light, so he swears, "For eternity I shall not part from my Master, who is my All!"

Well, for a time he keeps to his resolve. But then the "I" followed by the thought of "mine", the remnants of his petty being, the past accumulation of tendencies (*vasanas*), all pull him back with all their force and tear him from his Master's bosom.

He slides back again into the very dream of life which he had come to abhor. Now he is neither of the world, nor of eternity. Being entrapped by the world's forces, yet unable to be in harmony with them he returns to his Master for proper guidance in his conduct of worldly affairs. The Master is only too pleased to give him all the help he needs in order to free himself from the meshes that have once again entangled him. The poor man finds that he has to fondle and hug once again the very dolls he formerly abhorred. But the more he does so, the more they burn him, make him a prisoner; he can neither give them up, nor escape from their clutches. It is like the proverbial monkey with a cobra in its hand, or the ant between two fires. He is only waiting for the least opportunity to wind up his business here and slip away into oblivion, so that he may once and for ever return to the calm of his Master's presence.

He has indeed come there; but now he finds himself utterly unfit to receive that soothing solace from the Master which was formerly his. The mind and the senses, by their recent association in the things of the world, have so completely exteriorised him that 'diving in' has become for him a matter of the past, he can do it no more. So much is this so, that he has now to sell himself, so that in the proximity of the Divine and through It's Grace, the rebellious and discordant elements of his being may all be harmonised, life that was formerly so dear to him becoming worthless if not for surrender to the Master in absolute self-abnegation.

Now the Master speaks: "People think the Master is confined in a human frame, but it is not so; His existence and presence are universal, cosmic, because He is the True Guru (*sad-guru*) and Truth (*sat*) as such is not a newly discoverable entity. He has always been there with you even while you were undergoing all the pangs of existence. In fact, I am the 'I' in you; you and I have never been apart, nor ever can be. But you, with your separate 'I' and its exclusive and warring interests, could not know Me, much less feel Me. Now that that 'I' in you has dropped away, I alone live in you." This is the meaning of *Tattvamasi* ("That thou art"), and this is the meaning and the function of the Guru's Grace.

PART TWO

REMINISCENCES

4. SRI RAMANA GIVES RAMA-DARSAN

IT was in 1908 I first contacted Sri Ramana Maharshi, then in the Virupaksha Cave, when I was a boy of twelve. Had you seen Him in those days, you would hardly have taken Him for a mere human being. His figure was a statue of burnished gold. He simply sat and sat, and rarely spoke. The words He spoke on any day could easily be counted. He was an enchanting personality, who shed a captivating lustre on all, and a life-giving current flowed from Him, charging all those nearby, while His sparkling eyes irrigated those around Him with the nectar of His Being.

Peace, peace, peace. Now you have lost your individuality in Him; He absorbs you, is your all, is the All. I remember, how well! the first song I sang before Him at that time; it was the famous *Namasivayapadikam*, commencing “*Matrupatrenakkinri*”, the gift of the great Saint Sri Sundaramurti Swamigal. From then on He had me linked inseparably to Himself. I know one and only one thing, and that is that He alone exists as the Divine, and all else has only the appearance of existence, but in reality is not.

I never had to leave Tiruvannamalai after my nineteenth year. Sri Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni was at that time in Tiruvannamalai; his *Vaidika Sabha* Society was very active, and he gave a series of discourses on the

Vedas. His magnetic personality and exposition of the greatness of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi so deeply impressed me that I decided to study the Vedas at his feet, and was gladly accepted as a student. He was then living in the Mango-Tree Cave below the Virupaksha Cave on the Hill. Eight years I studied the Scriptures under him; daily we visited the Maharshi together and enjoyed the benefit of His presence.

After the Maharshi's mother, Alagammal, passed away, Sri Maharshi came down the Hill, and the present Ashram came into being. Sri Kavyakanta and his pupils would come down to the Maharshi's abode, when there would be memorable and scintillating discussions. When the Muni was in the Hall, Sri Maharshi could be seen in the full bloom of His being. The discussions ranged over various schools of thought and philosophy, and it was a period of great literary activity at the Ashram. Besides Kavyakanta, Kapali Sastry, Muruganar, Lakshmana Sarma, Arunachala Sastriar of the Madras Gita fame, Munagala Venkataramiah (the late Swami Ramanananda Saraswathi, the author of *Talks with Sri Maharshi*), Sivaprakasam Pillai, and a host of others, used to be in the Hall, which was open all through the hours of day and night. It was then the World of Freedom of Sri Ramana, our Lord, Guru and very Self. Our lives were based and turned upon that one central Personality. Nothing gave us greater joy than to be in His presence as often as possible and to do His bidding.

Thus did time pass till 1929 when, on leaving Tiruvannamalai for good, Sri Kavyakanta made me over

to the care of Sri Maharshi, and in the very first letter he wrote asked Bhagavan to take particular care of me. I was at school when that letter was received, and the Maharshi tucked it under His cushion. He pulled it out, read it to me when I returned from school, and said: “Look here, you must not run away from here. I am answerable to Nayana; he may come at any time and claim you from me.”

Our happiness in the presence of Sri Bhagavan was comparable to the joy of the hosts of Siva on Mount Kailasa. Sri Bhagavan used to say, “Kailasa is the abode of Siva; Arunachala is Siva Himself. Even in Kailasa things are as they are with us here. Devotees go to Siva, worship Him, serve Him, and hear from Him the interpretation of the Vedas and Vedanta day in and day out.” So it was Kailasa at the foot of the Arunachala Hill, and Arunachala Paramatma in human form was Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

In May 1933, on my 36th birthday, after the usual bath and prayers, I sat in Sri Bhagavan’s presence in a pensive mood. I addressed a prayer in the Tamil *viruttam* style to Sri Bhagavan, complaining: “O Bhagavan, I have completed three and a half decades, and yet have not had the experience of the real You. Pray let me have this day the touch of Your Grace.” Handing over this slip of paper I prostrated before Him.

Bhagavan bade me sit down and gazed steadily at me; I was still in a pensive and meditative mood. All of a sudden I lost body-consciousness, and was absorbed in

Sri Maharshi. I was turned inward, and the voice of Bhagavan bade me see whatever I desired, I felt that if I could have the *darshan* of Sri Rama my life would have been fruitful, as I was very much devoted to Sri Rama. I had then immediately a *darshan* of Sri Rama, with Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Satrugna and Hanuman. The ecstasy of the vision defied description; I simply sat on, with Maharshi perhaps gazing on me without my being aware of His gaze. Two hours may thus have passed in pin-drop silence, lost in the vision, until it vanished. I prostrated at the feet of Sri Maharshi, with tears of ecstasy in my eyes and my hair standing on end. To Bhagavan's enquiry I replied that I of course had seen dear Rama.

Bhagavan asked me to fetch the book *Dakshinamurti Ashtottara*, which I had not read, and opening a page therein He gave it to me to read. "The fifth name from the last read "*Om Sri Yoga Pattabhiramaya Namaha.*" Bhagavan then said: "Sri Rama is Dakshinamurti, and Dakshinamurti is Sri Rama. Do you know where Ayodhya is? The Vedas say it is in the Sun, and describe it as *ashtachakra navadwara devanam Purayodhya* (the Gods' city is Ayodhya with eight corners and nine gates). Arunachala is also *astachakra puri* (eight-cornered city), and Lord Arunachala is Sri Rama as well as Dakshinamurti. One has no need to go to the Sun to see Ayodhya or Sri Rama, but one may see them here and now."

Thus did Sri Ramana once appear to me as Sri Rama, proving once again the age-old adage that *Mahatmas* can give *darshan* as any Beloved form — see *Sri Ramana Gita*,

ch. 18 v. 26. In the Sri Krishna Avatara, did not Bhagavan grant Hanuman the vision of Sri Rama? Later I realized that the vision was given to me as painted in Sri Tyagabrahmam's picture of Sri Rama, though not for a moment can I equate myself with Sri Tyagaraja.

5. INITIATION FOR SRI BHAGAVAN

EVEN during the days Bhagavan lived on the Hill, His fame as a perfect *Jnani* had spread far and wide, and people of several religions were visiting him in large numbers. One of these visitors was a Sri Vaishnava hailing from either Srirangam or Kanchipuram — I do not remember which.

Although this man was orthodox, he showed profound regard and admiration for Bhagavan as one who had attained the highest stage in Yoga. Much to our surprise, and contrary to usual Vaishnava custom, he used to prostrate morning and evening to Bhagavan. He stayed with Him for three days, during which he spoke about the state of a *Jivanmukta*. He was all praise for Bhagavan, but had the one doubt as to how a *Jivanmukta* could attain the Abode of Vishnu without formal initiation; his own teacher was much troubled also on this point and had sent him with the offer to come in person to confer initiation on Bhagavan with *mantra* and sealing of the Vaishnavite emblems on His shoulders — if He consented to receive it at his hands. He added that his teacher was greatly concerned about the welfare of such a rare soul as Sri Maharshi, and he had been commissioned by God in a dream to give Him this initiation.

All there were eager to know how Bhagavan would react to this extraordinary proposal. But Sri Maharshi kept

his usual silence. Perhaps He hoped the emissary would go away quietly when found that his mission was a failure; if so, He was disappointed, for the Vaishnava remained. But when he spoke to Bhagavan about his teacher's dream, Bhagavan had no difficulty in solving the problem and quietly remarked: "Let the same Lord appear in my dream also and order me to accept the initiation, and I shall accept it."

On the third day after this pious soul arrived, an old Brahmin came to Skandashram with a bundle; after prostrating to Sri Bhagavan, he laid the bundle before Him and went out for his bath — but strangely did not return. After some time, curious to know the contents of the bundle, Bhagavan had it untied; in it was found a palm-leaf manuscript of the *Arunachala Purana*. Bhagavan untied the strings of the manuscript and began to read it.

Lo, He found there a verse on initiation: "To souls living within twenty-four miles of Arunachala, union with Me will be granted, even without any initiation to remove impurity (*mala*). Thus have I decreed, and this is My behest." This Vaishnava devotee was amazed at this decree of the Lord; the very appearance at that time of the *Arunachala Purana* and the disappearance of the old Brahmin seemed to him to be equally mysterious. All felt that the Lord Arunachaleswara Himself had presented the verse as answer to the Vaishnava doubts. The pious devotee took leave of Bhagavan, saying he would report the whole history to his teacher.

How strange to fancy that a *Jivanmukta*, who is already full, has anything to receive at the hands of another!

6. DEEPAVALI DARSAN

BHAGAVAN in His embodied state occupied our whole heart, being dear to us as father, mother, God and Guru, all in one. We were loath to leave His presence, be it night or day. We slept outside the Old Hall, and Bhagavan was always visible to us on the sofa from where we were.

On the night prior to Deepavali in 1929, the first year of my settling in the Ashram, Bhagavan suggested my going home for the 'Ganges' bath (*Gangasnanam*). To me (why, to all of us!) the very sight of Bhagavan is a bath in the Ganga, the sight of Bhagavan is the worship of Siva, the sight of Bhagavan is the fulfilment of every ritual and the practice of all austerities. Yet I did not want to go against the mandate of Bhagavan as I went home, late in the night. I was impatient to be back with Bhagavan, so I woke up my wife and children even at 2 a.m., finished the ceremonial Ganges bath, and hastened to His blessed Presence.

Bhagavan lay reclining on the sofa. It was about 3-30 a.m.; I made the usual prostration and sat down by the sofa. All of a sudden an aura was visible around the head of Bhagavan. It was like the glory with clusters of evenly arranged flames, just as we see round the deities in our temple processions. Bhagavan's face shone with beaming smiles. It appeared to me that on this

occasion Bhagavan was giving *darshan* (gracious view) of Sri Nataraja, the Lord of the Cosmic Dance. In my ecstasy, I think I must have sung hymns from *Thevaram*, which I love as dearly as the Vedas. The vision lasted for half an hour, and then the glory vanished.¹ At 4 a.m. Bhagavan sat up for His *Pansupari*.² I related to Him what I had seen, and Bhagavan again gave a beaming smile.

¹ A similar experience is recorded by the Buddhist Lama Anagarika Govinda in his *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* P.164, quoting the experience of Baron Dr. Valtheim-Ostaur: ‘While my eyes were immersed in the golden depths of the Maharshi’s eyes, something happened which I dare describe only with the greatest reticence and humility in the shortest and simplest words, according to truth. The dark complexion of his body transformed itself slowly into white. This white body became more and more luminous, as if lit up from within, and began to radiate. I saw him sitting on the tiger-skin as a luminous form. This was no rare occurrence in the life of devotees; though Bhagavan Himself would have playfully dismissed it, with all other observed wonders of the senses, with “It’s all in the mind!”. Yes, that is true, but how many of us can see such beauties in the mind in place of the ugly and commonplace which obsess it all the time?’

