

A SADHU'S REMINISCENCES
OF
RAMANA MAHARSHI

By

SADHU ARUNACHALA
(Major A. W. Chadwick)



SRI RAMANASRAMAM
TIRUVANNAMALAI
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Om Namo Bhagavathe Sri Ramanaya

INTRODUCTION

Sadhu Arunachala of Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, is a good example of perfect devotion to our Guru, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Some twenty-five years ago the name and fame of Bhagavan Sri Ramana dragged him from England to India, and having come to Bhagavan's Supreme Abode he never returned. (*Yath Gathva Na Nivartanthe tath Dhama Paramam Mama*. That is My Supreme Abode whence none returns. *Bhagavad Gita* XV-6). Visitors to the Ashram now see him sitting at the Shrine of Bhagavan every day punctually between 8 to 10 a.m. and 5 to 7 p.m. as formerly they saw him sitting in the old Hall in Bhagavan's physical presence. So naturally he has much to tell us not only of Bhagavan and his teachings, but also of many things that happened in Bhagavan's presence. The Ashram has given the English-knowing world the diaries of Swami Ramanananda Saraswathi, Sri Devaraja Mudaliar and Mr. S.S. Cohen. While the diary of Sri Ramanananda Saraswathi is a record of talks with Bhagavan through several years, the latter two chronicle day to day incidents. In the same vein Sadhu Arunachala gives us in this book what he saw happening in Bhagavan's presence but only such as have for the most part been unrecorded in the books of others. Thus *A Sadhu's Reminiscences of Ramana Maharshi* seeks to supplement the previous publications.

It is needless to say that the Sadhu records his facts with great accuracy and respect for truth and hence this book will be welcomed by the devotees of Bhagavan and others. The writer of this introduction has a very great regard for the Sadhu as a writer, as he knows that the Sadhu has rendered into English all the original works of Bhagavan and had them perused by Bhagavan himself but has chosen not to publish them out of modesty, as he feels there is no need to do so in the face of the *Collected Works of Bhagavan* given to the public by the Ashram as its own authentic publication.

The Sadhu's "*Poems of Ramana Maharshi*" published last year has placed us all in a debt of gratitude to him and the present Reminiscences increase this debt. There is no need to comment on the contents of this volume, which when once begun will carry the reader right through.

This short note can conclude by drawing the attention of the readers to what the Sadhu himself observes about Bhagavan in the Epilogue :

"Though we talk as though he (the Master) were dead, he is indeed here and very much alive, as he promised, in spite of appearances."

This gives the clue to the Sadhu's inherence in Bhagavan's Home. May Bhagavan bless him!

This prefatory note ought to come from some worthier soul, but the Sadhu's request to me could not be refused and that is my only apology for writing this.

T.K. SUNDARESA IYER

FOREWORD

by

SRI RAMANANANDA SARASWATHI

An ordinary reader will find this small book very interesting reading and useful too; a discriminating one will appreciate how the teachings have been brought in unobtrusively and, as it were, unconsciously; a good sadhak will delight to note how the meanings of *maya*, of “original sin”, of *dhyana*, *savikalpa samadhi*, *nirvikalpa samadhi* and *sahaja samadhi* have been simplified. Without polemics the highest truths of the Upanishads have been lucidly stated and many a seeker will be thrown back into the bosom of Reality while reading it. Bhagavan Ramana was the greatest miracle in our living memory not only because He was the living Reality but also He made the same so easily accessible to His votaries among whom Mr. Chadwick — or Sadhu Arunachala — stands one of the foremost. I say *foremost* deliberately because he has made the same truths so clear in his inimitably simple way.

The pen picture of Sri Ramana is so vivid and complete that any worthy disciple cannot fail to testify to its being faithful in spirit and accurate in detail.

Of course there are some elaborate books on Sri Ramana which present the different facets of the Gem but this book presents the Gem itself to the readers!

God bless the unostentatious writer of this small and invaluable book!

We regret that since the publication of the First Edition of this book in 1961, Sadhu Arunachala passed away in April 1962, Swami Ramanananda Saraswathi in February 1963 and Sri T.K Sundaresa Iyer in February 1965.

October, 1966.

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PROLOGUE

Venkataraman, later to be known as Ramana Maharshi, was born at the end of 1879 and left his body in April 1950. He was very well-known in Tamil Nadu, his home, and parts of India, while he had an extensive following in Europe and America.

He was a fully Realized Sage, that is to say he was always consciously one with the nameless Supreme, though he functioned as a normal human being, his body being no different from ours except perhaps more frail than that of a normal person.

He was born in a small village some twenty miles from Madurai, where he lived for the first years of his life, moving, after his father's death, to his uncle's house in Madurai. He was a normal boy loving games but not much interested in his lessons, though he had a good memory when he cared to study. He was an abnormally heavy sleeper and once they had to break open the door of the room in which he slept before they could wake him up. His friends took advantage of this abnormality, they would pull him off his bed while still asleep and take him with them, buffeting him and playing on him every trick which they would not dare to try when he was awake. For he was a strong boy for his age and quite capable of looking after himself. I think that this heavy sleep of his must have been associated with his future attainment, the tremendous power of his concentration being here illustrated.

He was not much interested in religion, though he would pay the usual visits to the temple, customary for any normal Hindu boy.

He was somewhat of a disappointment to his family who were counting on him to do well and gain a position of influence so as to help in their maintenance. But it was rather too early to tell yet, he was still young, maybe he would realize his responsibilities later, but all this planning for the future was suddenly upset. At the age of sixteen, in the upstairs room of his uncle's house, he had the great experience which was going to change everything. Let us hear what he himself said about it:

“It was about six weeks before I left Madurai for good that the great change in my life took place. It was so sudden. One day I sat up alone on the first floor of my uncle's house. I was in my usual health. I seldom had any illness. I was a heavy sleeper. When I was in Dindigul in 1891 a huge crowd had gathered close to the room where I slept and tried to rouse me by shouting and knocking at the door, all in vain, and it was only by their getting into my room and giving me a violent shake that I was roused from my torpor. This heavy sleep was rather a proof of good health. I was also subject to fits of half-awake sleep at night. My wily playmates, afraid to trifle with me when I was awake, would go to me when I was asleep, pull me to my feet, take me all round the playground, beat me, cuff me, sport with me, and bring me back to my bed - and all the while I would put up with everything with a meekness, humility, forgiveness and passivity unknown

in my waking state. When the morning broke I had no remembrance of the night's experience. But these fits did not render me weaker or less fit for life, and were hardly to be considered a disease. So on that day, as I sat alone, there was nothing wrong with my health. But a sudden and unmistakable fear of death seized me. I felt I was going to die. Why I should have so felt cannot be explained by anything felt in the body. Nor could I explain it to myself then. I did not however trouble myself to discover if the fear was well grounded. I felt 'I am going to die,' and at once set about thinking out what I should do. I did not care to consult doctors or elders or even friends. I felt I had to solve the problem myself then and there.

"The shock of death made me at once introspective, or 'introverted'. I said to myself mentally, i.e., without uttering the words, 'Now, death has come. What does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies.' I at once dramatised the scene of death. I extended my limbs and held them rigid as though rigor-mortis had set in. I imitated a corpse to lend an air of reality to my further investigation. I held my breath and kept my mouth closed, pressing my lips tightly together so that no sound might escape. Let not the word 'I' or any other word be uttered! 'Well then,' said I to myself, 'this body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of the body, am "I" dead? Is this body "I"? This body is silent and inert. But I feel the full force of my personality and even the sound "I" within myself, apart from the body. So "I" am a spirit, a thing transcending

the body. The material body dies, but the spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. I am therefore the deathless spirit'. All this was not a mere intellectual process, but flashed before me vividly as living truth, something which I perceived immediately, without any argument almost. 'I' was something real, the only real thing in that state, and all the conscious activity that was connected with my body was centred on that. Then 'I' or my 'self' was holding the focus of attention by a powerful fascination from that time forwards. Fear of death had vanished once and for ever. Absorption in the Self has continued from that moment right up to this time. Other thoughts may come and go like the various notes of a musician, but the 'I' continues like the basic or fundamental *Sruti* note (drone) which accompanies and blends with all other notes. Whether the body was engaged in talking, reading or anything else, I was still centred on 'I'. Previous to that crisis I had no clear perception of myself and was not consciously attracted to it. I had felt no direct perceptible interest in it, much less any permanent disposition to dwell upon it. The consequences of this new habit were soon noticed in my life."

(*Self-Realization*, Ch. 5.

by B.V. Narasimhaswamy.)

After this, as far as the family was concerned, nothing went well. He lost what little interest he had in his lessons and was more inclined to sit about when he was supposed to be preparing his lessons, gazing into space rather than studying.

Let us pause for a moment and consider what had happened to him.

When he lay on the floor death had come to him. What was that death he experienced but the death of the ego? The ego itself is entirely illusory as such, the Buddhists say, but granted that even if it has a sort of existence there is nothing permanent about it. It changes from moment to moment. One ego decides to do something on the morrow but when tomorrow comes another ego is in charge and refuses to do it. So we change from day to day, or rather the egos with which we associate ourselves change. But behind each of them is the permanent witness. But the witness is not confined to witnessing the doings of the little ego; it is the Supreme Witness, or what Bhagavan called the SELF. There is only one Self, and this is the only permanent thing there is. However this is not the place to enlarge on this, more will be said on the subject in the course of this volume.

So Venkataraman had died. After this happened he had no longer any name, he never signed anything or acknowledged any name as his. People called him Ramana, and he knew that they were talking about him when they did so, but even if they had called him by any other name he would have acknowledged it. Shortly afterwards when he left home he left an unsigned note to inform them of his departure.

Venkataraman having died, what then exactly had happened? The Self had taken over entirely. No doubt the body of Venkataraman and everything that people

associated with it continued so far as they were concerned. His mother still called him by his old name, he went to school and ate his meals, but the real 'he' did not associate 'himself' with any of this, he observed it all as one might watch a cinema show, but knew it as the show it was.

It is surely hard for anybody except a Self-realized soul to understand this. Here we see someone acting, eating, sleeping and doing all the things that we do, yet we are told that *he* is doing nothing at all. Things are going on but he in no way associates himself with them; he is quite a different sort of person from us though fundamentally he seems to be like any one of us. What other difference can one find? The truth is that no one can tell what it is like to be a Self-realized soul except a Self-realized soul himself, Bhagavan used to say.

In this one short hour in the room upstairs Venkataraman had become a fully realized soul. He was now God-realized. From that day on, his life was, from a mundane point of view, almost eventless. He left home shortly afterwards and went to settle in Tiruvannamalai where he remained for the rest of his life. In time he became widely known, though for as long as possible he avoided the lime-light. Not that he had any desire either way, to be known or ignored. For a Self-realized soul there is no such thing as desire. He is liberated. Events just happen. Fame came to him because it was his Prarabdha to help others along the way to that state of Freedom which he now perpetually enjoyed.

When I came to Tiruvannamalai, Bhagavan was well past middle age. He was widely known and had been established in the Ashram at the foot of the Hill, known as Sri Ramanasramam, for the past thirteen years. Accounts of his life and books on his teaching are easily available from the Ashram and will give the reader a complete sketch of his life. This small book makes no attempt at being either comprehensive or chronological.

May Bhagavan bless it and may it be a light to guide at least a few readers to his feet.

* * *

I first came to Sri Ramana Ashram on November 1st 1935. I had heard of Bhagavan through Brunton's book, *A Search in Secret India*, and immediately decided that here was my Guru. Directly I could settle up my affairs I left my house and possessions in Majorca and went home to England for a short stay with my sisters before finally leaving for India.

Off and on for a number of years I had been practising some form of meditation on my return from work in the evening, (I was at that time employed in Chile), and, after I finally retired, in my own home. This meditation of mine actually turned out to be very much the same that I learnt later when I came to Tiruvannamalai. I had argued that since God had created the world, (there must be some beginning somewhere, and this necessitated a Creator), it was only out of Himself that He could have done so, for if there was some other apart from Himself then He could not be God, undisputed and omnipotent.

So I decided that the seeker himself was God or, as Bhagavan puts it, the Self. My method of meditation then, was to make the mind cease from thinking as an individual and just rest in its God-head: "Do not think. Be!" I recognised, of course, the danger of a blank and was under no delusion that such a blank could be a goal or an end in itself. This form of meditation I carried on, off and on, from 1924 until I came to Tiruvannamalai eleven years later. But in between times were periods when I did not meditate at all. I had a conviction that I could not lead a worldly life and at the same time strive after spiritual attainment; the two things for me dwelt in separate compartments. I had not then realized the truth of Advaita that there could be no splitting in this way, that the worldly life was just as unreal as the unworldly life, or, if you prefer, that both were as real as each other. They were Prarabdha, which had in any case to be worked out; that actually there was no such thing as good and evil, only attachment; that actions were actions and it was identifying oneself with such that mattered and not the actions in themselves. I still believed in the importance of morals, as such, as absolute standards, and, so my meditation could be nothing but a spasmodic affair.

No doubt in some ways, at least as a beginning, this was good, for in the earlier stages there must be a rule or some sort of code to keep oneself concentrated on the work, though this rule will automatically drop away in time. However, as time went on, I became convinced that my attitude had been wrong, that, whatever one's

life, a short period of meditation should be practised each day, preferably in the early morning.

That the method that I devised of stilling the mind and concentrating on my own essential core, which I had decided was God, differed little from the method of seeking out the Self by constant enquiry and search for the Witness as taught by Bhagavan, there can be no doubt. I was lucky that the Truth came to me so easily. Of course it bore out Bhagavan's saying that, "Chadwick was with us before, he was one of us. He had some desire to be born in the West, and that he has now fulfilled." So it seems that the memory of the teaching given in a previous birth was bearing fruit in this.

I arrived at Tiruvannamalai by the early morning train. It was a bright clear day at the beginning of winter and I was immediately struck by the wonderful atmosphere of the place, which one almost felt that one could take hold of, so potent was it. I was met at the station by Ganapathi Sastry. I had asked the Ashram to send someone to meet me and so naturally concluded that this was the person, but it transpired that, though he had once been one of their men, at the time he was out of favour and had no authority to meet me. The emissary sent by the Ashram never showed himself when he saw someone else looking after me. Why trouble?

Ganapathi Sastry had once been a local magistrate and had been a devotee of Bhagavan for years. He had a special liking for a white face and would attach himself to any European or American that came to the Ashram. But

to his credit it must be said that he could be very helpful to a newcomer.