² *i.e.*, betel-nut, with a leaf, *chunam*, and flavourings, taken after meals as a digestive to be chewed — as customary over most of Southern Asia.

7. INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTED WORKS

IT was about 1927 when Sri Bhagavan's *Nool Thirattu*¹ in Tamil was under preparation to be published. There was talk among the Ashram pundits that the book must have a preface although the devotees of Maharshi considered that nobody was qualified to write a preface to His works. The pundits proposed the writing of a preface, but none of them came forward to write it, each excusing himself that he was not qualified for the task. It was a drama of several hours as one proposed another for the purpose, and each declined the honour. Bhagavan was watching all this quietly.

At about 10-30 in the night, as I was passing beside the Hall, Sri Bhagavan looked at me and said, "Why not you write the preface yourself?"

I was taken aback at His proposal, but meekly said, "I would venture to write it only if I had Bhagavan's blessing in the task." Bhagavan said, "Do write it, and it will come all right."

So I began writing at the dead of night, and to my great surprise within three quarters of an hour I made a draft as if impelled, driven by some Supreme Force. I

¹ Published also as *Collected Works* in English.

altered not even a comma of it, and at 2 O'clock in the early morning I placed it at the feet of Bhagavan. He was happy to see how the contents were arranged and to note the simplicity of the expressions used. He passed it as all right and asked me to take it away.

But as I had taken the written sheets of paper only a few steps away, Sri Maharshi beckoned me to show them to Him once again. I had concluded the Preface in the following way: "*It is hoped* that this work in the form of Bhagavan's Grace will give to all who aspire to eternal Truth, the Liberation in the form of gaining supreme Bliss shaped as the taking away of all sorrow." Maharshi said, "Why have you said 'It is hoped'? Why not say 'It is certain'?" So saying, He corrected with His own hands my '*nambukiren*' into '*tinnam*'.

Thus Sri Maharshi set His seal of approval to the book, giving to His devotees that great charter of Liberation, in the form of His Teaching (*upadesa*) which leaves no trace of doubt about it in the mind.

8. BHAGAVAN TELLS OF KANNAPPAR THE SAINT

DEVOTEES of Bhagavan Sri Ramana know well that the one book which radically influenced His inner life while He was still at school was the *Periapuranam* in Tamil, written by the poet-saint Sekkilar. This book contains the lives of the sixty-three saints of Tamil Nadu who, by their acts of supreme devotion or merit, won Siva's Grace and came to the state whence one never again returns to worldliness. Bhagavan never made distinction between *bhakti* (devotion) or *jnana* (knowledge), provided this true State is thereby obtained: "In that state *bhakti* is no other than *jnana*, *jnana* nothing else but *bhakti*"; this is Bhagavan's experience of them both.

In His perpetual silence, Sri Ramana was looked upon as Sri Dakshinamurti, and His teachings always emphasised the *Karya-karana* (cause-and-effect) aspect. The emphasis on this aspect was so great that there seemed to be no room in His teaching for anything but pure reason. People even used to feel that it was all cold and heartless logic. But those who have lived with Bhagavan know only too well that Bhagavan's heart — a strange term, this; is Bhagavan different from Heart? — was full of feeling for suffering humanity. His great disciple, Sri Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, used to say that Bhagavan had the light

of the Teacher Sri Adi Sankara, the heart of Sri Ramanujacharya and the analytical powers of Sri Madhvacharya. Be that as it may, on several occasions Bhagavan revealed in His life the aspect of true *Bhakti*.

Once, on the night after the Karthikai Deepam, the deities Arunachala and Apithakuchambal were in procession round the Hill. When the procession came in front of our Ashram, we offered flower garlands, coconut and camphor, and after being waved before them, burning camphor was taken to Bhagavan on His seat in the Old Hall. The devotees took this camphor, along with the ash-prasad (*vibhuti*) of Arunachaleswara, and began to wave it before Bhagavan. But He exclaimed, "Why all this? The Son is included in the Father!"

Once someone placed the *Periapuranam* in Tamil prose in Bhagavan's hands, and He began reading out of it. Now Bhagavan was a past master in story-telling, and he used to tell stories in hundreds. His solo-acting was ever the admiration of His devotees; His modulation of voice for different characters, suiting gestures and postures for each incident, was wonderfully effective. His devotees never missed a chance of being in the Hall on such occasions, so as to enjoy and benefit by the recitals.

Bhagavan began to read out the life of Kannappar, the great devotee saint. He went on reading incidents in his early life, and how he went to the forest and found Kudumi Devar, the *Sivalinga*, his Lord, up the Kalahasti Hill in the Chitoor district (of Andhra state). Then he told how Kannappar worshipped the Sivalinga with water

carried in his own mouth, flowers taken from his own hair, and the well-cooked and tasted beef prepared for his own meal — knowing no better and having no better to offer his beloved Lord. The way in which the ordained priest, Siva Gochariar, resented the intruding defiler of the sacred Sivalinga was so characteristically brought out by Bhagavan, with His own explanations of the rites and the meanings of the *mantras* used in the worship, that it enriched the recital greatly to the benefit and admiration of the devotees.

Then came the scene of scenes, when the Lord in that Sivalinga tested Kannappar and incidentally revealed to Siva Gochariar the intensity of the forest hunter's worship from a place of hiding. He saw the unexpected trickling of blood from one of the eyes on that Sivalinga; he saw Kannappar running to and fro for herbs, and treating the Lord's eye with them. Then he saw how, finding them all useless, Kannappar plucked out one of his own eyes and applied it to that in the Sivalinga; then, seeing the treatment was effective, he ran into ecstasies of joyful dance.

When Bhagavan came to the story of how Kannappar was plucking out his second eye to heal the second of the Lord, and of how the Sivalinga extended a hand to stop him, saying "Stop, Kannappar!" Bhagavan's voice choked, His body perspired profusely, His hairs stood on end, tears gushed out from His eyes; He could hardly utter a word, and there was silence, pin-drop silence in the Hall. All were dumbfounded that this great *Jnani* could be so

overpowered by emotion and ecstasy at the great hunter-saint's devotion. After a while Sri Bhagavan quietly closed the book, dried the tears in His eyes with the ends of His towel, and laid aside the book, saying, "No, I can't go on any further."

Then we could realise the import of His words in *Aksharamanamalai*: "Having become silent, if one remains like a stone, can that be called real silence?" His blossomed Heart had in it the perfect warmth of devotion, no less than the supreme light of Knowledge.

9. THE TEACHING IN SILENCE

IT was a Sivaratri Day. The evening worships at the Mother's shrine were over. The devotees had their dinner with Sri Bhagavan, who was now on His seat, the devotees at His feet sitting around Him.

At 8 p.m. one of the *Sadhus* stood up, did *pranam* (offered obeisance), and with folded hands prayed: "Today is the Sivaratri Day; we should be highly blessed by Sri Bhagavan expounding to us the meaning of the Hymn to Dakshinamurti (stotra)." Says Bhagavan: "Yes, sit down."

The Sadhu sat, and all eagerly looked at Sri Bhagavan and Sri Bhagavan looked at them. Sri Bhagavan sat and sat in His usual pose, no, poise. No words, no movement, and all was stillness! He sat still, and all sat still, waiting. The clock went on striking, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, one, two and three. Sri Bhagavan sat and they sat. Stillness, calmness, motionlessness — not conscious of the body, of space or time.

Thus eight hours were passed in Peace, in Silence, in Being, as It is. Thus was the Divine Reality taught through the speech of Silence by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Dakshinamurthy.

At the stroke of 4 a.m. Sri Bhagavan quietly said: "And now have you known the essence of the Dakshinamurti Hymn"? All the devotees stood and made *pranam* to the holy Form of the Guru in the ecstasy of their Being.

10. CAN A CRACKED EGG BE HATCHED?

IT was the early hours of the morning in the Hall of Sri Bhagavan. He had had His bath, and now went to the farther end of the Hall to take His towel that hung from a horizontally suspended bamboo, at one end of which a sparrow had built her nest and laid therein three or four eggs.

In the process of taking His towel Sri Bhagavan's hand came against the nest, which shook violently, so that one of the eggs dropped down. In this way the egg was cracked; Sri Bhagavan was taken aback, aghast. He cried out to Madhavan, the personal attendant. "Look, look what I have done today!" So saying, He took the cracked egg in His hand looked at it with His tender eyes, and exclaimed: "Oh, the poor mother will be so sorrow-stricken, perhaps angry with me also, at my causing the destruction of her expected little one! Can the cracked eggshell be pieced together again? Let us try!"

So saying, He took a piece of cloth, wetted it, wrapped it around the broken egg, and put it back in the mother's nest. Every three hours He would take out the cracked egg, remove the cloth, place the egg on His roseate palm, and gaze at it with His tender eyes for minutes together.

What was He really doing at this time? How can we say? Was He sending with those wonderful looks of gentle

Grace life-giving beams into the cracked egg, putting ever newer warmth and life into it? That is a mystery none can solve. Yet He kept on saying: “Let the crack be healed! Cannot this be hatched even now? Let the little one come from this broken egg!”

This anxious concern and tenderness of Sri Maharshi continued from day to day for about a week. So the fortunate egg lay in the nest with its wet bandage cloth, only to be fondled by Sri Maharshi with divine touch and benign look. On the seventh day, He takes out the egg, and with the astonishment of a schoolboy announces: “Look what a wonder! The crack has closed, and so the mother will be happy and will hatch her egg after all! My God has freed me from the sin of causing the loss of a life. Let us wait patiently for the blessed young one to come out!”

A few more days pass, and at length one fine morning Bhagavan finds the egg has been hatched¹ and the little bird has come out. With gleeful smiling face radiant with the usual light, He takes the child in His hand, caresses it with lips, stroking it with His soft hand, and passes it on for all the bystanders to admire. He receives it back at last into His own hands, and is so happy that one little germ of life has been able to evolve in spite of the unhappy accident to it in the embryo.

¹ The wonder here is that the bird understood enough to sit on the egg, even after it had been handled by man. Who really knows how far the understanding of a ‘beast’ can carry her towards the truth?

Ah, what concern for the meanest of creation! Is it not the heart of the real Buddha which shed first tears of anxiety at the crack in the eggshell and then tears of joy at the birth of the new-born babe? Could the milk of kindness ever be seen or conceived of sweeter than this?

11. DOES IT NOT PAIN THE TREE?

ONE morning K. was cutting down the ripe coconuts from the trees while Bhagavan was returning from the cowshed (*gosala*). Bhagavan asked K: what rod he was using to pluck the coconuts, whether it had a bamboo bit attached to the end or an iron point. K. remarked that it was only an iron sickle.

Bhagavan asked: “Will not the trees be hurt by the sharp iron? Would not a rod with a bamboo bit at the end serve the purpose?” And Bhagavan did not wait for a reply.¹

K. went on with his work, nor did he change his instrument, but continued to use the iron sickle every morning.

A week later, at the same time as on the previous occasion, while K. was cutting down the coconuts from the trees, one fell on his forehead and struck his nose very painfully. This news was reported to Bhagavan.

While expressing pity for the man, Bhagavan also remarked: “Now he will know what it is to be hurt, and also how much his iron sickle must have hurt the uncomplaining trees.”

How like this is of Bhagavan, who finds all nature pulsating with life and light!

¹ Suri Nagamma has the account of a time when an Ashram gardener struck down many leaves while gathering mangoes; on that occasion it seems Bhagavan expressed very great displeasure.

12. HE WAS MY REMEMBRANCER

AFTER breakfast one fine morning, I was in the assembly of Sri Bhagavan's devotees. Sri Bhagavan was expounding some remote point in philosophy; He went on talking till it was 10-45, and we were all so much absorbed that we had no sense of time, space or causation.

At 10-45, Sri Bhagavan turned to me and said, "Why, fellow, you have not left for the school yet!" I said, "But, Bhagavan, it is Sunday today!" Bhagavan, gave a hearty laugh and said, "It is a funny way you do your school work. It is Monday today. Run up; your Headmaster is waiting there at the gate, looking for you to come."

So I hurried, and reached school exactly at the stroke of the recess bell. As I reached the gates, I found the Headmaster standing at the entrance to the school, with his usual pinch of snuff in his hand, his eyes turned towards the path of the temple, and eagerly expecting me to come.

As I neared him, he said the same as Sri Maharshi: "Why, Sir, you have forgotten that it is Monday, and perhaps you required the Maharshi to remind you that today is a working day!"

I answered neatly, "Too true Sir; I did forget, and Sri Maharshi himself sent me for duty!"

My Headmaster laughed very heartily, and answered, "Go to your classroom!"