In the Ashram I was given a room newly built at the side of the store-room, which I shared with Annamalai Swamy; here I remained for three and a half months until a room had been built for me at the Ashram grounds. This room I have occupied ever since.

Bhagavan came back from his after-breakfast stroll at about seven o'clock and I went in to the old Hall and joined him. I was given a chair just beside the door facing him, which I occupied for some months until I realized that people objected. I did not know then that it was considered disrespectful by Indians to sit on the same level as the Guru or even to occupy a chair at all in his presence. I had then, and still have, considerable difficulty in sitting on the floor for any length of time in spite of years of practice. Afterwards I devised a meditation belt of cotton cloth which I brought round from the back across my raised knees and with this support could sit comfortably for long periods. Such belts are regularly used by Yogis, though strange as it may seem I had no idea of this when I devised my own. Bhagavan told me that his father had had one but had not used it in public. Once some boys came into the Hall and saw me meditating in the belt, they asked Bhagavan, "Why has he been tied up?" Bhagavan, who had a great sense of humour, was much amused. However, in spite of the fact that the belt made me conspicuous, I was so keen on meditating in Bhagavan's presence that I continued to use it for many years.

To try and describe my reactions when I first came, into the presence of Bhagavan is difficult. I felt the tremendous peace of his presence, his graciousness. It was not as though I were meeting him for the first time. It seemed that I had always known him. It was not even like the renewal of an old acquaintanceship. It had always been there though I had not been conscious of it at the time. Now I knew.

In spite of being entirely new to India and its customs, nothing that happened in these first days of my stay at the Ashram seemed strange to me, it was all quite natural. It was only afterwards when I had dwelt in India for some time that I began to realize how gracious Bhagavan had been to me from the very first. And this attitude of mine was to my advantage. Bhagavan responded to people's reactions. If you behaved absolutely naturally with no strain, Bhagavan's behaviour was similar. I do not mean, of course, that Bhagavan really had reactions or that his behaviour could ever be anything but natural, it was only that it appeared like that to us, for he was like a mirror which seemed to reflect back your own feelings. If you were reticent and over-awed he appeared almost stand-offish, but on the other hand if you responded quite naturally to the all-embracing love of his presence, then he treated you as one of his own.

When I entered the Hall for the first time he was seated on his couch facing the door. It was about 7 o'clock and he had just returned from his stroll on the Hill. He greeted me with his lovely smile and asked if I had had my

breakfast and then told me to sit down. There were quite a lot of people present that day, though this was some time before the crowds started to be a regular feature of the Ashram, it must have been some Hindu festival because the lighted camphor was brought in after Pooja which was only done on special days and *Na Karmana* was chanted in his presence. Bhagavan talked to me the whole morning till it was time for the mid-day meal. He asked me many questions about myself and my life. All this seemed quite natural. Later I was to discover that he usually greeted visitors on arrival with a glance, made a few remarks and then remained silent, or waited for them to put their doubts and question him so that he might answer. Or often he appeared unconscious that anybody had entered, though this was only in appearance, for he was always fully conscious.

He was very interested to hear about Brunton whom I had met in London, and who was returning to India in a few months. This was the first time he would be at the Ashram since the publication of his book, *A Search in Secret India*. Brunton had surely been inspired by Bhagavan to spread his teachings, or at least a knowledge of Bhagavan's existence, in the West. He undoubtedly wrote a lot of rubbish afterwards and was a plagiarist of the first water, but very many came to Bhagavan because of his book and were grateful to him for the indication he had given them of where to find their Guru.

I have always felt that his chapters in the book which refer directly to Bhagavan were certainly inspired by

Bhagavan himself. That Brunton always retained a love and great respect for Bhagavan there seems to be no doubt, in spite of his quarrels with the Ashram and some of the petty remarks about his Guru found in his later books.

Bhagavan certainly had a special message for the West where he was much appreciated. His purely rationalistic arguments and the lack of sentiment in his teachings had a great appeal. He never preached or laid down the law, but always concentrated on turning the seeker back on himself and pointing out to him that it was entirely up to him, the Guru could only indicate and guide, for no one could give Self-realization to another.

After I had been here a day or two Bhagavan asked somebody to give me a copy of *Who am I?* and told me to read it. Here is contained the essence of his teaching, though given by him as a youth of only 21 it never needed to be changed. Bhagavan might talk all sorts of philosophy and explain systems in answer to questions, but his teaching and instruction for Sadhana was all contained in *Who am I?* Everything else, as far as he was concerned, was padding or expansion for those who were not satisfied with the simplicity and straightforward explanation of this little book. He had always insisted that the book should be sold so cheaply that it was available to the poorest and originally it cost no more than half an anna.

This wonderful little book comprises one of the first set of instructions given by Bhagavan in about 1902 in writing as he was not speaking at the time. They are direct from his own experience and in no way influenced

by his reading of various Upanishads and other sacred writings which were afterwards brought to him to explain. Later reading these books, he realized the philosophic import of what had happened to him and so was able to co-ordinate his experiences and fit them into the Hindu tradition. But in this book we have his teachings at first hand and uncoloured. Here we find their very essence and by the help of this single brochure can learn all that is necessary. No more is needed.

As regards the period of his life, during which it is recorded that he kept *Mownam* or a vow of silence, I questioned him. He told me that there was never any such vow, but while living in temple at one time he found himself seated for a while by a Sadhu who was observing such a vow and saw how convenient it was as the crowds did not worry the Sadhu in the same way as they worried him. So for convenience he pretended to copy him. "There was no vow, I just kept quiet, I spoke when it was necessary," he explained. I asked him how long this had continued. "For about two years," he replied.

People talk about the intense *Tapas* he performed, but such *Tapas* is as mythical as his *Mownam*. He never performed *Tapas*, there was no need. His Self-realization, attained in the upstairs room of his uncle's house in Madurai was final, there was no more to be done. He was only a boy and it took him time to fit this all-embracing realization into his day-to-day life. It embraces that as it embraces everything else. It is perfection, *Purna*. So he just sought out quiet places where he thought that he

would not be disturbed and where he might enjoy Bliss. Actually he had reached that state where nothing could any longer disturb him, he was beyond such things. Boys threw stones at him and teased him, but he was quite indifferent. He was, however, not unconscious. Bhagavan's realization was not some featureless blank. Appearance continued for him but he knew it as appearance and was no longer deceived into thinking it was Reality. And here, I presume, lay his complete indifference to the world. It was all a dream anyhow, so why do anything about it? Just sit somewhere and enjoy the Self. What did teaching others and helping the world signify? There were no others. Besides if he was to live in the world, as appeared to be his Karma, then, before he could do so, he had to co-ordinate this realization with the world in which he did not really believe. And this must take time. This explains his apparent escapism. Though to talk about escapism with reference to a Realized Soul is a contradiction in terms for there is no longer anything from which to escape.

It was only after some time that people brought him books and asked him to explain them. Here he found the map of what had happened to him, here were recorded his own realizations. It came as a revelation to him. He had not known that what happened to him had happened to others before. Not only had it happened, but it had been deliberately sought and also recorded.

So engrossed was he in Reality that his indifference to his body became extraordinary. As he hardly ever, if at all, bathed, his hair became one matted lump. One day an

old lady, seeing this, was so shocked at his unkempt appearance that she brought a bucket of water and soap and proceeded to wash his head as if he were some idol made of stone. He remained quiet though he was quite conscious of what was happening. He told me that it was a remarkable thing but she had no trouble disentangling it; the hair shook apart and was ready for the comb immediately she had soaped it.

He was equally indifferent as to what he ate. At one time some Sadhus were giving him a cupful of the *Abishekam* contents after it had been washed off Lord Subramaniam's image, consisting of turmeric, plantains, milk and soap-nut. He was quite satisfied with this. In later years, however, it almost seemed as though he had preferences in diet, though he himself declared that all food tasted exactly the same. And this must be so, because for a *Jnani* the body has no reality since he does not associate himself with it. He knows of it, of course, but only as a part of the total dream that does not belong exclusively to him. We call it Bhagavan and think it is he. And it is a blessing to us that, as our Guru, we are able to see him and be near him and receive through this form his Grace.

The second book he told me to read was Self-realization, by B. V. Narasimhaswamy. In spite of its amateurish style and the way it is written, this is the standard and principal text book on the life and teachings of Bhagavan. B. V. N. took infinite pains to collect as many facts and details of Bhagavan's life as possible and record them; nobody else

had gone to all the trouble that he did or made any such record. Other people who have written accounts of Bhagavan's life have all had access to B. V. N's book and used it extensively, often turning it into their own words. Without this book we should have known nothing of the early years of Bhagavan's life. B. V. N. did a wonderful job and I do not think sufficient appreciation has been shown to him. Here we find the first recorded teachings to various early disciples. Especially interesting are the instructions to Humphreys, a young policeman who came to Bhagavan in 1911. He was the first European to visit Bhagavan as far as is known or at least the first to record his visit. He has given a beautiful picture of him in the Virupaksha Cave. The teachings are definite and are a guide to all who come after. Who else has recorded that Bhagavan said, "I am giving these instructions as a Guru gives them to a disciple"? Certainly there was some special tie between these two. Once it was said in the Hall that someone had seen Humphreys recently and he denied having derived any benefit from Bhagavan's instructions. All Bhagavan said to this was, "It's a lie!" Doubtless the whole thing was a spiteful invention.

The first question I asked Bhagavan was why Christ called out from the cross. If he was a perfect *Jnani* then surely he would have been indifferent to all suffering. Bhagavan explained that though a *Jnani* has attained Liberation already and for him there can be no such thing as suffering, some may appear to feel pain, but this is only a reaction of the body. For the body continues to have its

reactions. It still eats and carries out all its natural workings. All its suffering is apparent only to the onlooker and does not affect the *Jnani*, for he no longer identifies the Self with the body, he lives in a transcendent state above all such.

Besides this, it is immaterial to him where and when he leaves the body. Some of them when passing appear to suffer, others may pass while in Samadhi and quite unconscious of the outer world, while yet others may just disappear from sight at the moment of death. This conversation is especially interesting in view of what happened in the case of Bhagavan himself during the last days. He certainly appeared to suffer terribly, at night when he was unaware that anybody could hear him, he lay on his couch, groaning and calling out. At that time it was indeed difficult to realize that he, as a *Jnani* did not feel pain in the same way as we do, but that he saw it as something apart from him, as a dream which could be regarded objectively. When Milarepa was dying he was asked if he did not feel pain, his agony was so obviously great. "No," he replied, "but there is pain." Pain was certainly there for the body. If one is identified with the body one feels it and associates oneself with it. But for the *Jnani* who sees the body always as something apart from himself, pain is only an experience outside his reality. There is pain but somehow it is not his.

I found, when I had been in the Ashram a short time and was beginning to know my way about, that the best time to catch Bhagavan alone was at one o'clock in the

afternoon when he came back from the Hill. Everybody who could would have slipped away for a siesta, except for one attendant whose duty it was to remain with Bhagavan in case he needed anything. This was before the days of electricity, so a punkah had been hung just over Bhagavan's couch and this would be kept in lazy motion by a sleepy attendant who was himself dying to run off and have a sleep. At times I would take his duty and let him go, at others I would sit up near the head of Bhagavan's couch and talk to him. It was during these hours that he instructed me, and those quiet hours spent with him then were the most valuable of all. He knew enough English to read the paper and to understand me if I spoke slowly and if a short answer or reference to some book was all that was necessary this he could deal with at the time. But if the answer proved to be complicated he would wait until later in the day when he would call upon some English-speaking Tamil to interpret.

In the early days of my stay I was living in a big room adjoining the Ashram store-room. Here Bhagavan often used to visit me, usually when he went out at about ten o'clock. On coming into my room unexpectedly he would tell me not to disturb myself but to go on with whatever I was occupied at the time. It was correct for people to stand up directly he came into a room. I was ignorant of this and so would remain seated, carrying on with whatever I was doing at the time. I realize now that this was looked upon as terrible disrespect by the Indian devotees, but it had its reward. If one put oneself out for

Bhagavan or appeared in any way disturbed he just would not come in future, he would disturb nobody, so considerate was he. But if one carried on with what one was doing then he would himself take a seat and talk quite naturally without the formality which usually surrounded him in the Hall. I had no idea how lucky I was and how privileged, but certainly appreciated the visits. He might pick up my pocket-book and take everything out of it, a photograph, a membership card and any odds and ends it might contain, remark on each thing and ask some question about it. It might have been embarrassing but luckily there was nothing questionable in the wallet. Not that Bhagavan would have minded, for there could be nothing questionable or otherwise for him.

I had always wondered how it was that St. Paul, who was a most orthodox Jew, hated Christ and persecuted the Christians, interpreted his great experience on the Damascus road in terms of Christ and afterwards became an ardent Christian himself. So one day I asked Bhagavan.

He said that St. Paul was always thinking about Christ and the Christians, they were never out of his mind, so when he returned to self-consciousness after his experience he identified his realization with this predominant thought. And he referred to Ravana as an example. Ravana hated Rama, never ceased to think of him and, dying, Rama was the uppermost thought in his mind and so he realized God. It is not a question of love or hate, it is just the question of what is in the mind at the time. People judge the deeds of others as good or bad, but it is the doing itself

that matters and not the complexion of the deed. The whole secret lies in whether we are attached to our actions or not. A person who spends his time in good deeds can be much more attached to them than the so-called bad man is to his. And it is the one who drops off all attachments first who will be Self-realized soonest.

Good and bad are found eventually to be only relative terms. Self-enquiry is found to be no more than the discarding of *Vasanas*. So long as one single *Vasana* remains, good or bad, so long must we remain unrealized.

This reminds me of an incident that happened at the time of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Bhagavan's arrival in Tiruvannamalai, when Bhagavan pointed out that it was a good thing to let the *Vasanas* to come out. It is useless to bottle them up and let them go on gathering strength inside. The consequence of doing which would prove fatal in the end.

One of the old disciples had been causing a lot of trouble and annoyance to people by constantly pushing himself forward as of more importance than the rest. Eventually the manager went to talk to Bhagavan privately and ask him what he should do about it. Bhagavan listened without a word and then when he had finished remarked, "Yes, it's his *Vasanas*, it's a good thing to let them come out." And that was all. Excellent philosophy no doubt but not much consolation for the manager.

In Western books one reads of people who had flashes of illumination. One Dr. Bucke collected and published records of many such. But whereas the Realization of

Bhagavan was permanent, this was not the case with those described by Bucke, which were never more than temporary flashes, lasting usually no more than half-an-hour. The effect of such may remain for some days but it will invariably pass with time. I asked Bhagavan about this, how it could be so and he explained to me that which comes as a flash will disappear in a flash. Actually it is not Self-realization they experience but Cosmic Consciousness where they see all as one, identify themselves with Nature and the Cosmic Heart. In Hinduism this is called *Mahat*. Here a trace of ego remains even during the experience and a consciousness of the body belonging to the visionary. This false sense of "I" must go entirely, for it is the limitation which serves as bondage. Liberation is final freedom from this.

Bhagavan was a very beautiful person; he shone with a visible light or aura. He had the most delicate hands I have ever seen with which alone he could express himself, one might almost say talk. His features were regular and the wonder of his eyes was famous. His forehead was high and the dome of his head the highest I have ever seen. As this in India is known as the dome of Wisdom it was only natural that it should be so. His body was well formed and of only medium height, but this was not apparent as his personality was so dominant that one looked upon him as tall. He had a great sense of humour and when talking a smile was never far from his face. He had many jokes in his repertoire and was a magnificent actor, he would always dramatise the protagonists of any story he

related. When the recital was very pathetic he would be filled with emotion and unable to proceed. When people came to him with their family stories he would laugh with the happy and at times shed tears with the bereaved. In this way he seemed to reciprocate the emotions of others. He never raised his voice and if he did occasionally seem angry there was no sign of it on the surface of his Peace. Talk to him immediately afterwards and he would answer calmly and quite undisturbed. With others some effect of the anger will still remain for a while even after the cause is gone. Internally we all take time to regain our composure, but with him there was no reaction. He would never touch money, not because he hated it, he knew that for the purposes of daily life it was necessary, but he had never had need of it and was not interested in it. Money and presents came to the Ashram; well, that was all right, the management needed them to be able to carry on, but there was no need for them to worry about it or ask people to give. God would provide.

People said that he would not talk but this was untrue, as were many of the other foolish legends about him. He did not speak unnecessarily and his apparent silence only showed how much foolish chatter usually goes on amongst ourselves. He preferred every sort of simplicity and liked to sit on the floor, but a couch had been forced upon him and this became his home for most of the twenty-four hours of the day. He would never, if he could help it, allow any preference to be shown to him. And in the dining-hall he was adamant on this point. Even if some

special medicine or tonic were given to him he wanted to share it with everybody. "If it is good for me then it must be good for the rest," he would argue and make them distribute it round the dining-hall. He would wander out on to the Hill a few times a day, and if any attachment to anything on earth could be said of him, it was surely an attachment to the Hill. He loved it and said it was God Himself.

He used to say that it was the top of the spiritual axis of the earth; there must, he said, be another mountain corresponding to Arunachala at exactly the opposite side of the globe, the corresponding pole of the axis. So certain was he of this that one evening he made me fetch an atlas and see if this was not correct. I found, according to the atlas, the exact opposite point came in the sea about an hundred miles off the coast of Peru. He seemed doubtful about this. I pointed out that there might be some island at this spot or a mountain under the sea. It was not until some years after Bhagavan's passing that a visiting Englishman had a tale of a spot, supposed to be a great secret power centre, in the Andes somewhere in this latitude. Later I found that though a centre had certainly been started it had failed. Since then I have been told of another person who is practising meditation in solitude in the region of the Andes in Ecuador. So it does appear as though there were some strange attraction about that part of the globe. The earth is not an exact sphere and maps are not so accurate as all that, so we are unable to pin it down to any definite point. It is quite possible that

more is going on in that part of the world than we know and this would fit in well with what Bhagavan said. However I could never discuss the matter with Bhagavan as it was not until many years after his passing that I had any indication that anything of this sort was happening in those parts. I had many years ago travelled extensively in that country but had never seen anything which would lead me to think that there might be important spiritual-centres there.

Some people were of opinion that Bhagavan could be persuaded to do things against his will or to change his mind. Only, enough people had to ask him and he would do what they wanted. Of course this is absolute rubbish. Nobody on earth could make or persuade Bhagavan to do anything. I remember a case in question. Some devotees were holding an *Upanayana* function (investing a Brahmin boy with sacred thread) in the Ashram Vedapatasala. When Bhagavan walked past there at 10 o'clock on his way to the cow shed, the parents of the boy came out and asked Bhagavan to come in and grace the function for a few minutes. There was no apparent reason why he should not do so, he often did do such things, but for some reason he did not even trouble to reply, but passed on his way. On his return he was again begged by a number of people just to step inside for a moment, but he refused. This was typical. He either did or did not, there was no persuading him.

It was the custom of people, when they were proposing to go somewhere, first to obtain Bhagavan's

permission, but the way this was done was usually a farce. They would come into the Hall, prostrate and say, "I am going to Madras," or wherever it was they intended to go. Bhagavan would just say, "Yes" or sometimes just keep quiet. Then the devotee would cheerfully leave, saying he had taken Bhagavan's permission. If you made a positive statement to Bhagavan he would accept it as such. If you said, "I am going to eat some meat," Bhagavan would just nod, he accepted your statement, had heard what you said and understood. But it did not in any way mean that he approved. But if, instead, you positively asked permission, that was a different thing; he might give permission or keep quiet. If he kept quiet, surely it could not be interpreted as permission.

One evening I asked permission to go to Pondicherry. Bhagavan asked, "Why?". I replied that I was having trouble with one of my teeth and wanted to consult the dentist. As he kept quiet I did nothing. A few days later he said to me, "I thought you were going to Pondicherry and you're still here." "But you never gave me leave," I replied. Bhagavan kept quiet. It turned out that my trouble righted itself, something had jammed against the gum, this came loose and there was no longer any need for a dentist. A few months later I again had trouble, this time with another tooth. On asking permission and telling Bhagavan the reason why I wanted to go, he immediately said, "Yes, go!" This time the journey did prove necessary.

Again people used to say, probably to excuse themselves for the way they took leave, that Bhagavan

would never actually tell you to go or not to go. I once proved this to be quite wrong. If you definitely waited for a reply and refused to be satisfied otherwise, Bhagavan would tell you what to do.

My servant's father was ill in Malabar and the man wanted to go and see him. As it would have been awkward for me to remain in the Ashram without him I told him I too would go and visit a sick friend at the same time if he could get me Bhagavan's permission. We had a gate at the back of my hut which led into Palakottu, the garden at the side of the Ashram, this gate was usually kept locked. Occasionally we succeeded in getting Bhagavan to come back that way and visit my room when he returned from his midday stroll in that direction. My man went that way to meet Bhagavan and explained everything to him and asked leave for us both to go. This Bhagavan granted. But the man said that was not enough, for unless he came and told me himself I would never go. So he managed to entice Bhagavan through the gate to my room. Bhagavan told me, "Raman wants to go and see his father." "Yes," I replied, but made no comment. Just as he was leaving he turned to me and said, "Yes, go to Varkala, it will be cooler there."

On another occasion he gave me a direct order. Chinna Swamy, the Ashram Manager, brother of Bhagavan, had an old police gun. By this he laid great store, he was convinced that the mere possession of it would be enough to scare away all thieves and dacoits of whom he was mortally afraid. To get a license for this gun he had used

my name. The weapon I imagine was certainly useless and would probably have exploded if ever fired, but there was never any ammunition so there was no fear of that. Anyhow Chinna Swamy wanted me to keep the thing and be official executioner but I refused. I said that I had left the Army years ago, was a Sadhu and had no intention of handling fire-arms now. But he was most persistent. He sent a number of people to my room to persuade me, and every time he saw me he would bring up the subject. Eventually in desperation I said we would consult Bhagavan. Chinna Swamy did not take to this idea at all. He was always in awe of Bhagavan and never approached him personally if he could help it. In this case he thought that he might get a rap for even suggesting it. However he had to give way in the end. So one evening I went up onto the Hill and met Bhagavan returning from his evening stroll. I explained everything to him and asked him what I should do.

“Can you not keep it on a shelf in your room?” he asked. “Of course,” I replied. “Then do that,” he ordered. When Chinna Swamy heard the result of the interview he would never believe it. Bhagavan never gave orders or directions in that way, Chinna Swamy affirmed. But as he had sent someone with me to keep an eye on me and this person confirmed it, he had no choice but to admit the truth of what I had said. But the gun was never needed or handled and the only time it was touched after this was some years later when it was surrendered to the police, as the Ashram had no further use for it.

All this goes to show that, approached in the right way, Bhagavan would advise and even direct disciples, though the majority of people who moved with him would deny it. They had never tried in the right way, or, more probably, never intended to take permission at all. They thus bluffed themselves that he had given leave and in this way did what they had themselves intended to do.

Ganapathi Sastry would make dates with Westerners, invite them to visit the Ashram and then go off on some subsequent engagement when they were due, just referring them to me, telling them that I would look after them. Of course he never informed me what he had done and I would be taken completely by surprise when strangers suddenly turned up and asked for me.

This happened in the case of a Dutchman, I forget his name. He was travelling about India with a technical assistant making records of Indian classical music with a van full of instruments. I believe he had a travelling scholarship from Oxford. Anyhow neither of them was much interested in Bhagavan though they did sit in his presence for a while. What they had really come for was to make a record of the Sama Veda. Now, those who have learnt the Sama Veda are few and more orthodox than other Brahmins. Ganapathi Sastry seems to have promised the Dutchman that he would have no difficulty in finding what he wanted if he came to Tiruvannamalai. However I could not help them here. After a lot of enquiries they did eventually find two Brahmins who knew the Veda, but they refused to allow a record to be taken. This is only logical. No Veda is supposed to be

chanted publicly, (the rule is no longer observed in most cases) so if a record is made this can afterwards be played to all and sundry so breaking the rule.

At length after a lot of negotiation the Brahmins said that on one condition alone would they chant for him, and that was that the record should be taken in the presence of Bhagavan. Full of delight the Dutchman went to the Ashram Manager and asked his permission, without troubling to consider the consequences the Manager agreed. Then the van was brought as near to the Hall as possible and microphones were set up in the Hall. Bhagavan wanted to know what this was all about. When everything was explained to him his only comment was, "Take it away," and that was final.

The Dutchman was furious. He had been thwarted when just within sight of success. He came bitterly complaining to me. Bhagavan did not know how important the work he was doing was. In fact it was all far more important in his eyes than was Bhagavan himself. It was useless to try and explain to him that Bhagavan could not be used as an excuse to break some rule. Let the Brahmins give him a record anywhere they liked and Bhagavan would not think of interfering, but for them to say afterwards, "We did it with the permission of Bhagavan," which is what they obviously intended, could not be allowed for one moment.

People often complained that caste was observed in the Ashram dining-room, and why did Bhagavan permit it when he himself was beyond caste?

The dining-room was divided into two by a screen which extended almost the whole breadth of the room. Bhagavan sat in the opening at right angles to the screen and so was visible on both sides. On one side of the screen sat the Brahmins and on the other side the rest. Many people used to complain about this and especially at Bhagavan for allowing such things, for was he not beyond all caste? Yes, certainly he was, and that was why he took his meal with both sides.

“But why does he allow it?” people asked.

Not only did he allow it but he insisted on it.

Brahmins would come to the Ashram, say that with Bhagavan all were equal and sit down on the non-Brahmin side of the screen. But Bhagavan would object.

“Do you eat with non-Brahmins in your own home?” he would ask.

“No, but with Bhagavan it is different,” they would answer.

“So you want to use Bhagavan as an excuse for breaking your caste rules?” Bhagavan would ask. “If you do not observe caste outside, there is no objection to your doing the same here. But you are not going to use Bhagavan as an excuse for doing something which you consider at home to be wrong.”

Bhagavan would never eat during an eclipse of the sun or moon, a custom that still continues in the Ashram, where food may only be cooked after the eclipse is finished. He told me that the stomach did not digest while the eclipse was proceeding and so it was bad for the health to

eat at that time. However, he did not take the ritual bath at the beginning and end of an eclipse as is usual with orthodox Brahmins.

He was most dainty in his movements and to watch him eat was a pleasure. He always left his leaf so clean that it appeared as if it had not been used. Eating neatly in Indian fashion is an art in itself and at this Bhagavan was past master.

He was always scrupulously clean and his body gave off a faint perfume, though he never used any scented soap. At one time he had used snuff but had given it up before I joined the Ashram. He used to chew betel regularly just after meals and before he went for his stroll on the Hill; he would thoroughly wash out his mouth immediately afterwards. There was never any stain on his lips, and he chewed only for a few minutes, and then purely as a digestive.

One morning Bhagavan was about to go out and was only waiting for the attendant to give him the betel, which was always placed by his side when it was time for his walk. For some reason the attendant did not do it, everybody in the Hall was waiting expectantly but could do nothing about it as the management did not allow anybody to attend on Bhagavan except those who had been specially detailed. Eventually Bhagavan got up and left the Hall without it. From that day on he never chewed again. He would not cause inconvenience to anybody, even the attendant whose duty it was to look after such things, nor would he be bound by any habit. We were all

sad at this mishap, as everybody felt that the betel did help the body to bear its pain. But what did the health of the body matter, he would say. "The body itself is the worst sickness."

Bhagavan always radiated tremendous peace, but on those occasions when crowds were attracted to the Ashram such as Jayanthi, Mahapooja, Deepam and such functions, this increased to an extraordinary degree. The numbers seemed to call up some reserve of hidden force, and it was a great experience to sit with him at such times. His eyes took on a far-away look and he sat absolutely still as if unconscious of his surroundings, except for an occasional smile of recognition as some old devotee prostrated.

Bhagavan never encouraged people who came and started to confess their sins. He would not allow them to continue but shut them up by telling them not to dwell on the past but to find out who they were now in the present. The point was not the act but attachment to it that mattered. Dwelling on it in retrospect was the worst thing they could possibly do. This itself was attachment.

After three months I moved into a room that had been built for me at the far end of the Ashram and here Bhagavan came for the opening ceremony. He sat for a short time while the Vedas were chanted by some Patasala boys from town. Our own Patasala was not opened until 1937.

In March 1939 Somerset Maugham came to the Ashram. Many accounts have been given of his visit and all of them different. As I was the principal person

concerned in looking after him, I have decided to give my own version. He was brought to the Ashram by a friend of mine, Mrs. Austin, wife of the Collector of Madras. The party had first gone to the Dak bungalow to take their lunch, but finding it full, had come on to the Ashram. They asked me if I could find somewhere for them where they could have the meal they had brought with them. I arranged for one of the small rooms near my own. As I had already had my meal, at their request I sat and talked with them while they ate. Somerset Maugham asked innumerable questions about my life and the Ashram, apologising for his inquisitiveness.