13. WALK WITH BHAGAVAN TO THE LAKE

THE Samudram Lake at the foot of Arunachala Hill near Sri Ramanasramam is very extensive; neither summer rains nor winter monsoons in Tiruvannamalai fill this lake save once in a way, when it overflows.

Thus it overflowed once long years ago. The sight of it was very grand, and the outflow was as wide as a river. The tank really seemed that day like the Ocean of its name (*Samudram*). Bhagavan told us that it held this name because a certain local ruler had this tank constructed as a miniature sea to give his Queen an idea of what a sea would look like; for she had never seen the sea and wished to do so.

People thronged to look at the overflowing lake, and then came to Bhagavan to talk about it. One morning the devotees in the Hall expressed to Bhagavan a desire to visit the lake, and He was kind enough, human enough, to accept the suggestion; so we all went for a stroll to see it. The tank bund is about a mile long; we walked about a mile from the Ashram to the tank, and then the whole length of the bund. The presence of Bhagavan with us, and His words, were more interesting to us than the brimming tank and the grand view of the wide waters at the foot of holy Arunachalam.

Bhagavan talked of many things on that walk with us, but at this distance of time I remember only two topics that interested me.

At one place He pointed out a palmyra tree which had decayed in the embrace of a parasitic banyan tree. Some bird had dropped a banyan seed into the palmyra, and as it began to grow the palmyra became cloven and stunted in its own growth. Drawing our attention to this phenomenon, Bhagavan remarked that this is just what the look of Grace from a *Jnani* does. One look into a soul, and the whole tree of past tendencies and prejudices (*vasana*), gathered up through long cycles of past births, is burned up and decays away. Then the reality of the Self is experienced. Thus He explained to us the effect of contact with the Great and He said the supreme *Jnana* obtained with the touch of the Saint can never be won through the study of any number of Scriptures, or by any store of good deeds, or by any other spiritual practices and efforts. Later, on return to the Ashram, I put this in verse form as below:

A bird drops seed upon a tree and causes its decay. So
Guru's grace rays knowledge into the seeking mind.
Replacing ego-shadows with resplendent *Jnana's* light.¹

¹ The point of this Verse, brought out fully in the Tamil, is that made by Bhagavan Himself. The seed of the huge banyan tree, which grows to shelter hundreds, is one of the tiniest and represents unselfish benevolence. The seed of the palmyra which is so large, grows into a tree which can hardly shelter a single man from the sun, and so well represents the selfish ego. Yet this tiny seed can be dropped by a bird in its droppings, and while it grows it can demolish the palmyra tree itself. So the tiny seed of Grace can destroy the great tree of egoism.

Then when we actually came to the overflowing outlet at the end of the lake, we all marvelled at its width. We stayed there for some time, and then returned.

On the return walk, we happened to pass the sluice at the centre of the bund. Pointing to this, Bhagavan remarked: "Look at this small outlet, as compared with the big one at the end! But for this small hole, through which the stream of water trickles, the vast contents of the lake would not be helpful to vegetation. If the bund breaks it will be a regular deluge, and the entire crop will be destroyed. Only if the water be served under proper regulation through this sluice, are the plants helped to grow. So too is it with the Divine Consciousness. Unless the bliss of this Consciousness is gifted through the Grace of the Guru in controlled outlets, the soul cannot be helped to the destruction of its tendencies of the past; for in this way the Self, abiding as such in its oneness with the Divine, is established in the Guru's State of Being. Holding on to its Being Consciousness, the work of destroying the past (*vasana*) proceeds as and when thoughts arise to push the mind into action. This work becomes possible only in the proximity of the Guru. Hence the Guru is himself like the sluice and irrigates souls with Grace from his ocean of kindness, needed so that the Self may abide and the old tendencies be withered away. But if the bund is broken, the full force of the whole lake rushes through and sweeps everything before it. This resembles a practitioner (*sadhaka*) receiving the full force of Divine Consciousness without the intervening and mitigating grace of Guru's

sluice; he dies without the benefit of having the tendencies destroyed.”

This idea too I later put down in the form of a Tamil verse to this effect:

Water flowing through a channel carries off great
heaps of sand;

So mountain masses of the ego are washed away by
Grace.

14. THE PONTIFF AND SRI BHAGAVAN

ABOUT the year 1948 the Ashram received a letter from His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Puri (Govardhana Mutt), expressing his desire to pay a visit to Bhagavan and to get certain doubts cleared. Incidentally, the letter categorically mentioned the doubts and asked that they might be solved in a reply letter. The chief of these referred to certain Agamic texts: “*Hara Gauri Samyogat ... avacchayah yogaha*” and the Teacher asked what this ‘*avacchayah yogaha*’ is.

I placed this letter at the feet of Bhagavan, and asked what answer should be sent to him. Bhagavan simply laughed and said that the questioner knew it all himself and needed no fresh light, but that he would know it better when he came in person. A reply was accordingly sent on these lines.

After some days the Acharya visited the Ashram. Bhagavan gave instructions for him to be received and attended to with all care and respect for his exalted position; the Ashramites spared no pains in arranging for his reception and accommodation.

Sri Bhagavan was seated in the Golden Jubilee Hall on the granite sofa; and eager spectators had gathered in their hundreds. Quite near to Bhagavan’s sofa a small dais was arranged, with a deer’s skin for the Pontiff to sit on, and then he was escorted to the presence of Bhagavan.

On coming before the Maharshi, the Teacher greeted Him with his staff, as is the custom of *sannyasis*, and was shown the seat arranged for him. He was surprised that so prominent a seat had been allotted; he asked the dais to be removed, spread the deer's skin on the ground, and sat on that.

After a little preliminary talk, the Teacher repeated the main question of his letter and asked Bhagavan to enlighten him on the meaning of this phrase. Bhagavan gave him His look of Grace and was silent, and the Teacher was all receptive. No words were exchanged between them. Thus over half an hour passed.

Then Bhagavan smiled and remarked: "What is there to explain? You know it already; this text represents only the very essence of Divine Knowledge — when Nature unites with the Person, then the visible becomes all shadows. It is as meaningful as pictures on the cinema screen, and then will be experienced the state of All-Self as seen... The one Being-Consciousness which projects all this out of Itself, sustains and then withdraws it again into Itself. Having swallowed all the shadows of this world, Itself dances as the Ocean of Bliss, the Reality or Substratum of all that is, was and shall be. And then It is 'I-I'."

The Teacher seemed to have received new Light and Life; he was all joy. He said that in all his wandering through the country he had tried to be enlightened upon this mystery; but it was only here that he got the secret and the truth of Light as explained in the texts of the Vedanta.

So overwhelmed with joy was he that he repeated his visit to Bhagavan when the Matrubhuteswara Shrine was consecrated, and he personally supervised all the rituals in the *Yagasalas* (sacrifice halls) and saw to it that everything went off all right.

15. THOUGHT TRAVELS TOO

MR. and Mrs S. were visitors from Peru to the Ashram. They had heard of the Maharshi and His greatness, of how He was accepted by Arunachala, and how He and Arunachala are one. To the couple, Sri Maharshi's presence on earth seemed the second coming of the Christ Himself, so they had longed for years to meet this God-Man once in their lives.

They were too poor to find the money for their passage to India. But in their burning desire to see the God-Man in flesh and blood, they laid by each week a few coins out of their small wages, and in a few years they had enough money to become deck-passengers without the pleasant luxury of the higher classes on the ship. So they sailed for several months, and at last reached India and Tiruvannamalai.

The couple narrated all their story to Bhagavan, all the privations they had undergone to have a look at Sri Maharshi. Bhagavan was all kindness to them. He heard their story with great concern, and then remarked: "You need not have taken all this trouble. You could well have thought of me from where you were, and so could have had all the consolation of a personal visit." This remark of Sri Bhagavan they could not easily understand, nor did it give them any consolation as they sat at His feet like Mary. Sri Maharshi did not want to disturb their pleasure

in being In His immediate vicinity, and so He left them at that.

Later in the evening Sri Maharshi was enquiring about their day-to-day life, and incidentally their talk turned to Peru. The couple began picturing the landscape of Peru and were describing the sea-coast and the beach of their own town. Just then Maharshi remarked: “Is not the beach of your town paved with marble slabs, and are not coconut palms planted in between? Are there not marble benches in rows facing the sea there and did you not often sit on the fifth of those with your wife?” This remark of Sri Maharshi created great astonishment in the couple. How could Sri Bhagavan, who had never gone out of Tiruvannamalai, know so intimately such minute details about their own place?

Sri Maharshi only smiled and remarked: “It does not matter how I can tell. Enough if you know that in the Self there is no Space-Time.”

This confirmed in the minds of the couple Sri Maharshi’s original statement that they could well have thought of Him even at their own home and so obtained His blessings.

16. THAT HOOMKAR

DR. Venkatarangam, the eye specialist, had come from Madras. As *Chinnaswamy* (Sri Maharshi's brother and the then *Sarvadhikari*, Sri Niranjanananda Swamy) remembered that Bhagavan's spectacles needed new lenses, he requested that they be brought from the Hall and given to the doctor. The doctor tested these lenses and compared them with his own; he thought his own spectacles would suit Bhagavan's eyes, so he sent them through me to Bhagavan, who put these spectacles on and found they suited His eyes admirably. The doctor's lenses were both for distance and for reading, while Sri Bhagavan's were for reading only; and the latter was in fact what Bhagavan said He wanted.

I left Bhagavan's spectacles with him and returned with the doctor's, reporting that they suited Bhagavan well. Thereupon *Chinnaswamy* got the doctor to consent to leave his own spectacles and take Bhagavan's instead. I was sent again to Bhagavan to leave the doctor's glasses with Him and bring His to the doctor.

Now Bhagavan was not agreeable to this proposal. But, remembering how anxious *Chinnaswamy* was to have Bhagavan's glasses replaced immediately, I in an unwary moment pressed upon Him to accept the doctor's and give His own to be taken by the doctor. I cannot now say how hot-headed I was to press this upon Bhagavan, while

knowing full well that He would not agree. Bhagavan looked at me and said: "*Hoom*, why do you press on me what I do not want? I do not want glasses for distance, I want them only for reading." So I came back with the doctor's glasses and reported the refusal to *Chinnaswamy*.

This happened on the day before a *Jayanti*; I was participating in birthday activities and busily engaged in ever so many affairs. But from the moment I returned from Bhagavan, a burning fire took hold of me, the discomfort of which cannot be described. Yet I was going on with my work while the fire kept burning me.

The *Jayanti* day passed. The next morning the fire increased; it burned and burned and burned, till I could stand it no longer. Having taken delivery of certain articles intended for the celebrations, I was returning from the railway station. I handed over the articles to the stores clerk and ran into the Hall like a madman in a frenzy.

The Hall was full of devotees and Bhagavan reposed in His ceaseless Blissfulness. I fell prostrate and cried, "Oh, Bhagavan, forgive me! I erred. I should not have pressed those glasses on you and earned that '*Hoomkar*'. It burns me, burns me! I can bear it no longer. I tried to bear it for three days, night and day, but I can bear no more. Not that you intended to punish me; my own action brought it on me. If a pot falls on a rock and breaks, it is not the fault of the rock that the pot is broken. If an audacious man does ill to the Wise, it is not the Wise who sends punishment, it is the man himself who earns it. So, Bhagavan, pray look at me, and let this burning heat go!"

Thus I cried before Bhagavan, to the astonishment of Himself and of those around.

Bhagavan looked at me and said, “What is all this? I was never in the least offended. Don’t worry. Sit down and it will be all right.” So I sat, a penitent creature, and wept like a child. In less than ten minutes I became normal. The burning heat vanished miraculously.

Good devotees may know that however well-intentioned they may be, they should not clash with the wish of Mahatmas and get hurt.

17. PROXY CURE AT A DISTANCE

SRI Mahadeva Iyer, a devotee of Sri Bhagavan, was sailing in Madras from persistent hiccough for nearly a month. His daughter wrote to Sri Bhagavan, appealing to Him to bless her father and give relief to his distressing ailment. On receipt of this letter, Sri Maharshi told me to write to Sri Mahadeva Iyer that a paste of jaggery and dried powdered ginger, if taken, would effect immediate cure of his trouble.

Then turning to Madhavan, His personal attendant, Sri Bhagavan said: "We had some ready-made paste of this medicine; can you find it?" Madhavan immediately produced it. Bhagavan took a dose of it Himself, and distributed the same paste among those around Him.¹

He looked at me and said that I might write to Sri Mahadeva Iyer by that very evening's post. I said in jest: "Why, Bhagavan, Mahadevan is already cured. Bhagavan has taken medicine for him!" And Bhagavan gave a broad laugh.