At the end of the meal, which they had taken on the verandah with Somerset Maugham sitting more or less in the sun, he fainted. Many absurd stories were circulated to account for this; that he had seen Bhagavan and this was a state of Samadhi brought on by the meeting, and such like. Actually he had not seen Bhagavan at all. It was probably a slight sun-stroke, though he himself said that he had been liable to such black-outs occasionally since birth.

We carried him to my room and laid him on my bed. I then went to Bhagavan and told him what had happened and asked him, when he went out for his stroll at about 2 o'clock, to come to my room and see Somerset Maugham who was now unfit to come to the Hall, and Bhagavan agreed.

I met Bhagavan on the way and as we approached my room Somerset Maugham was just coming out. He said that he now felt better and was on his way to the

Hall. I told him to go back into the room and sit down as Bhagavan had come to him there instead. Bhagavan and Somerset Maugham sat opposite to each other for about half-an-hour without uttering a word. At the end of which Somerset Maugham looked nervously across in my direction and said, "Is there any need to say anything?" "No," replied Bhagavan, "Silence is best. Silence is itself conversation." After some further period Bhagavan turned to me and in his child-like way said, "I think I had better be going, they will be looking for me." As no one in the Ashram knew where he had gone except the attendant who always accompanied him, this was correct. After Bhagavan had returned to the Hall the rest of the party remained in my room for tea. After tea Somerset Maugham, who was wearing a large pair of boots, wanted to go to the Hall and see where Bhagavan usually lived. I took him to the western window through which he looked for some time with interest, making mental notes. He says in his indifferent and quite uninspired article 'The Saint', published in a series of essays twenty years after the event, that he sat in the Hall in Bhagavan's presence, but this is untrue, because he could not enter with his boots, he only gazed into the Hall from the outside. He has also tacked a certain amount of philosophy onto Bhagavan which Bhagavan could never have uttered in his life. But such is the habit of famous authors, to put their own opinions into the mouths of others.

In his recent article Somerset Maugham says that because of his fainting fit, which some Indians regarded

as a high state of Samadhi, which he denies, he has been sent a mass of literature concerning Maharshi. This may be true, but it is certainly true that he wrote to the Ashram and told them that he was going to write about Bhagavan and asked for as much material as they could send. He pointed out at the time that, of course, if he wrote anything it would be a wonderful advertisement for the Ashram and the Maharshi. As if it were needed! He talks about Sankara and his philosophy of Advaita, but does not seem to have a very clear idea of what it means. He has jumbled together a number of theories from various schools of thought and then tacked them onto Sankara and Bhagavan. One suspects a Theosophical influence. He says that the two main principles of Sankara are Brahman and Re-incarnation. This is nonsense as neither of them has anything to do with Advaita and both are dualistic concepts. Re-incarnation was always dismissed by Bhagavan by asking the counter-question, "Find out if you are born now; if you are not even born, how can you be reborn?" Here we have the very core of the matter. For ultimately we shall each find for himself that there is only one "I" which appears as innumerable egos, which are in fact quite unreal and nothing but passing shadows.

Somerset Maugham says in another place, "When one considers how full the world is of sorrow and suffering, one can hardly refrain from thinking that Brahman might have done better to leave well alone." Really, Mr. Maugham, is this your idea of Advaita? Here again we must ask ourselves, "For whom is the suffering?" Is the

Reality, the eternal "I" behind all appearance, suffering? Or is it only an imaginary "I" that has no actual existence which is imagining the suffering?

Again, "To Maharshi the world was a place of suffering and sorrow." What absolute rubbish! Bhagavan always insisted that there was nothing wrong with the world. All the trouble lay with us.

On reading Somerset Maugham one comes to the conclusion that he has again succeeded as a first class writer of fiction.

Bhagavan was invariably kind to all animals though he did not like cats, or, I believe, mongooses, this was principally because the cats hunted his beloved squirrels or chipmunks. These squirrels used to run in and out of the Hall window, over his couch and even his body. He would feed them with nuts and stroke them, some of them even had names. Their chief ambition seemed to be to make nests behind his pillows so that they might bring up their families under his protection. Snakes and scorpions were never allowed to be killed. Sometimes a snake would drop from the roof of the Hall at night. It was the duty of the attendant to show it out to safety by walking behind it with a lamp, as carried in front it would only dazzle the snake and it would become confused. Madhavan, the best attendant he ever had, who would anticipate Bhagavan's least wish was adept at picking up scorpions by the tail so that they could not sting, and carrying them outside where they could do no harm. For dogs Bhagavan always had a tender spot. One puppy that was born in the Ashram had

ricketts. Bhagavan was very solicitous and under his direction I treated it and eventually cured it with biochemical medicines. Strangely this dog proved unfaithful and ran away. Bhagavan said that it must have been killed by some beast or it would never have gone, but months later it returned with a new master it had adopted, it took little interest in any of us, even in Bhagavan. This was inexplicable.

If an Ashram dog barked trying to drive out some intruder and people got angry with it for making a noise, Bhagavan would defend it, saying it was only doing its duty by the Ashram. There was at one time a small puppy that would always relieve itself on a nice smooth spot near the office. Chinna Swamy would get furious and try to drive it out of the Ashram, but again Bhagavan would come to the rescue, saying that if some child did the same thing nobody would be angry, and the puppy was only a child and knew no better.

He seemed specially to love monkeys and often said that in many ways they were better than human beings. They lived from day to day not planning for the future and there was no premeditation in the mischief they performed. He would be very amused when some monkey would slip into the Hall and snatch away plantains from the side of an unsuspecting devotee who had just had them returned as holy *prasadam*. He would often give directions that they should be fed and encouraged them in many ways much to the annoyance of the management to whom they were a great nuisance.

Many peacocks settled in the Ashram but it seemed that not all were able to remain in such surroundings. Two were brought there by some villager but did not stay though they were brought back two or three times. Bhagavan remarked that they were not yet ready. This is most interesting and shows that all were not fit to remain in his presence, and that even animals came there with a purpose. He also told us how, at times, people would re-incarnate in the body of some animal just for a chance to be near him. There is, of course, the famous example of Lakshmi, the cow.

The Rani of Baroda gave Bhagavan a white peacock and two white peahens to go with him. The male was especially devoted to Bhagavan and never wanted to leave his side. Bhagavan was then living in a shed at the side of the old Hall, which owing to the increasing number of visitors he had out-grown. So a perch was put up there by the side of his couch and there the peacock slept at night. People used to say that it was Madhavaswamy, Bhagavan's late attendant who had passed away some time before. Bhagavan would nurse this peacock and pick lice off its body. He taught it not to eat caterpillars and other insects but to be a strict vegetarian. On the night of Bhagavan's passing it stood on the roof of the small room where Bhagavan was lying and screeched without intermission. It died in town some years later as the coloured peacocks always drove it away whenever it came near the Ashram. However they did not treat the peahens in the same way, but through them created numerous progeny.

Bhagavan once told me that thought comes in flashes, no thought was continuous. It was like the cycle of an alternating current, but was so rapid that it seemed continuous as does the light given off by an electric bulb. If one could only concentrate on the intervals between thoughts rather than on the thoughts themselves that would be Self-realization.

He always taught that mind and thought were exactly the same,

“The mind is nothing but a lot of thoughts.”

Upad. Saram. V. 18

And again that ego and mind were identical and arose together,

“The ego rising all else will arise.”

Ull. Narp. V. 26

“The ego the root of all thought.”

Ull. Narp. V. 40.

Yes, surely but,

“The mind in truth is only the thought ‘I.’”

Ull. Narp. V. 40

The ego is as impermanent as thought and has in truth no real existence at all. Do not the Buddhists say that there is no such thing as ego? Which brings us directly to Advaita.

Now Advaita is not the same as is usually meant by Monism nor is it some catch-word to avoid difficulties. The word means, of course, Not-Two, but this is not the equivalent for One, though to the casual thinker it is not easy to see where the difference lies. But if we call it

Monism then premising one we infer a whole series, one, two, three etc. No such series actually exists, there is just Not-Two.

When we see things we see duality; in one sense this duality is not unreal, it is only unreal in the sense that there is Not-Two. It is there in appearance but yet is impermanent and fleeting. This fleeting manifestation is called *Maya*, which is often taken to mean illusion, but actually means "that which is not," or which sets a limit to the limitless. In fact we sense everything, everything being in the mind, and the senses being only the instrument of the mind. For as a matter of fact there is no illusion, only impermanence.

The same truth is behind all. What then is the solution, seeing that everything has no permanency and is only an appearance? This, Bhagavan taught, also applies to our bodies and even our egos, which are thought by us to be all-important, but now we find them discarded as fleeting shadows. There is, however, no need to be despondent, for behind even the most fleeting appearance there must be something to appear. We jump aside because we think we see a snake only afterwards to discover that it is but a rope. But even though the snake is quite unreal the rope is there. So the obvious solution to our riddle is to search out and find the permanent behind the impermanent. This was Bhagavan's solution and he taught us how to do it by his method of self-enquiry. Though the ego changes minute by minute, though we are entirely different people through every stage of our life, there has

always been for us an "I". Now this is obviously not the ego, for we have already seen that the ego changes every second, while the "I" has been there all along as the observer. Let us trace it to its source. And through this method of self-enquiry we shall eventually realize the Self.

When talking about Bhagavan and the various things that he said, there will always appear contradictions in his teachings, but this is solely because he had to speak from two points of view. His real teaching, which never wavered, was that there is nothing but the SELF. He saw everything as just That and nothing else. But most people were unable to accept this. They wanted it to be expanded, so some explanations were necessary and to make such explanations he had to speak from the questioner's limited point of view. I said above that Bhagavan never taught re-incarnation and this is true though from our point of view he accepted it, as I believe did the Buddha. How could Bhagavan teach it when he saw no more than one? But in the "Talks" he explains how egos are reborn into a succession of bodies; so long as the individual idea persists there must be some form for it to take until the individual ceases to exist, and this continued individualisation consists in a constant change of form. For as one set of *Vasanas* is worn away another takes its place. Such apparent contradictions must always be there for the unrealized. Bhagavan taught us always to look to the present, find out who you are now, whereas re-incarnation tends to put things off to the future. What does it matter, you will have innumerable lives in which to put things in order?

This is naturally fatal to spiritual progress, and is probably the reason why Christianity has never allowed it to be taught, though there are indications of it in the New Testament and some of the Fathers.

After I had been meditating in the presence of Bhagavan for some months, I reached a certain stage when I would be overcome by fear. I asked Bhagavan about this. I was assured by some of those present in the Hall at the time, not of course by Bhagavan, that this was all wrong and quite absurd. In fact they laughed at me for my foolishness. Bhagavan was not so amused. He explained that it was the ego that experienced the fear as it felt that it was gradually losing its grip. It was, in fact, dying, and naturally resented it. He asked me, "To whom is the fear? It is all due to the habit of identifying the body with the Self. Repeated experience of separation from this idea will make one familiar with this state and fear will then automatically cease." Since then I have come to realize that Bhagavan mentions this fear in the second verse of the *Ulladu Narpadu*:

'tis only those who fear death intensely take refuge at the feet of the Lord."

In fact it is really a good sign when one is following the method of self-enquiry, though it must be overcome.

Afterwards some of the scoffers came up to me secretly and said that had they had the same trouble and what were they to do about it? This conversation of mine with Bhagavan must have been recorded somewhere, for still people come to me to ask about it. There is the one and

only answer to this in the method taught by Bhagavan: enquire to whom is the fear, get behind it to the witness and fear will automatically cease.

In the supplement to the *Ulladu Narpadu* it says that one look of a Mahatma is sufficient to give us initiation and is far more effective than any number of pilgrimages, the worship of images and other devotional practices. I asked Bhagavan about this, saying foolishly that I had already been staying with him for some months and yet I did not yet feel any change in myself. It is the look that purifies, he told me, but it is not a visible purification. Coal takes time to ignite, but charcoal is proportionately quicker, while gunpowder ignites immediately. So it is with men under the powerful glance of a *Jnani*.

Some thirty years ago a series of books was written about the Masters in the Himalayas which had a considerable vogue in some occult quarters. These books were translated into various languages and had quite a success in Germany. A German friend tells me that they caused quite a sensation at the time among people he knew. It is years since I read them myself, so I can only remember but little about them, but I thought them pretty cheap trash at the time, the sort of occult sensationalism which a certain class of people mistake for spiritual. Amongst other absurd things, it was recounted how the Masters lived, hidden in the very insides of the mountains, among whom the Master Jesus was to be counted, and whom, if I remember rightly, one approached by an

automatic lift pierced through the solid rock. Quite why the Masters wanted to restrict themselves to this rocky prison I never really made out. The author of this book was an American, Bierce Spaulding, and he came to the Ashram in 1936 with a party of Americans, all on their way with him as guide on a visit to the Masters. Their history was amazing if not tragic.

A party of enthusiasts in America who really believed in Spaulding's aberrations, though it seems that Spaulding had never been in India before, were organised into an expedition by one of the party to visit the Masters on a personally conducted tour. Special tickets were sold to them by the Dollar Line, who appointed Spaulding as the guide. They were told not to buy return tickets as it would be unnecessary; once with the Masters every care would be taken of them and they would have everything they desired and would naturally never want to return to America and their homes. Some of them who were poor sold all their possessions so as to be able to join the party, so enthusiastic were they. For had they not been assured that once they arrived at their destination they would have no more need for money?

The party, with Spaulding at their head, duly arrived in Calcutta; when they eventually arrived in Thiruvannamalai there were about twelve, as a number had dropped off by the way. In Calcutta they were deposited in an hotel while Spaulding established communication with the Masters and was advised how to proceed. Daily he would vanish on this mysterious

mission and daily return with some excuse. The party naturally began to get restless and suspicious and were keen to know when they could start on the last lap of their pilgrimage. Things reached such a pitch that Spaulding was no longer able to control them. One day he returned and said that he had that day met Paul Brunton who had invited all of them in the meantime to pay a visit to Sri Ramana Maharshi's Ashram in the South. I never discovered if he really had met Brunton that day, I forgot to ask him. By this time some of the party had reached the point of exasperation and gone off on their own, while the remnant proceeded with their guide to the Ashram. To have such an auspicious end to the fiasco was extremely lucky, as none of them was ever likely to have come to the Maharshi otherwise. Here they settled for some time, gradually dispersing.