¹ Sri Bhagavan's sense of unity was so intense that He would never accept what was not shared with others. By first tasting the medicine that He was going to send to His Madras devotee He made it holy as a *Prasad*. Then on His normal principle: "if it is good for me it must be good also for all these," He distributed it to all present.

I wrote to Sri Mahadeva Iyer from the Ashram office, but the next day's post brought us a letter from his daughter to say that her father was relieved of his ailment at 1 p.m. on the previous day. It was exactly the hour when Sri Maharshi took the jaggery paste.²

Isn't this like the saying in Tamil: "The *kurathi* (gypsy) was delivered of the child, though it was the *kurava* (her husband) who took medicine on her behalf."

² Bhagavan never encouraged any talk of 'miracles' but this did not prevent His devotees from experiencing what cannot be explained by normal physical science.

18. THE *EKARAT* AND THE PRINCELY BEGGAR

WE go back to 1924. Those were the days of the newly founded Sri Ramanasramam at the foot of Arunachala. The Old Hall had not yet come into existence and Bhagavan sat in the thatched shed of the early days in front of the *Matrubhuteswara* Shrine. A small elevated seat of cement was made there for Him, and He used to sit on it day and night. It was here that on a certain Sivaratri He once kept the assembled devotees in perfect silence and stillness all night, to explain the real meaning of the Dakshinamurthy Hymn.

One day at about 10 a.m. a certain princely person appeared before Bhagavan. We need not mention names, but it is enough to say that he was very pious and devoted to the worship of Siva, learned in Tamil and in the Scriptures. He had great love for saints (*sadhus*). Having heard of Sri Bhagavan's greatness, he had long been eager to pay his respects to Him, and now after several years of effort had come to Him.

In his royal robes, he stood in the presence of Bhagavan for over half an hour; nobody spoke to him or asked him to be seated. It seemed that he found pleasure in standing before Bhagavan, and stood motionless like a statue; Bhagavan was equally still, sitting like a statue.

His glorious eyes were all the time on that devout personality, blessing him with His Grace. Bhagavan and he remained without a movement; there was perfect stillness in the room. It was a wonderful sight to see the *Ekarat* (Emperor of Saints) Himself giving and the princely beggar receiving at His hands. After the half hour, the Prince prostrated before Bhagavan and left.

The funny side of this incident is that a *sadhu* who accompanied the Prince returned with a few hundred rupee notes and placed them at Sri Bhagavan's feet saying that the Prince gave the money to help the *sadhus* there. The Master remarked: "Look at this! A Prince, finding no peace or pleasure in his own environment, comes to beg of this pauper (*kaupina-dhari* = wearing only a codpiece), thinking that what is in us is the real thing that life needs, and you run after him to beg of that beggar! How clever of you!"

19. I AM NOT TALKING TO YOU!

MR. Noles, an Italian, not more than 30 years old yet well-read in philosophy, both Eastern and Western, and eager to imbibe the spirit of Sri Maharshi's teachings, was at our Ashram once, and he had very many interesting talks with Bhagavan.

One morning Sri Bhagavan was telling of the state of a *jivanmukta*; how he is the ever-aware Self, the Witness-Consciousness transcending space and time and causation, the fullness of Being; how he is the non-actor, non-enjoyer, and yet at the same time the greatest of actors, the greatest of enjoyers, and so forth.

Well, this was too much for Mr. Noles to digest. He put a straight question to Sri Bhagavan: "Are you, or are you not, now talking to us?" By an answer to this question he wanted to know how Sri Bhagavan expressed Himself consistently. Others around eagerly watched for what would fall from Sri Bhagavan's lips.

Sri Bhagavan gave Mr. Noles a meaningful look and said in a most emphatic tone: "No, 'I' am not talking to you." In an ecstatic mood Mr. Noles echoed: "No; Sri Bhagavan is not talking to us; Sri Bhagavan simply IS."

The devotees present greatly enjoyed this conversation.

20. IN BRUTE AND MAN ALIKE

SRI Rangaswamy Iyengar was a businessman in Madras. He had been frequenting Sri Bhagavan much earlier than even the Pachaiaimman Koil days of 1906. When Sri Bhagavan was in the Pachaiaimman temple during the days of the great plague in Tiruvannamalai, Sri Iyengar one day arrived at Bhagavan's place by the train at 1 o'clock, in the blazing sun. Sri Bhagavan received him with His usual beaming face of smiles and the sweet milk of kindness. Sri Iyengar was asked by the devotees around to have his bath in the pond nearby and he left Sri Bhagavan's presence to bathe there in front of the temple.

The spot was very lonely; Sri Iyengar was bathing at the eastern ghat. All of a sudden Sri Bhagavan, who was seated inside the temple, left that place. Those around thought He was walking out for some bodily need of His own. When He came there He saw a leopard come to the tank to quench its thirst at the northern edge.

Says Bhagavan quietly to the animal: "Go now, and come later; he would be afraid," referring to the man bathing nearby. At these words of Sri Bhagavan, the animal went away.

Sri Bhagavan then went up to the bather, who had by then finished his bath, and said to him: "We should not come here at this part of the day; wild animals come

at these hours to quench their thirst.” He did not add that a wild animal had actually come there, lest the man be frightened. Thus did Sri Bhagavan reveal His equality of being in both the brute and the man. A few days later, He Himself told us of this incident.

21. “WHO AM I, NAYANA?”

SRI Bhagavan was in the Virupaksha Cave on the Hill. One evening after 7 p.m., they were all coming down the Hill to go round Arunachala. The other devotees had all gone in advance; only Sri Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni was in the company of Sri Maharshi, and they were slowly climbing down the steps from the cave.

When they had walked a few steps, all of a sudden Sri Maharshi stopped, and with Him Sri Kavyakanta as well. The full moon was shining bright in the starry sky. Pointing to the moon and the beautiful sky, Sri Bhagavan said: “Nayana! if the moon, and all the stars have their being in ME, and the sun himself goes round My hip with his satellites, who am I? Who am I?”

This remark of Sri Maharshi made His blessed disciple envisage the Master as the Great Person of the Vedas, as described in ‘*Sri Rudra*,’ the ‘*Purusha Sukta*,’ and the ‘*Skamba Sukta*’ of the Atharva Veda. He is verily all these, and That beyond; there is nothing that is not He.

Sri Kavyakanta later made this revelation known to all the devotees.

22. BHAGAVAN AS A CLASSICAL SANSKRIT POET

DEVOTEES of Sri Bhagavan are aware only of his famous '*Upadesa Saram*' and a few isolated verses as His contributions to the 'Language of the Gods'. So it is necessary to place on record His contribution to the famous '*Uma Sahasram*' — thousand verses on Uma, the Divine Mother sung by His great disciple, the learned Sri Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni. This story shows the Maharshi as the joint author of this composition.

Sri Bhagavan was then living in the Pachaiaimman Temple, the abode of Maragathambal, on the north eastern slopes of Sri Arunachalam. In those days the Maharshi would sit and sleep in a hammock slung between two stone pillars and be rocked as a darling child by His loving pupils.

Sri Kavyakanta had composed 700 stanzas on Uma in some thirty different meters, and had announced to his devotees in various parts of the country that this poem would be dedicated on a certain Friday in the Shrine of Sri Uma in the great Temple of Sri Arunachaleswara. Over a hundred persons gathered at the Pachaiaimman Temple so as to be present on the occasion. Now these Sanskrit verses were not a mere intellectual display by Sri Kavyakanta, great as he was in Sanskrit composition.

Proof of his great intellectual capacity may be had from the very fact that in the presence of the heads of the Udipi *Maths* he composed *extempore* in a single hour the hundred verses of the ‘*Ghantaa sataka*,’ giving the cream of the teaching of the three main schools of Hindu Philosophy.

His ‘*Uma Sahasram*’ is different from other compositions in that it is *pasyanti vak*, i.e. revealed by the Divine Mother in Her own words to one who is adept in the *Kundalini* Yoga.

At about 8 p.m. on the evening before the dedication day, after supper, Sri Maharshi asked Sri Kavyakanta whether the dedication would have to be postponed to some other Friday, as 300 verses were still to be composed to complete the thousand. But Sri Kavyakanta assured Bhagavan that he would complete the poem immediately.

The scene that followed can hardly be believed by one who did not actually witness it. Sri Maharshi sat silent and in deep meditation like the silent Lord Dakshinamurthy. The eager disciples watched in tense admiration the sweet flow of divine music in Sanskrit verse as it came from the lips of the great and magnetic personality of Sri Kavyakanta. He stood there delivering the verses in an unbroken stream while disciples eagerly gathered the words and wrote them down. Oh, for the ecstasy of it all! Life is indeed blessed if only to experience those divine moments.

The ‘*Sahasram*’ was finished in several meters *Madalekha*, *Pramanika*, *Upajati Aryagiti*, etc. For a while the disciples present enjoyed the deep ecstasy of the silence

pervading the atmosphere, as Sri Kavyakanta concluded with the normal type of colophone. Then Sri Bhagavan opened His eyes and asked, “Nayana, has all that I said been taken down?” From Sri Ganapati Muni came the ready and grateful response, “Bhagavan, *all* that Bhagavan inspired in me has been taken down!”

It is thus clear that Sri Bhagavan inspired the final 300 verses of the ‘*Uma Sahasram*’ through the lips of Sri Kavyakanta, without speaking a word, as usually understood, or rather in the silence characteristic of the Silent Sage of Arunachala. It is noteworthy that whereas Sri Kavyakanta revised the first 700 verses of this monumental work some six times, he did not revise any of the last 300. This being Sri Bhagavan’s own utterance, there was no need to “polish them.” These 300 verses are to be considered as Sri Bhagavan’s unique contribution to Sanskrit poetry.

23. HOW THE MANTRA CAME

THE mantra “*Om namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*” fascinated me greatly in my early days; it so delighted me that I had always a vision of Sri Krishna in my mind. I had a premonition that this body would pass away in its fortieth year, and I wanted to have a *darshan* of the Lord before that time. I fasted and practised devotion to Vasudeva incessantly; I read Sri *Bhagavad Gita* and *Srimad Bhagavatam* with great delight. Then when I read in the Gita “*Jnani tu atmaiva me matam*” (In my view, the *Jnani* is my own Self) I was greatly delighted. This line of thought came to me: “While I have at hand Bhagavan Sri Ramana, who is Himself Vasudeva, why should I worship Vasudeva separately?” Be it noted that all this was in my early days before settling with Bhagavan at His Ashram. So I wanted one single *mantra*, a single worship (*devata*), and a single scripture, so that there might be no conflict of loyalties. Sri Ramana Paramatman became easily the God to worship, His collected works easily became the gospel; as for the *mantra*, it struck me intuitively that “*Om namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya*” might be an exact parallel to “*Om namo Bhagavate vasudevaya.*”

I counted the letters in this new mantra, and was very happy to find it also contained twelve letters; I told this all to Sri Bhagavan, and He gave the *mantra* His approval.

Advanced practisers (*sadhaks*) and thinkers may laugh at this and say: “Why do you need a *mantra* while the Ocean of Bliss is there to be immersed into directly?” I confess that in this I was trying to conform to the traditional method of practice (*upasana*) which forms one of the main elements in *bhakti* (devotion). Bhagavan has revealed His true nature as the All-Witness; yet there is the explicit injunction that Advaita must be only in the attitude and never be interpreted in outer action.

This is how the *mantra* first came out.

24. ENVOI

ONE of the Lord Buddha's last recorded sayings was, "All compounds must dissolve; herein there is no cause for sorrow." That precious and beloved body, so long treasured in our hearts as Sri Bhagavan, was, as a physical vehicle, a compound and had to separate in time into its component elements, disappearing from those eyes which so long delighted in it with reverent affection.

So too, Sri Krishna found it expedient that His Gopi devotees be made to enrich their love for Him by withdrawing His outward Form from their adoring eyes. Then He sent Uddhava to hint to them how they could now be always in His presence and find Him ever dancing in their hearts. When the eyes of love have no longer to seek with yearning for the Beloved outside, the eye of the inner heart is turned within, and there realizes His living ecstatic presence.

And so it has been with us. The inevitable happened on that April evening in 1950, and the dear body which had been so long the centre, the focus of our hearts' gaze ceased to delight our eyes. Can we say that He is dead? Bhagavan dead? The word could have no meaning. How can He who lives in all the universe ever taste of death? "You think I am going away? But where am I to go? I shall remain here with you!" That was His promise while He was preparing us for the seeming separation. And those of us who loved Him here in Tiruvannamalai hold firmly to the faith which we feel confirmed by continual experience,

that He has kept His promise, and is still to be contacted here in the Ashram as of old.

Like Surdas darkening the physical sight so that he might see clearly the Light within, He has dimmed our outer sight to His radiance only, so that the inner vision might be filled with His eternal Light. He has veiled the outer Form we loved so well, that its beauty might no longer draw our gaze away from the everlasting Presence enthroned in our inmost Heart.

Painful was that veiling to our human hearts. Yet in these days of seeming deprivation, happy indeed are we, if we be driven thereby inward, to see and love Him there; shining as the Heart of all, the ineffable radiant Self, manifesting ever as the Self of our self, the very Being of our being, the ever-blessed Awareness of all Truth, the Stillness of omnipresent Bliss-*Satchidananda*.

Our hearts were kindled to deep affection while He taught us by word and example, while He silently showers the nectar dew of Grace upon us all. Today they turn to Him within, by day and night, no less than of old; and they rejoice to find that Grace wells up unceasingly from the Fountain of the One Self, who alone is all Wisdom, Love and Power.

At His tender feet, that trod the rough hill path for so long, our grateful love and undying memory we lay. May He accept these poor gifts of our hearts, and pour His grace on all who wander in the darkness of the unknown tracts of primal ignorance. His Light shines, with the everlasting clarity of God's own Light.

PART THREE

THE GURU'S TEACHING

25. THE ESSENCE OF THE TEACHING

IN the course of a conversation with Sri Bhagavan, I once had occasion to say that having spent a lifetime in contact with Him, having imbibed His teachings as given in numerous conversations and discussions with others, and having also studied the works of Sri Bhagavan, I felt I could in a word summarise His teachings.

On being graciously ordered to do so, I said that all His teachings amounted to this — that He alone IS, and everything else only *seems* to be but really is *not*.

Sri Bhagavan smiled and, saying, “Yes, yes, yes!” left it there.

I quoted from His teachings: “The fourth state (*turiya*) alone is; the appearances of the three states are naught.”

26. WHAT DOES THE GURU SAY?

WE approach the Guru in the restlessness of our mind and find no satisfaction in anything done or achieved. He gives us His benign look of Grace; in that one look is the real touch of Grace. His proximity is the harbour of Peace, in Him you find your haven of safety. He is the healer of all sores in you. You seem to be melted and lost in Him. You are now still. The Guru says, “Be still, and Know that I am God.” This knowing is the understanding of the absolute and relative values of Life.

Understanding what? It is the distinctive knowledge (the *vijnana*) of the eternal unchanging Truth of your self. In the background of this eternal and unchanging Truth, the changeful and varying states of your doership move about and cloud your understanding of the Real Truth of your Being.

To put this more clearly, in the words of Sri Bhagavan, “You are the Self (*atman*).” Now no one will deny he is the Self, the eternal changeless basis of himself. This Self is Pure Being, conscious of Itself. It is Pure Bliss, in the sense that in Itself it is not touched or affected by the pleasures and pains of your varying states. Know to fix yourself as this Self, and to abide as such, unmoved by the fluctuating feelings of pain and pleasure, which pass and re-pass before you, the unaffected Self.

There must be no clouded vision of yourself. Whatever the nature of your doership and enjoyership, painful or pleasurable, you are always tranquil in the firmness of your real Being, as realised by the distinctive knowledge (*vijnana*) of yourself. This is the surest way to Peace, as taught by the Upanishads and by Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

Now you have been told about the constant part of yourself, and you also have to be told about the variable quantity in you. It is the mind. This is responsible for all your moods and states of being, and their activities, painful and pleasurable. Its nature is to identify itself with the body and induce it to activities, leading to pleasure or pain. This is due to its *rajasic* (active) and *tamasic* nature (inert and dark).

Through these qualities the mind not only identifies itself with the gross body, but it also veils and hides the constant part of yourself, the *atman* (real Self).

But there is also a saving grace about the mind. Apart from its *rajasic* and *tamasic* nature, there is in it a *sattvic* aspect (calm, harmonious). The wise try ever to enhance this *sattvic* aspect through all activities dedicated to God. You can learn how to improve this aspect of the mind through study of the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*. This *sattvic* aspect should be so developed as to first control the *rajasic* and *tamasic* qualities (*gunas*), and later to annihilate them, so that the *sattvic* quality comes to be 100 per cent of the mind. In this state the mind can be used as an instrument to get understanding (*vijnana*) of the constant quantum of your Being — the *Sat-chit-anandam*, or Being-Consciousness-Bliss.

This understanding can be had by separating the mind from the gross body, to which it has been so long outwardly projecting, and taking it inwards towards the Self, your constant Being. When the mind is so trained as to be more and more in contact with the Self, then there arises perfect understanding and abidance in the Real.

You are really free in yourself; the clouds do not really affect you. Yet you are also outwardly active, according to the latencies of the past karma in you, which work out according to the law of that karma. The potter has given up his hold on the wheel; yes, but the wheel still moves on owing to the momentum still left in it.

In the same way you move, and yet you are unaffected, no longer clinging to the action. You do; yet you feel you are no more the doer. You enjoy or suffer; yet you feel you are no more the one who suffers or enjoys. You are a mere witness of all things in your varying states: waking, dreaming and sleeping. You are you, or I am I, or the Self is the Self; and these states pass and re-pass. This is the state of real knowledge (*jnana*) or real devotion (*bhakti*). This is the message of the *Gita*. This is equally the message of our benign Guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Let us heed it and in our desperate need take full courage. May Sri Gurudeva so bless us that we abide as the Self, and so have done with the egoic 'I' and its endless round of coming and going. Lokamanya Tilak declared: "*Swaraj* is my birthright, and I shall have it." So too Gurudeva declares, "Pure Knowledge is your Birthright, and you shall have it."

27. THE KNOWER AND THE MAGICIAN

PEOPLE who visited Bhagavan used to discuss with Him the several aspects of spiritual life and also the attainment of psychic and magical powers (*siddhi*). Bhagavan used to say that we are all *siddhas*, because it is only after very great efforts and penances that we achieved this bodily existence. The purpose of this wonderful attainment is to achieve the greatest of all attainments — the pure Existence-Knowledge Bliss. But if we use embodiment only to gain psychic powers, we only put on more fetters — golden chains for iron ones. All the same, fetters are fetters, and to remove those of gold you have to requisition the service of the supreme fetter-breaker, namely one who has attained *Nirvana*.

In the view of a knower [*jnani*], these powers are no more real than those gained in a dream. Suppose a beggar has a dream that he is a king ruling some kingdom. So long as the dream lasts, he has the pleasure and satisfaction of being the king, but the moment he wakes up he has to pick up his begging bowl again to appease his hunger. So too, these powers satisfy only so long as they pertain to the existence of the inner nature. But when that is found to be non-existent, then will come the rude shock of finding these powers as essentially false.

To illustrate this principle, Bhagavan used to quote the story in the '*Prabhulinga Lila*' of a great *Siddha* named Gorakhnath. After very great efforts of various kinds, this man had so perfected his physical body that it would not die even for a thousand years. He put his body to various tests, and it stood them all well. In high glee at the success of his bodily perfection he invited all great souls and yogis to cut his body with a sword. When they subjected his body to this test, it could never be cut or pierced by the sword, but from it emanated such a loud metallic clang that its resonance lasted for several minutes, as in the case of temple bells. The *siddha* was so contented at having overcome the fear of death, that it never occurred to him that his embodied state must still come to an end some day or other.

While he was feeling supremely happy in his fool's paradise, he heard of a great *Jnani*, Allama Prabhu, to whom people were flocking day in and day out in large numbers, to sit at his feet and imbibe the bliss of his Being, and to benefit from the Truth of his spoken words. Needless to say, this *Jnani* was in fact Lord Sankara Himself incarnate in that form to help mankind. He explained to all who came to Him that all our bodily experiences are false; being based on the non-existent separateness of individuals; also that unless the Self be realized as the witness-Light before whom the three states of waking, dream and sleep pass and re-pass, one cannot remain unaffected by the experiences of mind-stuff, pleasant and painful, and that the Fourth State is the permanent aspect

of Being, experienced in and as the Centre (*akasa*) of the Heart. This State is one indivisible whole in all beings, on realizing which all sense of opposites and triplicities vanish. In brief, His teaching was that you are the Absolute Reality, the One unique witness of all — indeed, rather that the very ‘all’ does not exist, for the word implies something outside itself as a non-existent duality, whereas there is only the One conscious Being-Awareness, which you are. To be That is the only real Bliss.

Now our great *siddha* resorted to this *Jnani*'s presence out of idle curiosity to see what kind of man He was, and if possible to arrogantly challenge Him and scoff at His teaching. He was surprised to find that the *Jnani* was a poor specimen of bodily health, a mere skeleton of skin and bone. He accosted Him in not very venerable terms, saying: “They say you are a great *Jnani* who has overcome the fear of death. But what a miserable sort of body you live in! Do you think that with this body you can have overcome the fear of death? Look at me! I am sure that I have so perfected my body that it can never be killed. Here is a sword; try it on this body, and you will see for yourself the nature of my attainment!”

The *Jnani* requested to be excused from making such a hazardous experiment. But when Gorakhnath persisted in his request, He took up the sword and struck it against his body. Of course, the metallic sound came out and echoed for a while. In all seeming humility, Allama Prabhu pretended to be greatly impressed by the man's attainment. Said He: “It is indeed a great power you have attained; all

glory to you! But now that I have granted your request to test your body, you must now grant me my request to subject my body to the same experiment. Please take the sword and kill me with it!”

The *siddha* was afraid to do this; he said the *Jnani* would die. But the *Jnani* said, “It will not matter if I die, for I shall not hold you responsible.” So the man took up the sword and struck at the *Jnani’s* body. To his great surprise, the sword passed straight through the body without affecting it in any way. Gorakhnath found that he could pass it from left to right, from right to left, to and fro, and yet Allama Prabhu was in no way affected by it. It was as though the sword were passing through empty air!

This gave him a rude shock indeed. He said to Allama, “What is it that I have achieved after all? I have only baked the pot, while you have the core of the deathless Being. Great Guru, pray take me as your disciple, and teach me how to know the Immortal Self!” Saying this, the *siddha* fell prostrate at the feet of the *Jnani*, who accepted him as his disciple and taught him the Knowledge beyond knowledge and ignorance.

Now this story was a wonderful illustration of the real state of Bhagavan’s imperishable Being, and all who loved Truth enjoyed it and were enlightened about the state everlasting.

28. HOW THE “*FIVE HYMNS TO ARUNACHALA*” CAME ABOUT

TO be calm and know “I AM THAT I AM”, is really Bhagavan’s one work. The inmost core, the Heart, the Divine shining all alone as ‘I-I’, the Self-aware, is He. This centre simply IS; It is all Knowledge and all Bliss. It is from here that all begin to manifest, and in It all get lost. Being Itself That, It is all peace; no discord is there since the ‘I’ or ego does not arise and has no ‘he’ or ‘you’ to oppose. Being the ever-present and all-pervading, the Supreme ‘I’ is the Lord, Ramana who ever rejoices.

This state of Pure Bliss is the Supreme Man; the Truth Absolute is such as cannot be hidden under any cover. It spreads far and wide, and attracts to Itself kindred or seeking souls. It is Stillness, eternally expressive. Others can know it, enjoy it, but cannot know its fullness nor Its source. They long to know, but the Stillness is unbreakable. Their longing grows and becomes an agony.

This Stillness, diamond hard, is milky kindness and at last responds. First it stirs, finds voice, and lisps a syllable or two. Though pregnant with fire and penetrating like light, the Voice seems like the prattle of a child. Then, gradually attuned, it picks up its chords and trickles out — first as a small gentle stream, then expanding like the majesty of the Ganga, fertilising the soul by the waters of its songs,

and surpassing itself in revealing the placidity of ocean depths.

Such is the origin and the growth of Sri Bhagavan's spoken words, which have been gathered up in the form of published works.

“Aksharamanamalai” (The Marital Garland of Letters) first and foremost of His hymns to Arunachala, came out in response to the prayers of his *sadhu*-devotees for some distinctive prayer songs which they could sing on their rounds for alms. Usually, when Sri Maharshi's devotees went around singing common songs, the householders in the town knew that the food was being partaken of by Sri Bhagavan; and they gave large quantities of food, as against a single morsel given to other groups of *sadhus*. Knowing this, a few unscrupulous beggars began to pose as the Ramana group and created difficulties for them. To get over this difficulty, there was felt the need for a distinctive prayer-song.

When the request for such a song was made, Bhagavan as usual kept quiet and for a long time there seemed to be no prospect of their desire being fulfilled. But during one of the processions round the Hill, there blossomed forth from Sri Bhagavan the 108 sweet flowery verses strung like a marriage garland for Arunachala, the Lord of the Heart. These songs are like the outpourings of a pining soul to her lover, and they are no less ardent than Saint Manickavachakar's for Siva. These and other soul-stirring hymns of Sri Bhagavan are the delight and solace of His devotees, who sing them to this day in the Hall.