Just at this time one of the *Darshans* was held at the Pondicherry Ashram to which Spaulding took all those of his party who were left. They all stayed together in the same hotel where Paul Brunton happened to be at the time, as he, too, had gone there for the *Darshan*. He told me that one night after dinner there had been a show-down and one by one they had turned on Spaulding and accused him of having swindled them, that the story about the Masters was nothing but an invention and that he had never been in India before. However, he seemed quite equal to the occasion and held his own in spite of the odds. One of them he accused of having made a commission on the sale of the tickets and others of various

misdeemeanours, till he had each one in turn more or less beaten down. From Pondicherry those who were really interested in spiritual matters returned to Bhagavan and amongst them came Spaulding. I saw something of him and liked him. He seemed a decent sort of a person who obviously suffered from delusions. He told me some fantastic tales which he certainly believed himself, so perhaps after all he was not to be blamed. For surely he would never have had the courage to lead such an expedition which could only end as a fiasco if he had not been slightly mad.

There were some very nice and sincere people in this party, and one cannot but feel that they had been deliberately led to Bhagavan in this strange way. One couple, the Taylors, I remember well. Mr. Taylor was a retired Post Master. They became much attached to Bhagavan. One day Mrs. Taylor was sitting in the Hall with Bhagavan when she suddenly said, "Bhagavan, I want Self-realization."

"Wait," replied Bhagavan, "it will come in due time."

"No," she answered, "that's no good. I want it here and now."

Bhagavan tried to explain to her that when she was ready everything would work out all right. But she insisted. She must have it here and now and it was up to him to give it to her. Bhagavan said nothing but gazed at her steadily in the eyes for some five minutes or so. She suddenly burst into tears and rushed out of the room, but would never tell anybody what had happened.

There was another old gentleman, Dr. Hands. He remained, I think, after all the rest had gone. He finished up on his last night by giving an unsolicited lecture in the Hall on India, Indian agriculture and many subjects of which he could have had only a very superficial knowledge. He was writing a book solving all India's problems, but I do not know whether it was ever published.

During the war I never read the newspapers. I had, in fact, stopped doing so some time before the outbreak. I suppose it was really a form of escapism, but I did not escape much for even the nicest Indians took every opportunity of coming to me and crowing that the Allies were going to lose. Any catastrophe that happened they would not let escape my notice. They were, of course, working off some of their old resentment on me, a lot of which was the creation of the political propaganda of their leaders, besides the inherent sense of inferiority created by their position as a subject race. They became, however, much less communicative towards the end. Many of them now realize what would have happened to India if the Axis had won. The country would have been in chaos. But, though I did not read the papers, Bhagavan did. He was most punctilious in informing me if there was any notice in the paper which concerned British residents, such as reporting to the British Society, which was in charge of recruiting Britishers. Of course he was quite unmoved by the war and its course. Probably he saw it as just another turn in the wheel of Karma. He is reported to have remarked once, "Who knows but that

Hitler is a *Jnani*, a divine instrument." He was certainly a man of fate. To deny it by criticising many of his acts as evil is wrong. For the *Jnani* there is no good and evil. There is only action — spontaneous activity or the actionless activity of Tao. This has no Karma-binding effects. Yet it seems doubtful if Hitler's actions were quite so disinterested, though it is not impossible.

Before I came to India I had read of such people as Edward Carpenter, Tennyson and many more who had had flashes of what they called "Cosmic Consciousness." I asked Bhagavan about this. Was it possible that once having gained Self-realization to lose it again? Certainly it was. To support this view Bhagavan took up a copy of *Kaivalya Navanita* and told the interpreter to read a page of it to me. In the early stages of *Sadhana* this was quite possible and even probable. So long as the least desire or tie was left, a person would be pulled back again into the phenomenal world, he explained. After all it is only our *Vasanas* that prevent us from always being in our natural state, and *Vasanas* were not got rid of all of a sudden or by a flash of Cosmic Consciousness. One may have worked them out in a previous existence leaving a little to be done in the present life, but in any case they must first be destroyed.

I was reminded of Sri Ramakrishna who said that so long as one single desire remained unfulfilled one had to go on being born to fulfil it. He said he himself, once, had wanted to wear a silk cloth and gold ring and sit and smoke a hookah. One day he asked Mathura Nath to obtain these things for him. When he had been given

them he sat on the banks of the Ganges dressed in the silk cloth with his gold ring conspicuously on his hand and smoking the hookah. Then he told himself, "Now I am dressed in a silk cloth, look at my gold ring, yes, and I am smoking a hookah." He continued for some time enjoying these. After a while he got up, threw his ring into the river, tore off the silk cloth, stamped and spat on it and broke the hookah. He had now fulfilled his desire and he no longer had any wish to do these things again.

Yet even supposing one has got rid of most of one's *Vasanas*, how does attainment actually occur? On this question of attaining Self-realization Bhagavan told me that in the early stages a person who was regularly meditating would usually at first go into a trance which would probably last for some thirty minutes, and if he continued with his *Tapas* properly such *Samadhi* would become more frequent. So carried away by it would he be that he would be able to think of nothing but slipping away to some quiet corner to meditate undisturbed. He would lose all interest in everything else until that time when he became established in the Self and no more meditation was necessary.

He had then attained *Sahaja Samadhi* or his natural state. But there were no fixed rules. Some might attain this state quietly and unrecognised, without even the necessity of the process of meditation. However, Bhagavan explained, although there were no actual stages in Self-realization, there was a deepening of one's *Sadhana* as explained above.

In the Indian spiritual vocabulary you find the terms *Manolaya*, *Savikalpa Samadhi*, *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and *Sahaja Samadhi*, and these are apt to cause some confusion to those not familiar with the terminology.

Manolaya is just a blank mind. Advaitins are often accused of trying to achieve this, which is quite absurd though I have at times met those who told me that this was their aim, and they would be most happy to achieve it. I would point out to them that this could be attained by them every night in sleep so what was the use of undergoing all sorts of austerities, spending hours in meditation to obtain a thing that could be got by just lying down on their bed?

With regard to this Bhagavan used to tell the story of the Yogi who was practising *Tapas* on the bank of the Ganges. He told his disciple to go and fetch him some water and in the meantime went into a state of *Manolaya*. After a thousand years he awoke, the first thing he did was to demand his water, but the disciple had become skeleton at his side, the Ganges had changed its course and the whole country was different. What good had the long trance done? It had just been a blank when time stood still.

Savikalpa Samadhi is the state of deep meditation when one is sunk in peace but still retains the consciousness of one's identity. One knows that one is meditating and can still consciously continue one's *Sadhana*.

In *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* one has attained to a state where the identity has been lost and sunk entirely in the highest Self. However long it may last it is only

temporary, one must return eventually to one's normal state of consciousness. One is unable to function in this state and so long as it lasts one is in a state of trance. It is usually preliminary to the final state. But Bhagavan attained *Sahaja Samadhi* directly without any intermediate state. Many people consider that *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* is final, and once having attained it seek to progress no further.

Sahaja Samadhi is the final and most blessed state, the goal of all Yogis. In this state the individual has become completely merged in the Supreme Self. His identity which became lost in *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* has become enlarged and is now the Supreme Self and knows itself as such. Trances are no longer necessary, a person can still carry on with the ordinary day to day business but he no longer identifies himself with the activities, but watches them like a dreamer watching a dream. There is no more to do, and no more to be attained. This is the Supreme State of Absolute Bliss. But in the simple words of Bhagavan, it is the SELF and it can be realized by one and all by Self-enquiry.

The word Yoga means union, yoke is derived from it. There are four principal schools of Yoga: *Jnana*, *Bhakti*, *Hatha* and *Karma*, but there are also a number of subsidiary schools which are usually a combination of two of the above. In any case it is almost impossible to separate off any one of them from the others as a cast iron system. As Bhagavan used to say, to know God (or *Jnanam*, the Path of Wisdom) one must love God (*Bhakti*, the Path of

Devotion) and to love him one must know him, while to do this a certain amount of Hatha Yoga and Karma is often practised. Hatha Yoga itself consists of various exercises, body postures and breath control, whereas Karma Yoga is the Yoga of works and comprises chanting of Vedas, elaborate Poojas and daily purification ceremonies. There are many other minor schools such as *Tantra*, *Kundalini* and others.

Bhagavan of course never taught any of these though I once saw him giving instruction in Yoga, a thing almost unheard of, to a North Indian who was practising some form of Kundalini Yoga. This can only be explained by the fact that Bhagavan saw that by this method and this method alone the person would be able to advance. But as a rule he would tell people not to waste time in these practices, going the long way round, when they could go direct by the practice of Self-enquiry.

One evening during the last few months of his life, at a time when only the attendants were allowed into the immediate presence of Bhagavan, a man from the North came and obtained special permission for a private interview with Bhagavan. Of course he had to work through an interpreter and it was from him I had the story, though through the window I saw the interview proceeding.

The man explained to Bhagavan that he had been practising Kundalini Yoga; that he could bring the force up to a certain point or *Chakra*, and that there it got stuck, he could proceed no further. What should he do?

Bhagavan explained in detail and the Yogi left his presence completely satisfied.

The classic examples of these four Yogas in modern times are: *Jnanam*, Sri Ramana Maharshi; *Bhakti*, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa; Yoga, Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry; and Karma, Sri Shankaracharya of Kanchi Peetam, the only one of the above still in the body.

Bhagavan would go for a stroll on the Hill several times during the twenty-four hours and would sometimes tell us that he had seen inside the Hill a great city with large buildings and streets. It was all very mysterious. There he had seen a big company of Sadhus chanting the Vedas, most of the regular devotees were among the company, he said, and he saw me there. "But that's only a vision," some one remarked. "All this is only a vision too," he would reply, meaning our world. "That is just as real as this."

We know that a *Jnani* is beyond time, that past and future are all contained in his present, so it used to intrigue me exactly what that vision of Sadhus really was. Was it something that had happened in the past? I did not feel so, though Bhagavan had said that I had been here before, or was it something to happen in a future incarnation? Who could tell? Bhagavan would give no help. He had many similar stories but never any explanation. "I don't know what it means," he would say.

As I have stated above, for an Advaitin there is no such thing as re-incarnation. Egos being completely impermanent, what is there to re-incarnate? Bhagavan would always deny that anybody is born now, so how could such

be re-born? "Search and find out if you are born now," he would instruct us. However, for such as believed in the actuality of the ego he did concede re-incarnation.

One night in the Hall there was some talk about re-incarnation. Just as Bhagavan was getting up from his couch to go for his evening meal, I, as a joke, said, "But Alan Chadwick has not been born before." "What, what did he say?" asked Bhagavan sharply. "He said that he had never been born before," someone wrongly interpreted. Of course I had not said that at all. I had meant that whatever form the ego took formerly it had never had the name and form Alan Chadwick, but had been some entirely different person. But Bhagavan replying to the wrong interpretation quickly replied, "Oh, yes he had been, for what has brought us all together here again?"

He never asked us what had brought us to him, but what had brought us again to Arunachala. He had so completely identified himself with the Mountain. This answer, though caused by a mistake, was very gratifying to me, as Bhagavan admitted the old connection between us. So must I always be with him until Self-realization, after which there will be no more he and I. I used to say that I must attain Self-realization in this life or Bhagavan would have to be born again so that I might be with him. So for his own good he must see that I gain my end in this life. Bhagavan would just smile. Though this was only said as a joke, there was a fundamental truth behind it.

Bhagavan was deeply interested in the construction of the Shrine built over his Mother's tomb. He attended

every function in connection with it, placing his hands in blessing on the various objects that were to be enclosed in the walls. At night, when no one was about he would walk round and round the construction consecrating it. That he should take such a demonstrative part in anything has a very deep significance. It was extremely rare and has been doubted by many, but I myself was an eye-witness to these things and can vouch for their truth.

He took a personal interest in the cutting of the *Sri Chakra Meru* in granite which was installed in the completed temple and is regularly worshipped. This is about one and a half feet square and proportionately high. At the time of the *Kumbhabhishekam*, on the penultimate night before the sacred water was poured over the images, he personally superintended the installation in the inner shrine. It was an extremely hot night and with three charcoal retorts for melting the cement adding to the heat, it must have been intolerable inside the airless cave of the inner shrine, but for about an hour and a half Bhagavan sat there telling the workmen what to do.

On the last night of the function he went in procession, opening the doors of the new Hall and temple and passing straight up into the Inner Shrine, where he stood for some five minutes with both hands laid on the *Sri Chakra* in blessing. I happened that night to be at his side the whole time; this was unusual as I deliberately avoided taking prominent part in such things, preferring to watch from the back. Strangely, something made me keep by him on this occasion and on account of this I was

able to understand his deep interest in the Temple and especially in the *Sri Chakra*. It was because of this knowledge that I was instrumental after Bhagavan's passing, in persuading the Ashram authorities to institute the *Sri Chakra Poojas* six times a month. The explanation for this unusual action on Bhagavan's part may be found in the necessity that Siva must be always accompanied by Shakti. The world would stop otherwise. On the only occasion when such a Pooja was performed shortly after the dedication of the Temple during the life of Bhagavan, he refused to go for his evening meal but insisted on remaining a witness of it until the end. When someone remarked how magnificent it had been and it would be a good thing if such Poojas could be performed regularly, "Yes," replied Bhagavan, "but who will take the trouble?" The trouble is being taken now and it undoubtedly has the blessings of Bhagavan.

I do not think that anyone who has written about Bhagavan and the Ashram has remarked on the extraordinary fact that here we have a Temple dedicated by a *Jnani*; there cannot be very many such, and there must be some very deep meaning in it. A great many devotees who come to the Ashram have only time for the *Samadhi* where Bhagavan was interred. I do not pretend myself to understand why he did it or what will be the consequences, but it is certain that having been consecrated in this way it must for ever be a very sacred spot and from it spiritual power must radiate all over India.

Bhagavan taught that dreaming and the waking experiences were exactly the same. I always found this hard to understand and would often question him on the subject. He would explain that all my questions about dreams only occurred in my waking state, they never occurred in dream. How, then, could they be valid? Everything is just a projection of the mind. But because you find that dreams are only transitory in relation to the waking state you imagine there is a difference between them. This is only apparent, it is not real. Dream is for the person who thinks that he is awake, but actually both dream and waking are quite unreal from the Absolute standpoint. You do not question your state when you are dreaming, it is only questioned by the one who is awake. Is this fair?