The following few verses, though a poor rendering from Tamil, amply gather in our hearts to the Lord:

1. "O Arunachala, Thou hast entered into me, drawn me and kept me enclosed in the cavity of Thy Self; why is this?"
2. "For whose sake didst Thou accept me as a lover? Do not abandon me, or the entire world would blame Thee.
3. "Avoid this blame. Why didst Thou at first make me remember Thee? Hereafter I can never abandon Thee.
4. "Take away this garb of mine; make me naked, and then clothe me in the raiment of Thy Grace.
5. "Be seated there in me; let the ocean of Bliss ebb, and let words and feelings subside in me.
6. "If Thou gather me not in Thy arms, my whole being will melt in tears and perish.
7. "There is no room for laughter (at my ugliness). Bedeck me with Thy Grace, me who has sought Thee, and then see.
8. "Let us cling together without distinction of 'Thou' and 'I', at rest in eternal Bliss; grant Me that State.
9. "Let me not dangle like a green creeper with nothing to hold; be Thou my support and save me.
10. "Come, let us be happy in the home of empty Space, void of night and day!"

The following few verses contain a profound Philosophy:

1. “Thou art the eye of the eye, and seest without the eye; who then can see Thee; O Arunachala?
2. “Thou art the food of all; I shall draw near to Thee and become Thy food, and then shall I go in peace.
3. “Thou art alone the Truth, and shalt Thyself reveal Thyself.
4. “I thought of Thee and fell into Thy Grace; and, like a spider in its web, Thou didst bind and swallow me!”

Next of the Hymns is the “Navamani Malai” (the Nine Gems); these were born on different occasions, but were strung together for their exquisite appeal to the Heart of different hues. The first of these explains the Dance of the motionless Arunachala, while the second equates the term Arunachala with Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*satchidananda*). Here is a strange thing; while in other holy Centres *Sakti* dances and Siva witnesses, here the display of the Mother’s activities cease, and merge in Siva that He may dance as Arunachala.

The “*Pathikam*” and the “*Ashtakam*” (Ten, and Eight verses), which come next, are a group by themselves.

The former begins with the word ‘*karunaiyaal*’ (by Thy Grace). This word had once been ringing in Sri Bhagavan times out of number. He tried several times to put it off, but it would not go. Again and again the word shone out in Him, and so pressed itself on His attention,

that at last He yielded to penning it. Once started, the stream began to flow, and it flowed into ten beautiful verses. Sri Bhagavan then thought that the course of the flow had fulfilled itself, but it had not yet finished. It still flowed on, changing form, dimensions and contents, and so built itself up into the “*Ashtakam*”. While the “*Pathikam*” was more in the nature of an appeal for Divine Grace, the “*Ashtakam*” is superb in that it explains in full and in such minute detail the significance of Arunachala, the Absolute Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, and how He, or IT, as the ‘I-I’ of our being transforms Himself into all that is manifest. Incidentally, it also traces back the course, to the Source to attain that state of Being which is supreme Stillness (*santi*).

Let us listen to verses 10 and 11 of the “*Pathikam*”:

“I have found a wonder; It is a mountain magnet that attracts life. Feel it but once, and It sets to rest the ills of life; nay, It draws it to face Itself, makes it still, and consumes the sweet life as an offering. Lo, what is This? Know that and be saved, O men; this destroyer of souls shines within as the great Aruna Hill.

“How many like me considered That as supreme and were lost? O, you that have lost your love of this life because its sorrows are so immense, and who wander in the desire of swift death, think but once and casually of that sweet Drug within, which kills without killing. Know It on earth as the great Arunachala!”

And now let us turn to the sweet verses 6 and 7 of the “*Arunachala Ashtaka*”:

“Thou art the One — the Heart, the Source of all knowledge and light. In Thee is the wondrous Power that is not apart from Thee. The series of pictures embedded, atom-like, in the film of Destiny (*prarabdha*) are by that Power projected through thought and knowledge upon the mirror-screen of the mind-light, and thereon display the shadow-world pictures which are perceived by sense organs within and without. O glorious Hill, Thou art like the screen; those pictures seen through the lens, whether they appear or disappear, are not apart from Thee!

“With the vanishing of Egoism, all thoughts vanish. Till then, when other thoughts arise ask yourself to whom they arise; ‘To me,’ the answer comes. Then question further whence the I-thought springs, and thus dive inwards and reach the seat of the Heart; then you become the Lord. There are there, no dreams of dualities like ‘I’ and ‘You’, like virtue and vice, birth and death, pleasure and pain, or light and darkness. In that Court, the Heart, the Supreme One dances motionless — the Aruna Hill the boundless Ocean of Grace and Light.”

The “*Arunachala Pancharatna*”, last of the hymnal series, was first composed by Sri Bhagavan in Sanskrit, and subsequently translated by Himself into Tamil verses. The first stanza, commencing “*Karunaa purna sudaabdhe*”, alone was casually written by Sri Bhagavan. Long afterwards, someone showed it to Sri Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, who requested Him to write four more verses in the same *arya* metre, the first being benedictory, the second on the Divine, and the next three being on *Jnana*, *Yoga* and *Bhakti*.

Thus it will be easily seen that these five gems form a complete treatise in themselves, and they are also devotional hymns giving immense consolation to those who sweeten themselves by chanting them. Sri Kavyakanta had planned to write an exhaustive commentary on these, such as could compare with the famous “*Maanasollaasa*” of Sri Sureswaracharya. But Providence took him from us before he could carry out this plan. There is however a good commentary in Sanskrit, by Sri Kapali Sastri called “*Arunachala Pancharatna Darpana*,” published by Sri Ramanasramam.

We quote verses 2 and 5 here, only as a sample:

“O Crimson Hill all these scrolls of painting arise, remain and merge in Thee; the Seers call Thee the Heart and Self, because Thou dancest in the Heart eternally as ‘I’.

“Seeing Thee eternally through the heart surrendered to Thee and seeing all as Thy form, he who does single-minded devotion to Thee is victorious, being merged in Thee.”

How clearly Sri Bhagavan has here explained the Truth; may His devotees who benefit by reading this be blessed!

29. WHERE IS THE DIVINE WORLD?

WHEN studying the Upanishads in my early days, I always visualised the Divine Abode in the Sun God and was performing the practices enjoined in certain texts. Even later, after settling at the abode of Sri Maharshi, I continued this practice (*upasana*). It proved very hard to succeed in this process, and I had to undergo very trying experiences, so I referred the whole matter to Bhagavan.

“So you want to go to the Divine World?” asked He.

“That is what I am trying to obtain; that is what the Scriptures prescribe,” I answered.

“But where are you now?” the Master asked.

I replied, “I am in Your presence.”

“Poor thing! You are here and now in the Divine World, and you want to obtain it elsewhere! Know that to be the Divine World where one is firmly established in the Divine. Such a one is full (*purna*); he encompasses and transcends all that is manifest. He is the substratum of the screen on which the whole manifestation runs like the picture film. Whether moving pictures run or not, the screen is always there and is never affected by the action of the pictures. You are here and now in the Divine World. You are like a thirsty man wanting to drink, while he is all the time standing neck-deep in the Ganga. Give up all efforts and surrender. Let the ‘I’, that wants the

Divine World die, and the Divine in you will be realised *here and now*. For, it is already in you as the Self, not different from the Divine (*Brahman*), nameless and formless. It is already in you, and how are you to obtain that which ever remains obtained? The Self (*atman*) in you is surely not different from US?” Thus spoke Bhagavan.

“So, then, Bhagavan says that He is the Self (*kutastha*) in this, the field of this soul (*jiva*), that This is already established in Bhagavan as such, so this soul need do nothing but give up the sense of being a separate soul?” I asked, prostrating before Bhagavan.

“Yes, yes,” He replied. “That is what one must do to drop the ego-sense. If that is done the Self will be experienced as ‘I-I’ *here and now* and at all times. There will be no going into the Divine World or coming out of it. You will be as you really are. This is the practice (*sadhana*) and this is perfection (*siddhi*) too.”

This teaching of Sri Bhagavan, Himself being the Divine World, is recorded for the benefit of all who are ever in Him.

30. WHO AM I?

I am the Self (*atman*). I am Being-Consciousness. Being is my nature. I am the Self-aware Witness-Consciousness. I have no identity with the three states — waking, dream and sleep; they pass and re-pass in my presence. I am the Knower of Reality; I have my identity with the Divine.

Being unattached to any fluctuations of the life-force and the mind, I have neither joys nor sorrows. These pertain to the states of waking and dream, which are the mental modes of the individual soul. In the waking state he is known as the [*viswa*]; in the dreaming state he is known as the radiant [*taijasa*]; in the sleeping state he is known as the wise [*prajna*]. I am the Knower of Reality. These three states are really non-existent, they function only as the result of the latent tendencies [*vasana*] of the mind; and even while they function and screen my real identity, I am the Self.

I am the Present ever-present, so I am not newly discovered or obtained, only I have no delusion about myself. I am unborn (*aja*), so death cannot affect me. For me death does not mean the loss of a body, whether gross, subtle or causal. To me death means only identifying the self with the non-self. This is intoxication (*pramada*) and this intoxication is Death. So has Sri Maharshi taught.

The discrimination which removes this intoxication (*pramada*) is Immortality. This Immortality is not obtained after prolonged penance and at some distant point of time. It is obtained *here* and *now*. As a result of this discrimination I steady myself to enquire who I am. After this enquiry, as instructed by the Benign Guru, I find the 'I' to be the real substratum, the Self ever aware. All this enquiry is only on the path, for the Final Goal is the supreme Wholeness, into which there is nothing to enquire.

I am the Final Goal of the path. The Reality that I AM appears to be hidden by confusion and a veil. But by the Grace of the Guru, I being fixed firmly in my own reality, the veils have fallen away, both inside and out; so I am the One Indivisible, the *Turiya* (Fourth State). Yet though it be termed the "fourth" with reference to the changing three states, yet this "fourth" is the substratum and the primal state of Being. When this "fourth" is in contact with the Guru's real nature, then is established Being, and then is the One Whole.

I am the Heart (*hrdaya*), the one eternal 'I-I'.

31. WHERE CAN THE SELF BE FOUND?

IN the state of deep sleep (*sushupti*), the Self experiences repose and unmixed bliss, and has the experience of coming out of it refreshed — from that ‘something’ into which the Self has receded while in deep sleep.

What is that ‘something’? That is the Self, the *Pratyag-atma*, the unaffected Witness-Conscious-Self Aware. This is the unchanging Truth, the ground of one’s real Being, in the presence of which the states of waking, dreaming and sleeping pass in succession. It is this real Being that is the ‘I-I’ in the Heart.

Sri Bhagavan urges that the basis of all manifestations be realised as the Self, self-aware as ‘I-I’ in the inmost core of the Heart, the Witness-Consciousness unmoved and unconditioned.

This realization alone can give the experience of Oneness of the Self with All; and only on realization of That can selfless work (*nishkama-karma*) become a matter of course. Then everything one does becomes spontaneous and natural (*sahaja-dharma*), and that is the universal religion (*viswa-dharma*), so inner experience and the outer life become co-ordinated in Integral Existence. That is pure Devotion (*bhakti*), true Yoga, and Full Knowledge (*purna-jnana*).

32. SILENCE: SELF-IMPOSED OR IMPOSED BY THE SELF?

THAT which is, is *sat* variously termed positively as Light, Supreme or Prime Consciousness, Fullness, Heaven, Silence, Grace, and negatively as *Nirvana*, *Nisreyah* and so on. Its aspects of *Chit* and *Ananda*, knowledge and Bliss, are expressed as the Heart of all that appears as Existence. In its aspect as Grace its one effort is to express itself through all that exists. This expression of joy is the eternal Dance behind all the wakefulness, dreams and peaceful sleep of life, though these three alone appear as our experience.

The effort of humanity from time immemorial has been to discover this Joy eternal and this has been termed *Tapasya*. The result of such an effort is not the attainment of something new but only fitting the vehicle so as to be overtaken by the ever-present Grace and be in It, and then to find that there is nothing but It. Wherever there is a perfect vehicle the overtaking and the expression of Grace are immediate and perfect, and such a one is termed Maharshi, *Siddha*, *Jivan-Mukta* and so on.

THE TRANSFORMATION

Nearly fifty six years ago such a perfect vehicle appeared on earth. After sixteen years of apparently normal

life the Grace of life awakened in Him, gushed in and out of Him, caught and drew His normal consciousness deeper and deeper inward into that in which nothing but Itself is seen or heard or known, in which there is not the shining of the sun, the moon, or the stars, but which is all these and fullness Itself. In the Grace enthralled or Grace-embraced condition, aware of nothing but ever-awareness, the vehicle was propelled or impelled to Arunachala, Light-Constant. Here, absolutely controlled by the Light ever-aware, He sat and sat and sat. He could not talk, not that He would not. He could not open His eyes, not that He would not. He could not move, not that He would not. What we call 'He' was under the control of an inner-something which was to Him an experience of unterminating awareness, and Bliss all-embracing. That state of fullness is the *Mouna* of perfect *Shanti*, the Reality into which the Maharshi awoke and in which there was no 'he' to act.

While the small bubble of 'he' was merged in the wide expanse and kept enthralled, His being was being renewed and reconstructed, the old faculties partook of the nature of the essence into which they were merged. Until His re-cloaking and re-decoration was complete, hugged the Son firmly in His sleep, and the Son, enjoying the inner recess of His Father's Chamber, was of necessity lost to all knowledge of the outer thatch. When this process of attuning was complete, the Parent let go the Child to play with whatever urchins might come to Him in the street. The Child, in the same way as the Parent and being

perfectly as towering a personality as the Father, was sure that He could not be tarnished by the touch of the foul urchins in the street. Nay, He was sure He could not only play with them, but was fully conscious that He could transform them all after His own and His Father's Image.

RETURN OF THE VOICE

When He came out, He found that He had lost His power of speech in the fullness of His joy and communion in the silent language of His Parent. He could have quietly slid back into the enjoyment of His Father's chamber, but no. He was all-compassion for the urchins, and He began to lisp and prattle like a new-born babe. Those who were fortunate enough to be close at hand, when He came out of His Father's Chamber, can testify to His first efforts to articulate. His vocal chords could not coherently put words together for long years after this release. Today His soothing voice, silvery eyes and golden touch are the solace of thousands and thousands of pilgrims from the East and the West. May this Grace be with us forever and bless all who long for Light.

33. THE DIVINE RULER (*Sastha*)

SASTHA worship is unique in itself, in that the mere mention of the name of *Sastha* is awe-inspiring and brings before the mind's eye a vision of the Absolute and the relative, of the unmanifest and the manifest, of Knowledge and of Grace, of Hara and Hari, Siva and *Sakti* (Creative power) and the culminating Inmost Knowledge (*swarupa-jnana*) born out of unity in diversity. In the background of this unity the diversities are seen as mere variations not apart from it. This is the grand Truth proclaimed by Hari-Hara's Son, which He beckons us to realize for our release from the bondage of the world (*samsara*).

In the Knowledge and Grace of this unity is experienced the Bliss of pure Being. In the Knowledge and Grace of this unity of Siva and *Sakti* is experienced the vision of Skanda, the destroyer of primal Ignorance. In the Knowledge and Grace of this unity of Hari and Hara is experienced the vision of *Sastha*, the bestower of supreme Good.

Hari screens Himself with His Vishnu-Maya and leads His souls towards dynamic activity, not for His own sake, but that the souls may evolve. In the perfection of their evolution, He throws away the veil, and also helps the evolved souls to cut asunder the Knot of primal Ignorance

(*hrdaya-granthi*). All doubts are set at rest, and the oneness of the Self and the All (*Brahman*) is experienced.

Herein is the aspect of *Sastha's* Grace: He teaches, instructs, communicates and governs the Supreme Knowledge, establishing the fundamental unity of the individual with the manifested world, and of the manifest and its abidance in the Absolute. He is the Essence of Hari-Hara Unity (*aikya*) and equally so of the one *Siva-Sakti*. He is Hayagriva; He is formed as Guru Govinda; He is Dakshinamurti, He is Ishwara, Guru and the Self, all in one.

This is the interpretation of Dharma-Sastha in the light of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings.

34. THE RIBHU GITA

RIBHU was a great Seer (*rishi*); his name finds mention in a few Upanishads like the *Tejobindopanishad*, the *Narada Parivrajakopanishad*, and the *Varahopanishad*. He is reputed to have obtained Divine Knowledge direct from the Supreme Lord Himself, and then to have taught it to several disciples, such as the Sage Nidagha. His teachings to him are contained in the '*Ribhu-gita*,' which forms a section of the '*Siva-rahasya*' but to the best of our knowledge this section has not yet been printed in Sanskrit; we have a rendering into simple and easily understood Tamil verse by Sri Lokanatha Swamigal, also known as Bhikshu Shastri. This Tamil rendering was often read before Sri Bhagavan, and Tena Patti's recitals were the most inspiring. As Sri Bhagavan often used to refer to or quote from it, the *Ribhu-gita* finds mention in all works relating to Him.

Long after Ribhu had taught Nidagha, he desired to learn how his old disciple fared. Disguised as an ignorant villager, the Master asked Nidagha what the procession was; and was told that the King was going in procession seated on the elephant. Ribhu next asked, "And which is the elephant, which the King?" The disciple replied, "Why, the one below is the elephant, and the one above is the king!"

Feigning not to understand the terms 'above' and 'below', the disciple was made to demonstrate so that the disguised Sage might understand them. Chiding the supposed villager as a hopeless ignoramus, Nidagha got on the back of the Master, and said: "Now 'I' am above; and 'you' are below."

Next, alas! the poor villager could not understand either 'I' or 'you', and questioned the disciple about the meaning of these terms also. Light then dawned on the disciple, who discovered that the villager was no other than his illustrious Master, come to bless him and make him realize himself. Nidagha prostrated before the Master Ribhu, who had graciously come to find out his disciples mode of life and progress.

This is story. An anecdote about the translation by Bhikshu Shastri is worth relating. Deeply struck by the pure Advaita of the teachings in this Gita, the translator held so steadfastly to that glorious doctrine that he denied the truth or reality of all phenomena, including the Gods themselves; he said their existence is as true only as that of the barren woman's son, the hare's horn and the flowers seen in the sky. Teased too much by his atheism, the manifest Gods put the translator to the test, and he lost his eyesight; only when he wrote verses in praise of the Lord Nataraja was his sight restored to him. To have this punishment for daring to defy the Form-aspect (*saguna*) of the Formless (*nirguna*) Divine excused, he had to write a verse in praise of Sri Nataraja at the end of each of the 44 chapters of the *Ribhu-gita*.

This is the essence of the teaching of this precious Gita, so often referred to by Sri Bhagavan:

“The Self is one and whole, Self-awareness. This is the Divine (*Brahman*) the Indestructible, the Existent, Beginningless and Endless Many. There is nothing apart from the Self (*atman*), not anything else worthy of meditation. All that is manifest — the ‘I’, the ‘you’, the ‘he’, the Lord, and the all — all is the Divine. There is not even an atom apart from the Self that IS, the Single Unbroken Essence (*akhanda eka rasa*). Therefore the surety, ‘I am the Divine’ (*aham Brahmasmi*) is the endless True Knowledge. Know: ‘I am Being-Awareness-Bliss, of the nature of my own Self. I am without any differentiation of caste, clan, birth, and the like I am the Divine Absolute shining eternally in all splendour as the All, the Full, spotless, intelligent, ever unbound, true and still, beyond the body, senses, life-current, thought, intellect mind and ego-sense; unattached to the five sheaths (*kosa*), unaffected by the incidents of birth and death, void of a world that is lifeless and animate, you are That. This is experienced as ‘I am the Divine’ by negating through stainless enquiry the whole concept of individual, the world and beyond.

“The *maya* of the world is not for you; you are the bliss of spotlessness, without either purpose or uncertainty. You are the purport of Vedanta. You are the indivisible form beyond the three clouds. You are yourself the One Self, without attributes or changes, which cannot be experienced by mind or speech. Here, there, this, that, I and he — all such thoughts convey is only mind; the

elements and their compounds are only mind. The concepts of time, space, objects, the triads and their appearances, celestials and men, Hari and the Creator Brahma, the Guru and the disciple — all are mind alone.

“Here is the true form of worship: ‘I am the ocean of Bliss that is ever full!’ — this beatitude is the true bath in holy water (*abhisheka*) for the divinity of the Supreme Lord. ‘I am the unbounded Expanse!’ this beatitude is the offering of cloth to the Supreme Lord Siva. ‘I am the Self!’ — this beatitude is the real offering of ornaments to the Supreme Lord Siva. Discarding the thought-form leading to the qualities (*gunas*) — this is the offering of the boundless to Siva the Supreme Lord. The annihilation of all sense of difference between the Self, the Guru, and the Lord — that is the offering of *bel*-leaves to Siva, the Supreme Lord. Casting away the tendencies of the past (*vasana*) — this is the burning of incense to Paramasiva, the Supreme Lord. ‘I am the attributeless Paramasiva, the Supreme Lord!’ — this beatitude is the waving of Light (*arati*) before the Supreme Lord, Siva. Realising that the Divine and the Self are one — is the burning of fragrant gums before Siva, the Supreme Lord. That alone is the offering of flowers, in which one abides as the Self, the Supreme Bliss. That alone is the singing of the Name in harmony (*namasankirtan*), wherein one conceives himself as being without names and forms.

“I am the Supreme Knowledge determined by the scriptures on spiritual wisdom (*vedanta*). I am the solid Bliss abiding as in the universal Great Silence. I am the single impartible Own Form (*swarupa*).

“Abidance in the Void is firmness; that itself is wisdom (*jnana*), liberation, Siva and the Alone (*kaivalya*). The forms of thought are impurity, creating time-space and the differentiation of the world and individual, very harmful. Mind takes the form of intention and uncertainty. The egoic self does not really exist; the Truth is ‘I am the Divine (*ahambrahmasmi*)’. Meditate on this, practise the wisdom yoga, destroy all sense of difference, be freed from the disease of mind, obtain the Stillness of the tangible experience, and come to realize the release from bondage. Abiding in the Self as ‘I am the Divine’ is the real ablution; the determination of the Self as the ever-realized Divine is the real heaven.

“He is freed while alive (*jivanmukta*) who, motionless like the Hill, is still and immaculate, the Self in Itself, absolute Existence experienced as Bliss. Rid of individuality, rid of all concepts, he who is *still*, as pure Light, immaculate, peaceful solid Bliss, he who is free without a body (*videhamukta*). Knowing, feeling, thinking, praying, determining, mingling, abiding all these must be in the Self Itself. Meditate incessantly on ‘*Aham Brahmasmi*’ until it becomes permanent; later on, be freed from even this thought and be the Self Itself alone.

“Seeing anything apart from the Divine is the cause of the sense of difference and so of fear. The thought-waves that rise in the mind are the cause of bondage. When there is no mind, there is neither world nor individual soul. The conquest of the mind is the greatest

of all conquests. It is the Divine Himself who appears as world, individual and the beyond. So abidance as the Divine at all times and in all places will result in conquering the mind. Then will you come to realize 'All Is the Divine; I am that Self;' and you will attain the natural state.

"The view 'That am I' is the surest way to conquer the mind. 'There is nothing apart from me; the three states, the five sheaths, the three qualities, the separate and the crowd (*vyashti, samashti*) — all these are not apart from me. All that is seen is the Seer, the Self; be at peace by the feeling 'That am I'. Cast off the idea 'I am the body'; be firm in the feeling 'I am'... the Self.

"The conclusions of the Four Vedas — Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva... are all the same: the 'well-known Divine,' the 'I am the Divine', the 'That art thou', and 'I am the Self Creative *Brahma*, you are the Divine Knowledge'. He who teaches you thus is the real Guru. After obtaining this teaching (*upadesa*), throw off all other books and be firm in meditating on 'I am the Divine.'

"Let the Pure Existence of the Divine alone be realized; if the sun of this Knowledge arises, how can the darkness of ignorance prevail? The mind of him who is certain that the Divine is one and whole cannot be shaken by the Great Illusion (*maya*) even if the vast Mount Meru be shaken by tying it to a thread. Practise 'That am I' (*soham*); the experience 'I am Siva' (*Sivoham*) will make you into Siva. Therefore sing '*Sivoham, Sivoham, Sivoham!*'"

35. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS*

1. Q. When was the 'Truth Revealed', '*Ulladu Narpadu*' composed, and what was its cause or purpose?

A. '*Ulladu Narpadu*' was not specially written to constitute a systematic treatise on Truth, but was first composed as stray stanzas by Bhagavan between the years 1923 and 1927. When some aspect of Truth was discussed and explained, it was couched in verse form, and when these amounted to 40 verses, they were arranged into a systematic treatise with reference to the subject-matter of each stanza. Strangely enough, there was found to be a sequence and continuity of thought in these; the whole work then came to be admired, read, re-read, digested and discussed by various persons, who commented on them from various points of view.