Still, while knowing Bhagavan's teaching, that all is only an appearance and a creation of the mind, I found his teaching on dreams hard to understand. For waking seemed to me continuous, going on from day to day. I awoke into the same world each day whereas my dreams were always different, they were distinct. However, Bhagavan would never accept this distinction and repeated that the criticism only arose in the waking state and never in that of dreams. Then I myself had a dream :

I was having an argument with somebody on the subject of dreams and in the course of this I said, "Whatever you say, Bishop Berkeley was right, things are only in the mind, there is no reality outside of that. Things just don't exist; so dream and waking experience must be

exactly the same. They are only mental concepts.” “You say that now” the other replied, “but you would not talk like that in a dream.” And then I woke up. The whole thing was intensely vivid.

Some people have failed to see how this applies to the above. But the point is that the dream was so real that I never questioned it to be anything but the waking state. The two *were* exactly the same.

That everything is in the mind and that the mind itself is only a passing phenomenon was continually stressed by Bhagavan. “Who is the one behind the mind?” he would ask repeatedly. “Find that one and the mind itself will automatically disappear.” To do this one must repeatedly seek out the source of the “I” by the enquiry “Who am I?”. This process has often been misunderstood, though actually Bhagavan’s teaching is quite clear. In this search one is not to seek for some transcendental “I-Absolute”, but for the ego itself and the point where it arises. Find this, the ego automatically drops away and one then knows there is nothing but the Self. It is like following a stream to its source through the hills, and when one has reached that point whence it arises the stream itself will no longer exist. Source, mind, ego are one and the same and cannot exist apart from each other. The mind cannot know the Self, for how can it know that which is beyond mind? So it is impossible even for a *Jnani* to explain his state in words, which is only of the mind. To know it is to be it. There is no other way.

Bhagavan said that the mind was like a monkey, never still for one second, it was an almost hopeless task to try and quieten it; the best thing to do was to give it a productive employment and not allow it to fritter itself away building endless pictures. Let it concentrate on "Who am I?" and then there will be no room for any other thought. It is like using a thorn to extract a thorn from the foot. Nevertheless, Bhagavan would often tell us to "make an effort to be without effort." This surely presupposes that the mind has already achieved some success in turning back on itself.

Many people identified Bhagavan with Dakshinamurti, the silent Guru. For though he was not so taciturn as many people made out, he did have profound silences when he spoke to his disciples in their hearts. People would come to him bursting with doubts, would sit in his presence and go away without asking a single question, all their doubts cleared. He himself said, "Silence is the best *Upadesa*, but it is suited only for advanced pupils; others are unable to draw full inspiration from it, therefore they used words to explain the Truth. But Truth is beyond words. It does not admit of explanation. Lectures may entertain individuals for a few hours without having an effect upon them, whereas the result of silence is permanent and benefits all. Even though it is not understood, that does not matter. Oral lectures are not so eloquent as silence. It is unceasing eloquence. The primal master Dakshinamurti is the ideal and he taught in silence."

In every South Indian Siva temple, on the southern wall, is found an image of Dakshinamurti (the god facing the south) to whom daily worship is offered. He sits under a banyan tree. At his feet are his four disciples. His left leg rests across his right knee and his right foot is placed on a figure representing the ego. He has four arms. One hand blessing with the mystic sign known as the *Chinmudra*, the other three holding respectively a torch (enlightenment), a book (wisdom), and the drum (or *damaru*, the creative sound).

His story is as follows: Brahma was tired of creating and wanted to retire, so he created the four Kumaras to take his place. But these did not in the least wish to take over but demanded instead initiation from him into the secret of how to gain liberation. This their father refused. So they left him and went in search of this somewhere else. They eventually encountered an awe-inspiring figure seated under a banyan tree. Here they remained and received the instruction they were seeking, which was given in silence. In silence, because no word can express that which is beyond all words and no mind can grasp that which is beyond mind. Silence is the most perfect teaching of all.

Dakshinamurti is known as the silent Guru, the Guru of all Gurus. Though he is daily worshipped in every Siva temple in the South he has few temples of his own. Dakshinamurti is an aspect of the ascetic Siva.

As an example of how eloquent silence can be for the sincere seeker, the following episode which I personally

witnessed in the old Hall some years ago will illustrate: A gentleman from Kashmir came to the Ashram with his servant who could not speak a word of any other language except his native Kashmiri. One night when the Hall was almost dark except for the pale glimmer of a single hurricane lantern, the servant came into the Hall and stood before Bhagavan in a respectful manner jabbering something rapidly in his own language. Bhagavan said nothing, but lay quietly gazing at him. After a while the servant saluted and left the hall. Next morning his master came to Bhagavan and complained. "Bhagavan, you never told me you could speak Kashmiri, was it fair?"

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Bhagavan. "I know not a single word of your language."

Bhagavan asked the gentleman how he had got hold of this absurd idea and the latter explained:

"Last night my servant came to you and asked you several questions in his language. He tells me that you answered him in the same language and cleared his doubts."

"But I never opened my mouth," Bhagavan replied.

Bhagavan disliked being touched, the only people who were allowed to do so were his personal attendants. People would want to place their heads on his feet or place garlands round his neck. Such a nuisance this became that a low fence had to be put round his couch to stop people approaching too near. It was perhaps because of this he never initiated by touch. Surprising as it may seem, some people took strong offence over the fact that they were not allowed to touch him, they looked upon him as

public property and thought that all and everybody had the right to inconvenience him as much as they liked. When some old woman was pestering him one day, a man near me was very indignant that she was repeatedly stopped. "Why shouldn't she if she wants to?" he asked. Bhagavan's own convenience was not even considered.

There are three ways of giving initiation: placing the hands on the person, usually upon his head; giving a *mantra* which is whispered in the ear; and through the eyes. It was usually recognised that Bhagavan did it through the eyes alone, though he never said that he initiated anybody, it was all done without trappings. He always refused to place his hands on a person's head though very many besought him to do so. However, I do know of one exception.

An old sannyasin came from Mysore State, he was an ex-station-master. Bhagavan seemed from the first very sympathetic towards him and unusually* kind. When he was leaving the Ashram, with a friend to act as interpreter, he entered the Hall which happened to be empty at the time. Bhagavan had just returned from a walk after his midday meal and was seated on his couch. The Sannyasin prayed to Bhagavan to place his hands on his head and knelt quite close to the couch, resting his head against it. Bhagavan turned towards him and placed both his hands on his head for a few minutes

* Though Bhagavan could be nothing but kind to one and all, he did not always *appear* so.

without saying anything. Then the Sannyasin rose and left the Hall showing great emotion.

Bhagavan would always advise his disciples never to take on the onerous duty of being a Guru. It would only lead to trouble. The disciples would expect all sorts of impossible things from their Guru, and trying to satisfy them he would inevitably resort to trickery. Then, even if he could perform miracles they were things to be avoided as being impermanent and would only deflect him from the true path.

Anantanarayana Rao said that once when he was attending on Bhagavan during his last illness and begging him to continue living for the sake of his devotees, Bhagavan replied, "The prime duty of a Guru is to establish the certainty of his existence in his disciples and having done this he is free to leave his body." Another proof that Bhagavan recognised his relationship of Guru to disciples.

Bhagavan said that the principal *Sadhanas* we should practise were to eat only *Satvic* food and observe *Satsanga*. He laid down no other rules. He said that the mind was entirely created by the food we ate which must be healthy and strictly vegetarian. However he never interfered with people or enforced such things on them. The food in the Ashram was very hot, South Indians being used to eating such food, but Bhagavan did not complain, he himself was a Southerner. His attitude was that they know what to do and if they preferred not to do it that way that was their look-out. However he was dead against meat-eating. Once in my early days someone spread the rumour that I

was preparing meat dishes in my kitchen. It was, of course a lie, my food was actually much more *Satvic* than the Ashram food. When Bhagavan heard this story he said, "We don't want that sort of thing here."

As regards *Satsanga*, since we obviously take on the colour of the company we keep, the ideal is to live with a Realized Sage; but if that is not possible, then we should choose our company in the best way we can, avoiding undesirable company. He never taught morals, and had no special abhorrence of sex. He once said in answer to a troubled disciple in my hearing, "It is better to do it than to be always thinking about it." This reminds one of the Gita, "Thoughts are acts in fancy." Always thinking of it is repeatedly doing it. He naturally expected Sadhus to lead a decent life and set an example to others. In any case we should practise moderation in all things, even in those that we consider good, and, strange though it may seem, a moderation in our Sadhana also is recommended. Overdoing of austerities and prolonged and unnaturally forced meditation may eventually lead to madness, unless we do such under proper guidance.

I once saw Bhagavan appear really angry, the atmosphere in the Hall was electric; one felt afraid. The occasion was the visit to the town of a popular Swamy who initiated all and sundry, in fact anybody who came to him, without any sort of preparation. He taught them a form of breath control which proved very dangerous to those who practised it without observing certain necessary restrictions. He was quite the fashion for a short time but

luckily was soon forgotten and those few who did practise his teaching duly lapsed. There were, however, a number of casualties by the way-side of those who went insane. Swamy Ramdas speaks about this man in one of his books. Two of this Swamy's disciples came to the Hall one evening just before the meal. They asked Bhagavan some questions which he readily answered, but they would accept none of his answers and tried repeatedly to put him in the wrong. Bhagavan was very patient with them and tried for long time to put them right; but at last their impertinence became such that Bhagavan flared up and went for them in a frightening way, but they were so hardened that it seemed to have but little effect. They were eventually ejected from the Hall forcibly and driven from the Ashram, Bhagavan remarking that "they came here to try and undermine this teaching."

Bhagavan showed not a sign of anger immediately the men had left the Hall, and no ripple of disturbance was left, it had all been on the surface. Someone coming into the Hall immediately afterwards and asking some quite ordinary question, Bhagavan replied quietly as if nothing had happened, the whole incident was obviously completely forgotten.

During one conversation with Bhagavan I remarked that I tried to shake off the body. Bhagavan replied that a man discards his clothes and remains naked and free, but the Self is unlimited and not confined in any way to the body, so how can the body be shaken off? Where can the Self leave it? The Self is all-embracing. Wherever it is, is

the Self. The ultimate Truth is so simple, it is nothing more than being in one's own natural original state. However, it is a great wonder that to teach such a simple truth a number of religions should be necessary and that so many disputes should go on between them as to which is the God-ordained teaching. What a pity! Just be one's Self, that's all.

I remarked that people did not want simplicity. "Exactly," replied Bhagavan, "they want something elaborate and mysterious, that is why so many religions have come into existence. For example the Christian will not be satisfied unless he is taught that God is somewhere hidden away in Heaven and cannot be reached without the help of the Church. Christ alone really knew Him and it is Christ alone who can guide us to Him. But if they are told the simple truth, 'The Kingdom of God is within you,' they are not satisfied and read some complicated and far-fetched meaning into it. It is only those who are mature that can understand the matter in its naked simplicity."

During the war a little man came to stay at the Ashram. He was half Indian and half Japanese, though he looked almost wholly Indian. He had a book of talks of Krishnamurti's in which he was very much interested and about which he asked many questions of Bhagavan. Bhagavan was very gracious and patient with him. It almost seemed to me afterwards as if Bhagavan had been sympathising with him, having foreseen his fate. For one day at the local school, where he was posing as a

professional photographer, he annoyed the boys in some way who started ragging him, in the course of which his wrist watch, which turned out to be no watch at all but some form of miniature radio, was snatched off. For this he was hauled off by the police as a Japanese spy and probably suffered the inevitable end, anyhow we never saw him again. All we can say is that he had been well prepared by Bhagavan.

One day Bhagavan was telling us that the Tamil Saint Manickavasagar's body disappeared in a blaze of light leaving no residue. I asked him how that had happened and he explained that the body is solidified mind. When in *Jnanam* the mind dissolves and consumes itself in a blaze of light, the body is burnt up in the process. He gave Nandanar as another example of this. I mentioned the case in the Bible of Elijah being carried up to Heaven in a chariot of fire, a poetic way of saying the same thing. I asked if Christ's disappearance from the tomb had resembled this in any way, but Bhagavan pointed out that this was entirely different, for Christ's body remained for a time after death, whereas the bodies of the others had been immediately and utterly consumed. He explained that the subtle body is composed of light and sound and that the gross body is a concrete form of the same.

One often hears people saying that Bhagavan was an *Avatar*, in this way thinking to add to his glory; but except for the fact that everybody might possibly be called an *Avatar*, since each of us is God in a human body, there

was absolutely no ground for saying so. One day a Sannyasin belonging to a well-known order, who think that their Guru alone attained Self-realization, challenged Bhagavan in a most aggressive and unmannerly fashion.

Sadhu: "People say that you are an *Avatar* of Subramaniam. What do you say about it?"

Bhagavan said nothing.

Sadhu: "If it is a fact, why do you keep silence about it? Why don't you speak out and tell us the truth?"

Bhagavan did not reply.

Sadhu: "Tell us, we want to know."

Bhagavan (quietly): "An *Avatar* is only a partial manifestation of God, whereas a *Jnani* is God himself."

Here lies the whole difference between Advaita and other philosophies. In Advaita all is nothing but the Self. There is no room for such special manifestations as *Avatars*. A person is either Self-realized or is not. There are no degrees.

Many people said that Bhagavan did not give initiation or have any disciples, although those who lived with him had no doubts as to the relationship existing between themselves and Bhagavan. I was interested to find out what Bhagavan himself had to say on the subject, so one night after the evening meal the following conversation took place.

D.: "Bhagavan says that he has no disciples."

B.: (Looking at me suspiciously): "Yes."

D.: "But Bhagavan also says that for the majority of aspirants a Guru is necessary?"

B.: "Yes."

D.: "Then what am I to do? I have come all this distance and sat at Bhagavan's feet all these years, has it all been a waste of time? Must I now go off and wander about India in search of a Guru?"

Unfortunately the interpreter himself was so interested in the reply that he could hardly interrupt it to interpret to me fully what Bhagavan was saying. I may add here that to act as interpreter between Bhagavan and another was extremely difficult. Bhagavan talked so fast that sometimes it was hard to follow exactly what he was saying and the interpreter was so taken up in trying to understand, and so interested in the subject matter, that he found no time to repeat more than an odd sentence. They were often too shy to ask Bhagavan to wait, which he would always willingly do, so that they might tell what he said sentence by sentence.