2. Q. When and for whom was the 'Spiritual Instruction', '*Upadesamanjari*' composed?

A. This book does not contain the direct words or writings of Bhagavan. But one devotee, Sri Natanananda, who noted down his discussions with Him later expanded them into a short treatise.

* These questions were received by post at the Ashram, and the replies were drafted by the author, Sri T.K.S.

Bhagavan went through this carefully line by line and approved of the whole. So it came to be included as part of Sri Bhagavan's own work. The book was compiled at about the same time as '*Ulladu Narpadu*.'

3. Q. I should like to know when the Maharshi broke His vow of silence. Was it when He opened His mouth to Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni to inform him that if one repeats a *mantra* and watches whence it springs, that is *Tapas*? Please clarify.

A. It is a mistaken notion that Bhagavan observed silence as a vow or a spiritual practice (*sadhana*). From the days of His grand Realization, He was so much absorbed in Himself that pure Being became His very nature, His natural state (*sahaja*). He had no vow not to talk, but there was no need to talk. Those who came in contact with Bhagavan in those days took it for granted that He would not talk, and as they did not themselves talk to Bhagavan, He kept silent. Thus the language of Silence continued until Palaniswamy's efforts to read Tamil books like the '*Kaivalya Navaneetham*' struggling like a schoolboy excited Bhagavan's compassion to read out the books for Palaniswamy. You will find this recorded on pp. 72-74 of the Fourth Edition of '*Self-Realization*' (1944).

The great act of Sri Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni was his proclaiming the Master in 1907 as *Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi*, by which name He came to be universally known ever since then.

4. Q. I know I should not ask you this, but frankly I cannot understand how the Maharshi changed from an introvert to an extrovert at a later period of His life. Of course I use these words in a very general and relative sense. What I mean is that at one time He was unaware of the most vicious bites on His body, while in the later part of His life we see Him proof-reading, giving minute attention to detail, etc. Whence this transition? — from complete and utter indifference even to the care of health or body to minute attention to objects of external perception? I trust you will clarify this point.

A. This question arises because there is no clear understanding of Ramana as Being-Consciousness [*Sat-Chit*]. Was Ramana the six-foot body? Was He in it, or outside it or both in and out? Was He as the Supreme Self confined to space-time? If you conceive of Him as being a transcendental Existence, this confusion of thought will not arise. Has He not said that He is the One Substratum of all that is, was and shall be? The pot is neck downward in the ocean of water; there is water in and out; the water is Ramana, not the pot. Well, we shall leave it at that, hoping that you will easily catch the point.

Bhagavan was neither introvert nor extrovert, because for Him there is no *in* or *out*. He *IS*, that is, Pure Being only. All that appeared to others was only phenomena reflected in the mirror of the

Supreme Being of Bhagavan. So we may say that He was extroverted while doing such actions as proof-reading, yet was always merged in the Self within. Please note that the Scriptures also confirm this point of view, saying, “All this is the Self, all this is the Eternal Truth, all this is Brahman,” and the like.

5. Q. What is the *Ajata-vada*?

A. It is the doctrine of no birth. Nothing is or ever was born, nor does it decay or die.

6. Q. Then what do we see happening before us?

A. The seer and the seen are mere phantoms as in a dream vision.

7. Q. But dream is bound up with sleep, while here we are awake.

A. What is sleep except being unaware of your own being? Mental activity in such unawareness gives rise to confusing thoughts; thus comes the mistake of seeing what is not and missing what is. Similarly in the waking state; we miss the Self and see the world, which really is not. That which is not cannot be born or die; it seems to emerge from the Real Being, and also merge in It again. To become aware of this Real Being is the ultimate goal of the man who is ignorant of It but yearns to realise It.

Ajata-vada fulfils this purpose, and it is based on the fundamentals laid down in the Upanishads and elaborated in the *Karika* of the *Mandukyopanishad* —

which has been elaborately explained by Sri Sankaracharya. The original of this work is in Sanskrit, and its translation is available in English from Sri Ramakrishna Mission, Madras — 4.

Others who cannot rise up to this level and yet consider themselves very learned, deluding themselves that they are also infallible, offer other interpretations of the *Upanishads*. In this view this exposition is called a *vada*, a doctrine.

Restatements of this *Ajata vada*, or expositions of this doctrine, either partial or full may be found in 'Yoga Vasishtha', and we may add that our own publications, the 'Tripura Rahasya' and Lakshmana Sarma's ('Who') *Maha Yoga*, are also based on this principle.

PART FOUR

APPENDIX

36. TIRUVANNAMALAI-ARUNACHALAM

THE Lord enshrined in the great Temple here is known by the name of *Arunachaleswara** (Tamil: *Annamalaiyar*). The Mother Uma enshrined in the Temple is known as *Apithakucha Nayaki* (Tamil: *Unnamulai Amman*). The Lord has in truth no name, no form; He embodies Himself in name and form, so that His devotees may easily see and love Him.

The Tamil land has indeed the fortune to be studded with sacred shrines of the embodied Lord; this has enriched her culture and made her glorious. Of these great shrines, Tiruvannamalai is unique in that Brahma and Vishnu sought the furthestmost limits of Arunachala, while He stood as a huge column of Fire. The failure of their efforts brought the two primal Gods to realize the truth of their own Being, and rid them of the sense of doership. The day these Gods first worshipped Arunachala is known as the *Mahasivaratri* Day.

* The problem of scientific and common sense transliteration of Sanskrit and Tamil words is very hard to solve. In this volume, whereas usually the normal scientific method has been adopted, in the case of certain words like 'Maharshi', 'Vishnu', etc. which have become so familiar in their common form, it was felt that to change the spellings would be pedantic. When words have been used a number of times in this book, it has not been found necessary to translate them every time or to adhere to the diacritical points of their correct spellings. Tamil forms of semi-anglicised words like 'Ashram' have been dropped.

Mother Uma covered Siva's eyes with her palms, and the result was a huge deluge of the Worlds. Siva admonished Uma for this untimely deluge, and ordered her to go into the world to make amends for her action. So Uma did penance here in Arunachalam under Rishi Gautama's guidance. During this penance she encountered and killed Mahishasura. On the full moon day of *Karthikai*, Siva blessed her with the light of His Being. Uma went round the Hill and obtained her rightful half in Siva; the '*Karthikai*' Festival is held to commemorate this, when a huge concourse of devotees gather from all parts of India to witness. The mere sight of the Hill helps them control the fluctuations of their thoughts (*vritti*); one-pointedly they are devoted to the thought of Arunachala, go round the Hill, gaze at the Beacon on its summit, and cry "*Harohara* to Annamalai!" The millions of voices must indeed be heard even in the heavens, while here down below people are blessed with entry into their ecstatic being.

Rishi Bhringi would not worship the diverse manifestations of Maya here and would contemplate only the Absolute Being Himself. As he was emaciated for want of the grace of Divine Power (*Sakti*), Siva blessed him with a third leg to support himself on. He is said to have pierced the male-female (*ardhanariswara*) form of Siva and to have gone round Siva alone. Siva granted Liberation to this Sage, and Parvati was angry at this slight. It is in commemoration of this event that the grand *Tiruvudal* Festival is held; the *darsan* of Arunachala on that day is a sight fit for Gods to see with joy.

Of the great Five Establishments (*Panchabhutasthala*) Arunachalam stands at the very centre; of the Six Support places (*sadadhara*) Arunachalam is the navel; of the Four Places that give Liberation (*Muktisthala*), Arunachalam has the reputation of granting deliverance at the very thought of it. It has all the requirements of Form, Pilgrimage and Place — the attributes of a perfect place for giving Liberation.

In the first Age (*krta*) its form was fire; in the Second (*treta*) it was emerald; in the Third (*dwapara*), gold; and in this last (*Kali*) age it is seen in earthy form. In this holy place was the seat of the kingdom of King Ballala, whose one delight was never to say “No” to anyone who sought anything from him. Arunachala came in the form of a Child and played in this King’s lap, and the Lord said that as the King had no progeny He would Himself perform his annual ceremonies (*sraddha*) for all eternity. Even today there is a festival to commemorate this fact every year.

The Hill here is considered the very Form of Arunachala. Many have gone clockwise round the Hill and obtained great powers (*siddhi*) — gods, sages, kings, and many beings of the lower kingdoms; it is said that groups of Perfect Ones (*siddhas*) are eternally going round Arunachalam.

The Lord Himself goes round the Hill with His Consort twice a year.

On the eight cardinal points round the Hill there are eight *lingas* and eight *nandis* (stone bulls) with their holy waters. Round the Hill there are 360 sacred waters (of

which only a few are now visible), such as the *Indra Tirtha*, *Agni Tirtha*, *Isanya Tirtha* and *Khadga Tirtha*; the *Brahma Tirtha* and *Sivaganga* are inside the great Temple of Arunachaleswara, and the *Mulaipal Thirtha* is some way up the Hill.

Like the gigantic forms and constructions of the Temple, the Vehicles (*vahanas*) are equally huge and imposing; so too are the beautifully decked deities that ride on them. It is rare to find such grand processions elsewhere.

Sri Jnanasambandar and Sri Vageesa, two of the Saivite Saints have visited this spot and sung of Arunachala and Uma; five of their Hymns on Arunachala are found in the *Tevaram*, and the world famous *Tiruvembavai* of Manickavachakar was first sung near Adi-Annamalai Temple behind the Arunachala Hill.

It was here also that the great Arunagirinathar with his grand experience of the Self (*jnananubhuti*) flourished and spread the glory of Lord Subramania by his *Tiruppugal* songs. It was here that he triumphed over Sambandandan, the worshipper of Uma, and here he obtained *darshan* of Lord Subramania for King Prabuddhadevaraya; in commemoration of the latter event we have the Shrines of Kambattu Ilayanar and Gopurathu Ilayanar in the great Temple.

“Arunachalam attracts those firm in wisdom (*jnana*)”; this is the glory He has earned by the gift of His Grace. In accordance with this fame of His, many are the great souls who have been drawn to Arunachalam, among whom

only a few are Guhanamasivaya, Gurunamasivaya, Isanyadesika, Seshadriswamy, and Ramana Maharshi. They came here from far off places, and rejecting all spots on the way chose to live and merge in Arunachalam, the Primal Being. This very thought uplifts our mind towards the ever-present Arunachalam.

37. MY LITTLE ONES

Arunachala, the Single Lamp of Love,
Was lit and shines in Ramanachala.

This lights itself again in a million hearts;
It glows and glows, consuming the dirt and dross in all.

I too was lit in that Light that day;
It glowed as the 'I'...'I' of the Heart;
But the accumulated dirt of ages would not let it shine-
Perhaps it is dim or flickering there.

I would this pot were broken;
But to live to see that Light shine in clear pots;

That is, indeed, the pleasure I enjoy;
I see the lamp of Ramanachala in my little ones;

I shall not mention names, for they'll be shy.
I see my little ones and enjoy the lamp of love,
The Love lit by Ramanachala,

May His family increase,
May His Light flourish,
May It ever proclaim Itself in Its unseen effulgence-
That is ever my heartfelt prayer.

38. SIX VERSES IN PRAISE OF SRI BHAGAVAN

BY T. K. SUNDARESA IYER

1. We adore that 'Ramana' whose totality is Awareness; who is the embodiment of all Knowledge; who has neither birth nor death; who is the prop of all existing life-force; who accepts service rendered by spiritual aspirants; with whom there is none to compare; to whom none is superior; who shines in our soul as Knowledge just as the Sun shines in the sky and on whom all the worlds depend for their existence; to Him we offer our obeisance.
2. Those who worship the Graceful Feet of Sri Ramana Bhagavan, who is the incarnation of Lord Subrahmanya residing in Arunachalam, will be blessed with the virtues of mind-control and restraint of outgoing senses. He will thus be enabled to look upon pleasure and pain with equanimity; the restless mind getting one-pointed will bloom into Blissful *sphurana* (Awareness).
3. He who meditates ever on *Om Ramanaya Namaha* is free from the fear of Death. When death approaches and the Self is veiled, meditation on the sacred syllable of 'Ramana' rescues us from death by putting an end to Death itself.

4. Verily the Self in the Heart appears as the five elements, as the sun, moon and stars, as angels and different deities; as the vast space and as the origin and source of all this. Let us adore the Self as 'Ramana'.
5. 'Ramana', the Pure Self, whose Grace emanates from its seat — the Heart, whose Grace plays upon His serene face, and is directed through His most beautiful eyes, blessing all who turn to Him.
6. Harken! I shall tell you about the Golden Abode of Wisdom where the Omnipotent 'Ramana' resides. Without renouncing the internal and external attachments, it is impossible even for the keenest intellect to approach the Heart, where He shines alone, as Grace and where the Milk of Knowledge overflows. Come, let us abide there, drink the nectar of Grace and be Liberated!