But to go on with Bhagavan's reply, the gist of which was as follows:

For the *Jnani* (Realized Soul) all are one. He sees no distinction between Guru and disciple. He knows only one Self, not a myriad selves as we do, so for him how can there be any distinction between persons? (This is for us almost impossible to understand. How can he both see distinctions and not see distinctions? He obviously does. He can answer questions, discuss and apparently do all things in the way we do, yet for him, I repeat, there is only one Self and this life is nothing but a dream.) However, for the seeker the difference between persons is very real. For him there is undoubtedly the relationship of

Guru and disciple. If such does not exist “why has he come all these thousands of miles to this place and remained here?” For the seeker, God in his Grace takes a form in order to lead him to the formless state. “Has he any doubt about it? Ask him, does he want me to give him a written document? Go and call Narayanier, the Sub-Registrar, and tell him to make one out for him.” Then later he added humorously, “Go and get the office stamp and put it on him. Will that convince him?”

Actually to reconcile the two points of view of the *Jnani* and the disciple is almost impossible. Anyhow Bhagavan did clear the doubts of many by this conversation, in spite of which there are still some who say it was useless to go to Bhagavan because he gave no initiation and did not even recognise the relationship of Master and disciple.

One day when someone was talking of doing this and that, Bhagavan asked, “Why do you think that you are the doer? There lies all the trouble. It is quite absurd, as it is obvious to all that ‘I’ does nothing. It is only the body that acts, ‘I’ is always the witness. We so associate ourselves with our thoughts and actions that we continually say, ‘I did this or that,’ when we did nothing at all. Concentrate on being the witness and let things take their course, they will go on anyhow, you cannot prevent them.”

That’s the point! Things will go on anyhow, but Bhagavan taught that though we had no power to stop them, we did have the power to observe them from a

detached point of view, as the witness and not as the doer. That was the purpose of life, and *Sadhana* consisted exactly in that.

Bearing directly on the above let me quote from Devaraja Mudaliar's *My Recollections*:

'The only freedom man has is to strive for and acquire the *Jnana* which will enable him not to identify himself with the body. The body will go through the actions rendered inevitable by *Prarabdha* and man is free to identify himself with the body and be attached to the fruits of his actions, or to be detached from it and a mere witness of its activities.'

To attain to such detachment Bhagavan taught the method of Self-enquiry, "Who am I?". When we have succeeded in that, we will see actions as no longer ours but as just a necessary working of the whole.

Bhagavan was never strong, at least not after about thirty years of age. This was no doubt owing to the strain he inflicted on his body in the early years in Tiruvannamalai. For years he suffered from asthma and a photograph taken at Skandasramam shows him as little more than a skeleton. Suddenly after fifteen years, for no apparent reason, the asthma left him almost entirely, he told me. But he was always liable to bad colds and had frequent digestive trouble. Later he had more and more difficulty in walking. Innumerable oils were tried and he was massaged morning and evening, but with little effect.

One early morning in April 1942, when Bhagavan was returning from his walk on the Hill after breakfast,

he had a nasty accident. One of his favourite squirrels ran across his path as he was descending the stone steps near the Ashram Dispensary. This was being chased by the Ashram dog who was in full pursuit. Bhagavan pushed forward his stick in front of the dog to try and delay it, slipped and fell down the steps and broke his collar bone. This naturally caused a lot of pain. He was treated by a local bone-setter and was entirely cured within two weeks, but, while it lasted, it was a most anxious time for all of us.

In 1947 he was given some medicine for his rheumatism but it had little effect except to bring on a violent attack of hiccups which lasted for many days and the doctor seemed quite incapable of even relieving it. This should never have occurred as the medicine jacket warned that the patient must be carefully watched for such reactions. But though afterwards Bhagavan said that he had noticed that his urine had become very yellow, and this had been one of the principal symptoms to be looked for, nobody had noticed it. We were all much alarmed at the time, but at last the attack subsided of its own accord. While it lasted the Ashram was in a high state of tension as we all felt quite helpless to do anything.

On February 5th 1949 the tragedy of the final illness had its inception. Bhagavan had been frequently rubbing his left elbow which was causing some irritation. His attendant inspected this to see what was the trouble and found a small lump the size of a pea. This he duly reported to the then Ashram doctor. The doctor decided that it

was only a small matter and should be removed by a local anaesthetic. No one was consulted, though I was told that he had been warned that Bhagavan was no ordinary person and that a number of doctors would willingly come from Madras for a consultation and that he should wait and do nothing without their opinion. But he was adamant and insisted on carrying on.

Another doctor who was staying in the Ashram at the time reluctantly agreed to give the local anaesthetic and the operation was quietly performed in Bhagavan's bathroom one morning just before the meal. A small (too small I was told) incision was made and the growth was extracted, superficially as it turned out. Bhagavan had never wanted the operation and had told the doctors to let nature take her course. However they decided to carry on. This was the beginning of the end. The curtain on the last act was slowly descending. The growth turned out to be a sarcoma.

In a month's time another operation was performed in the Ashram dispensary by a leading surgeon from Madras. This time under full anaesthesia, but though this gave temporary relief, the growth again, grew in strength. Radium was tried but failed to check it. By July the growth was bleeding and had become septic. The doctors held a consultation with Bhagavan and told him that the only hope lay in amputation of the arm, but this he flatly refused. This was the only occasion on which he really took an active part in what should be done to him during his illness. Let them do what they like was his attitude,

though all along he told them it would be better not to interfere but to let nature take its course, but nobody heeded. In all, four operations were performed, including the small fateful one at the beginning. Bhagavan grew weaker and weaker. A homeopath tried his hand for a few days, during which he insisted in making Bhagavan follow a strict diet; this did not suit him at all and only created complications and untold suffering. A local man tried herbal treatment and applied strong caustic poultices which caused septicaemia. A man was flown from Calcutta and tried Siddha treatment but this made Bhagavan so bad that he refused to take any more medicine as he could no longer urinate because of it. By March all hope was given up. The Allopaths did things in style, they came down with a lorry-load of material and laid on a special circuit from the electric main for diathermic treatment. As many as ten doctors attended the last operation in which Bhagavan almost passed out and had to be revived with a blood transfusion.

The night before this operation took place, I went in to see Bhagavan and on my knees begged him not to have it. It was obvious it could do no good. Each time the tumour had grown bigger and bigger, spreading up his arm to the armpit. I prayed that this extra suffering was useless and that he would let us be spared the strain, but he refused; for, as he said, the doctors had taken so much trouble, *it would be shame to disappoint them now*. It was only after the all-powerful doctors had failed and given up all hope that the other treatments were allowed to be

tried; naturally it was by then too late. They had said that unorthodox treatment would be useless and by withholding it until the last, naturally proved correct. But Bhagavan's attitude had all along been to let everybody have a chance; no one should be disappointed.

The length of this terrible illness of just about one year gave everybody a fair warning that the end was inevitable and not very far off. But, out of his Grace, he in this way saved all from a sudden shock. No one had any excuse to be taken by surprise. He also repeatedly warned the devotees that giving up the body would make absolutely no difference. "Where can I go? I shall always be here."

Perhaps it would be well if I explained here my apparently condemnatory attitude towards the doctors. It is all summed up in my belief that we should implicitly obey Bhagavan. Doubtless we often fail; we are weak and our *Vasanas* are strong, but here was an occasion when we could do so without inconvenience to ourselves. He said, "Let nature take her course," but we would not heed him. In fact, we knew better than he. What absolute arrogance!

On the last night, Bhagavan was lying in the small room which had originally been built as a store-room when he had moved into the big hall. We are all seated along the verandah of the temple opposite. Our only view of the room was through a small ventilator window about six feet from the ground. Naturally, seated as we were on the ground, we had no view of the interior of the room where he lay; all we could see was the constant movement

of a fan backwards and forwards. This fan was anxiously watched by everybody, for when it stopped they would know that the end had come.

The Ashram authorities were afraid that there might be some trouble from the waiting crowds, as a certain clique had arranged if possible to remove the body and bury it outside the Ashram. It would have been quite impossible to do this, there were lots of police about and the majority of opinion was naturally against such a scandal. However the powers were scared. For this reason about an hour before the end the D.M.O., who was present, was prompted by the Manager to come out and announce that there was no immediate danger of anything happening that night. It was a scandalous thing to do. Naturally many of the people went home for their evening meal and so missed the last moments.

There were some American reporters and photographers, who were there just out for a scoop. They were living less than half a mile away. One of them standing outside the house suddenly looked up and saw a very bright star or meteor swing slowly across the sky towards the North over the top of the Hill. He called out to the rest of the party who ran out and saw the same phenomenon. One and all agreed that something had happened to Bhagavan. Even though they were without special faith in him, by some intuition they were certain that this must be the case. It happened exactly at the time of the passing, (8-47 p.m. on April 14th, 1950) and was seen by many people, all of whom strangely enough,

associated it with the same thing. People in Madras, too, saw it and some got into their cars immediately and made their way to the Ashram. This is a fact which I will not attempt to explain, but must accept it as it happened.

In 1938 Stanley-Jones a Congregational Bishop came to call one morning. He was accompanied by a secretary who took copious notes of all he said and little of what the Maharshi was allowed to say, which was not much. There were two other Christians in the party. He was on a tour of India collecting material for a book which was out to prove that Hindu Saints were nothing as compared with just an ordinary Christian believer. He wanted to know what Bhagavan's method had been and how much and what he had attained by it. His whole attitude was arrogant and uncompromising. For the actual conversation I have refreshed my memory from the *Talks*, though modified according to my memory.

S. J.: What is the quest and goal? How far have you progressed?

B.: The goal is the same for all. But why search for a goal at all? Why are you not content as you are?

S. J.: Is there then no goal?

B.: I am asking you why you are seeking a goal?

S. J.: I have my own views on these things. I want to know what Maharshi has to say about them.

B.: Maharshi has no doubts so does not need to ask such questions. What are you searching for?

S. J.: I consider the goal to be the realization of the Higher Mind by the lower mind so that the Kingdom of

Heaven may come to earth. The lower mind is now incomplete; only in this way can it be perfected.

B.: So you do admit a lower mind which is incomplete and seeks perfection in a Higher Mind. Tell me, in what way is that lower mind different from the Higher Mind?

S. J.: (Ignoring the question but declaiming his own views in which alone he was interested) The Kingdom of Heaven was brought down to earth by Jesus Christ. I consider him the Kingdom personified. I want everybody to realise this. Christ said, "I am hungry with other men's hunger." Mutual partnership is joy and to be apart from the Kingdom of Heaven is pain. If that Kingdom is universalised each of us will become at one with the rest.

B.: You talk about a difference between people, but what becomes of this difference in deep sleep?

S. J.: (Again ignoring the question) I want to be wide awake.

B.: You believe that you are awake now. On the contrary this is only a dream in a long sleep. Everybody is asleep, this world and all actions are only a dream.

S. J.: This is Vedanta. I have no use for it. These differences are not imaginary. They are positive. (Harping back to his old question) Can Maharshi tell us what he has found? What is this waking state of which he talks?

B.: It is beyond the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep.

S. J.: But I am awake now and I know it.

B.: But in the real waking state there are no differences.

S. J.: What happens to this world in that case?

B.: There is no world in your deep sleep. When you wake does the world suddenly appear and tell you, "I exist"?

S. J.: No, but other people tell me that there is a world and that it needs spiritual and moral regeneration. So there must actually be a world. All are agreed as to that.

B.: You now see the world and the people in it, but can they exist apart from your thoughts?

S. J.: (Going off at a tangent) I enter the world with Love.

B.: Are you apart from it that you can enter it?

S. J.: I am identified with it. I came here to ask questions and to listen to Maharshi's answers. Why do you keep on asking me questions in this way?

B.: But Maharshi has answered your questions. The real waking state does not involve differences.

S. J.: Have you reached the goal?

B.: There is no goal apart from the Self, so how can it be something to be gained afresh? If so it would be impermanent, and what is impermanent will one day disappear. Do you not agree that the goal must be eternal? So it must be within the Self. Seek and find it there.

S. J.: I want to know your experience.

B.: Whatever experience I have does not affect the question. Each must find the truth for himself. How can someone else find it for you?

S. J.: Not at all. Each person's experience has a human value and can be shared by others.

B.: The questioner must solve his own question, another cannot do it for him.

S. J.: (Smugly) But I know the answer.

B.: Tell us!

S. J.: Twenty years ago I was shown the Kingdom of Heaven. It was by God's Grace alone, I made no effort to attain it. I was happy. Now my purpose is to make it available for all. Nevertheless I want to know Maharshi's experience of the divine.

Bhagavan kept quiet. Stanley-Jones then gave a discourse on Love. How he had two Ashrams in N. India and how through these he was spreading Love through the world. He was in the best sermon form and the secretary was kept busy recording his words. After a while he again renewed his offensive and tried to get Bhagavan to tell him of his experiences.

Mrs. Jinarajadasa, wife of the President of the Theosophical Society who happened to be in the Hall at the time protested.

"Here we believe that Maharshi has himself brought the Kingdom of Heaven to earth, now you pester him with questions relating to his experience. Is it not rather up to you to follow his instructions and seek it within yourself?"

S. J.: But how shall I realize it?

But he would not stop. He kept on nagging at Bhagavan refusing to understand what he was telling him, until eventually I became impatient.

I was sitting at the far end of the Hall meditating or at least trying to, but his absurd persistence

distracted me. Eventually I could stand it no longer and called out.

“Why do you ask Maharshi to realize it for you? The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. Your own scriptures tell you that.”

He turned round in surprise to see who was this impertinent person who dared intervene and question a pillar of Congregationalism.

“I don’t,” he snorted angrily.

“Yes, you do. Why don’t you follow your own Christian teaching and find the Kingdom of Heaven within?”

S. J.: “It doesn’t say that. It says ‘come among you.’”

I.: “No, that is not correct, ‘within you.’ Also it adds, ‘seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and then all things will be added unto you.’ Why don’t you do that?”

Stanley-Jones deciding that he was not receiving the reception that was his due as an important person, said, “we have over-stayed our time.”

The secretary bundled up her precious papers and the party got up and left the Hall.

Bhagavan laughed after they had gone and remarked that I had certainly paid him back in his own coin.

Some time after, an article appeared in a Punjabi paper on his visit to the Maharshi. In which he said that Bhagavan’s teaching was the usual negative, ‘make the mind a blank,’ a thing never taught by Bhagavan and never even mentioned in the above interview. So we see how useless it is for a person who is not fit to receive

instruction from a Guru to sit at his feet? Stanley-Jones came to the Ashram with preconceived ideas, so could accept nothing else. He went away convinced that he had heard what he had already decided to hear.

There is a well-known saying that when the pupil is ready the Guru will appear. It can be equally truly said that if the pupil is not ready even the appearance and teaching of the Guru can have no effect.

Bhagavan's reactions to mad people were negative and at times almost disapproving. Where we expected pity we found no such thing. It seemed, by the way Bhagavan spoke of them, that he considered that it was their own fault, that it was, in fact, just lack of control, that if they really wanted to they could pull themselves together and act normally. Bhagavan never said any of this, it is only my personal feeling on the subject.

There was one lady who spent some time at the Ashram and thought herself a very great devotee, who entirely shut herself up in a cottage just outside the gate, tying a cloth across her eyes so that she should not see and so be distracted by the wicked world, at the same time observing silence, hoping in this way to quiet the senses. All that Bhagavan said was, "Why does she not come over here and join us like other people? What good is all this going to do? She comes here to be with us and then shuts herself away."

Another woman, a Jewess, who had undergone dreadful Nazi persecution in Germany used to strip off all her clothes and appear naked in public, have hysterical

fits, scream, and seem beyond all control. Bhagavan was very cold about her antics and hardly seemed interested. Though he did make some enquiry, when the police took her away, and ask what had become of her, he showed no apparent sympathy with her ravings.

A young man from Mysore sat in front of Bhagavan for months, apparently always in deep meditation. Bhagavan appeared almost antagonistic towards him, so much so, that someone asked him, why? Bhagavan replied that the young man was only meditating for a job as he was out of work, and this proved to be true. The youth was actually offered employment in a local school as he had a degree in science but had by then gone so crazy that he ignored it. His idea of a job now seemed to be to take the place of Bhagavan himself. It was very dangerous to misuse Bhagavan's power and a thing which Bhagavan always strongly opposed. This youth finished up by trying to jump onto Bhagavan's couch and embrace him, calling out, "Father, Father!" and thus hoped to gain power directly.

But many mad people were brought to the Ashram with the hope that Bhagavan would cure them; although this was against the Ashram rules, they would be smuggled into the Hall when no one was looking. In some cases the visit did prove effective, but in all cases Bhagavan appeared completely indifferent.

Bhagavan did reciprocate the grief of others in most cases, and speak some comforting words, though when a person had lost control he would be stern and apparently unsympathetic. With people who were ill he would

sympathise, and in certain cases even offer advice and help them in any way possible. Once he unexpectedly came to visit me when I was lying sick in my room. He had been to Devaraja's place so as to be the first to enter a new room he had just built and was told that I was unwell and would be delighted if he paid me a surprise visit. He immediately complied. Therefore the mystery of his behaviour in the case of mad people becomes all the greater. He was sympathetic by nature to one and all, so this one exception remains somewhat of a riddle.

Many people consider it most auspicious to handle anything that their Guru has touched intimately. Old ladies would wait outside the bathroom to sip the water running from Bhagavan's bath, or the water on the ground left after he had washed his feet on returning from a stroll. So it was considered especially blessed to eat from a leaf that Bhagavan had already used for his meal. But Bhagavan himself was dead against such things and did his best to discourage them. It was the habit in the Ashram for each person to remove his own leaf after he had eaten, with, of course, the exception of Bhagavan. But one of the attendants was responsible to see that this was thrown away without anybody being allowed to get hold of it. I know for a fact that if the attendant had not already had his own meal he would have it served on Bhagavan's leaf; but Bhagavan was not aware of this or there would have been trouble.

One day Bhagavan noticed a young girl hanging round and watching him eating. She was obviously waiting for something. Eventually he asked the doting parents,

who were watching with admiration, what it was all about. They explained that she was waiting for his leaf from which to take her own meal.

Bhagavan was very angry. So as a punishment to all who had allowed such things to happen, he said that in future he would remove his own leaf and throw it outside, so that no one might get hold of it. Everybody was upset at this, one reason being that by then Bhagavan's rheumatism was so bad that to try and carry his leaf and at the same time support himself with his stick would render him unable to hold onto the rail at the side of the steep steps that led out of the dining-room. But Bhagavan was adamant.

To save the situation, a lady devotee said that she herself would be responsible for seeing that Bhagavan's leaf was removed without anybody being allowed to handle it. This Bhagavan would not at first allow, for why make an exception in his case? So a compromise was reached. In future all leaves were to be left in the dining-room and were to be removed together by one of the servants. At first the lady said that she herself would do it, but the servant soon took her place and this custom persists to this day.

An American lady who was travelling about in India in the cause of birth-control, came to visit the Ashram. She asked Bhagavan if birth-control were not a good thing seeing how the world was rapidly becoming overpopulated, especially India where already there was not enough food to go round. Bhagavan only smiled.

“How do you hope to control life when you cannot control death?” he asked. “Find out rather who it is who is born now.”

Again this same sort of reply was made when someone asked with regard to the death penalty, if it was not evil to kill somebody deliberately, even though done by the state. He hoped for some pronouncement from Bhagavan, but was sadly disappointed.

“If a person is going to die he will die whatever happens, you cannot prevent it. He may walk across the road and be killed by a car. Anyhow, die he will.”

Bhagavan never passed judgement on anything, not even on the death penalty. As I have previously stated, there was no good and no bad for him, only actions and attachment to actions. Know the actor and rest there, then all else had absolutely no importance.

In this respect I will quote the *Gita*. II. 27:

“For certain is death for the born and certain is birth for the dead; therefore over the inevitable thou shouldst not grieve” — (*Translation*: Annie Besant).

On another occasion I asked Bhagavan about suicide. I had been cycling round the Hill and on meeting a bus the thought had come into my head: “Why should I not concentrate on the Self and throw myself in front of the bus, so that in this way I may attain Moksha!” I told this to Bhagavan, but he said that it would not work. Thoughts would spring up involuntarily as I fell, fear and the shock would cause them, and thoughts coming, life would continue so that I would have to take another body. If I

could still my mind sufficiently so that such a thing would not happen, then what was the need of suicide?

It was during the war, many people were talking about aeroplanes, bombs and other wonderful things that were being made for the sake of destruction. Bhagavan remarked that there was nothing very wonderful in all that, they had had all these things before in ancient India. Rama had his flower-car which was nothing but an aeroplane, and in accounts of the ancient wars we find mentioned, fire-weapons, diamond weapons and even electric weapons besides many others which are described in ancient books. Modern man thinks he is so wonderful but the ancients knew many more things than he imagines. They had a combination of metals by which they were able to overcome gravity. People have not succeeded in doing that yet.

A question was once asked if human beings were ever reborn as animals. "Oh, yes," said Bhagavan, "even today they will take on such forms just to be born here."

An instance of this is certainly the cow Lakshmi.

One night a dog stood on a rock at the back of the Ashram and barked without stopping. At last Bhagavan told someone to take it some food; this was done, the dog ate it and quickly went away. It was not seen again. Bhagavan explained that it was some Siddha who had taken that form to come here and have a meal as he was hungry. There were many such about he said, but they did not wish to make themselves known and so came like this.

He was asked if the story were true that there were always seven *Jnanis* living about the Hill. "There may be even more than that," he told us, "who can tell? How to recognise them? They may appear as beggars lying in a ditch or in some other unrecognisable capacity. It is impossible to say."

Bhagavan always discouraged any devotee going *Mownam* or taking a vow of silence. During the war I decided that I would like to do so, chiefly to protect myself from the jibes of others. I went and asked Bhagavan's permission. He was not enthusiastic and told me that it was useless to keep the tongue still but to continue to write messages on bits of paper which so many so called *Mownis* continue to do. In this way only the tongue had a rest but the mind continued just as before. I said that I had no intention of doing this but would throw my pencil and paper away. I felt that I had obtained a reluctant consent as Bhagavan agreed that people were worrying me. So I made the necessary arrangements, installed a bell from my room to the kitchen so I should not have to call my servant, and fixed a lucky day to begin. The night before I was to start, a friend of mine brought up the subject in the Hall after the evening meal when only a few of us were present. Bhagavan immediately showed his disapproval and said it was unnecessary and in fact not a good thing at all. I did not talk much anyhow. It was better to speak only when it was necessary, that it actually did no good to observe silence, that if one did so for twelve years one

became dumb and might obtain some thaumaturgic powers, but who wanted them? Speech acted as a safety valve. Naturally after this talk I gave up the idea.

He was also against people taking Sannyasa. If properly kept, it was a useless tie. If not properly kept, it condemned itself. After all, it only made one think 'now I am a Sannyasin', instead of 'now I am in the world.' Thought went on and that was the chief enemy. About retiring to the forest or shutting oneself up in a cave, he expressed exactly the same views. So he obviously endorsed living in the world as itself the necessary environment for helping a person along in his *Sadhana*. If one could do this, be in the world but not of the world, one had achieved a high state of detachment. It is always better to have some sort of opposition, the tree that is not buffeted by the winds is usually a weakling.

One day someone remarked to Bhagavan, "There are many things that happen here of which Bhagavan cannot approve. Why does he remain here? He has no ties or desires."

"What can I do?" asked Bhagavan. "If I go off to the forest and try to hide, what will happen? They will soon find me out. Then someone will put up a hut in front of me and another person at the back, and it will not be long before huts will have sprung up on either side. Where can I go? I shall always be a prisoner."

In this respect the following story is an amusing illustration. One day, years ago, Bhagavan decided to have a day's fast. He intended to wander about the Hill of

which he knew every inch, having explored it as a young man. So he took a rather larger meal than usual the previous night to keep himself going. He set off alone in the early morning, but he had not gone very far when seven women met him. "Oh, here is our Swamy," they cried out delightedly. They made him sit down and proceeded to serve him a full meal which they seemed to have brought on purpose. When he had finished they departed saying, "We will come and bring Swamy his mid-day meal," and in some extraordinary way they did find him again though he had followed no beaten track. They again served him a large meal.

Bhagavan made his way home feeling he had eaten far more than was good for him. M. V. Ramaswamy Iyer, a very old disciple living in the town, had heard that Bhagavan was going to have a day's fast, and decided that by the evening he would be hungry, so he cooked a sumptuous meal and went out to meet Bhagavan whom he encountered on the outskirts of the town. Here he made him sit down and again eat and would not spare him, so Bhagavan returned home gorged, saying he would never spend a day fasting again. With regard to the seven women who had met him so mysteriously, Bhagavan suggested that they must be fairies.

Someone said one day to Bhagavan, "Is it true that the *Jnani* is conscious in all the three states, even when he is sleeping?"

"Yes," replied Bhagavan.

"Then why does Bhagavan snore?"

Which ever doth within the heart its radiance
 unfold.

The Adepts by renunciation and one-pointedness
 Who have become both pure in heart and who
 have also known

The certainty of that one Truth Vedanta doth
 profess,

Attain Self-realization; when ignorance has flown
 From body and its cause Maya they'll gain full
 liberty.

That only as minute Akash what has eternal
 shone,

That is within the Lotus Heart, of every sorrow
 free,

of the Immaculate Supreme, the seat molecular,
 Within the body's inner core, should meditated
 be.

He verily is Lord Supreme. He is exalted far
 Above the Primal Word, which is of Veda first and
 last;

In which blends the Creative Cause, so merged in
 one they are.

Bhagavan used to say that the ego-sense arose in the Heart. This Heart is not the physical organ or even one of the Yogic *Chakras* but a point about one and a half inches to the right from the middle of the chest. Some people pretended that Self-realization was to be found at that point. But how is that possible? Can there be a physical spot where Realization is located? Surely it is all-

enveloping. The idea is that when a Sadhu returns from a state of deep *Samadhi*, the first point of outer consciousness of which he is aware is this point in the so-called Heart. At this point the transcendental experience drops away and the ego again takes possession. So, looking back, it almost seems to him as though Self-realization was found there, as it was his last point of consciousness. Talking inexactly, then it is possible to say that Realization was found in the Heart. People were sometimes advised to take their minds back to this point, for, at the same point where ego took birth, at this same point the ego would drop away. This was not laid down as a necessary *Sadhana* but only as a help for a certain number of seekers. For Bhagavan repeatedly pointed out, "You cannot locate an experience." In this connection I quote another beautiful poem found in the Vedas, the *Narayana Sooktha*, which is chanted by the boys every evening as one of a number of hymns during their evening prayers:

(1) It must be understood that the heart resembling the lotus, a span below the throat and a span above the navel, hangs upside down and is the chief seat of the Universal form of *Paramatman*.

(2) There is a subtle hole in its centre. In it is the Paramatman for the purpose of giving Grace to those who meditate on Him. In the centre of the heart there is a fire full of heat.

(3) This fire is active and is for consuming and distributing the digested food from head to foot, for the vitalising of the body.

(4) The flame is upturned in the heart, shining like a streak of lightning in the middle of dark clouds, like the subtle pinpoint of a seed. It is of golden yellow colour and shines effulgently. It is not comparable with anything else.

(5) In the centre of the tip (of the flame) is the *Paramatman*. He is Brahma, Siva, Indra and is the indestructible, self-effulgent *Paramatman*.

I suspect that this hymn may allude to the Heart Chakra rather than the spiritual Heart of which Bhagavan speaks, which he places on the right side of the chest, but in the *Talks* he explains about the Heart as follows :

“The Heart is used in the Vedas and the scriptures to denote the place whence the notion ‘I’ springs. Does it spring only from the fleshy ball? It springs within us somewhere right in the middle of our being. The ‘I’ has no location. Everything is the Self. There is nothing but that.

“So the Heart must be said to be the entire body of ourselves and of the entire Universe conceived as ‘I’. But to help the practiser (*Abhyasi*) we have to indicate a definite part of the Universe, or of the Body. So this Heart is pointed out as the seat of the Self. But in truth we are everywhere, we are all that is, and there is nothing else.”
— (*Talks*, 29.)

Bhagavan adored the Hill and was never happier than when wandering alone about its slopes. There is a current story about a great Siddha Purusha, known as Arunagiri Yogi, who lives under an enormous banyan tree on the north slope of the Hill. Leaves from this tree were once

found by Bhagavan on the ground when he was going round the Hill. They were more than a foot in diameter.

One day Bhagavan set off in search of this spot. At length he found it and saw the tree in the distance, which he described as enormous. But the place was surrounded by a thick and impenetrable hedge of thorns, and this prevented his further approach. When he did try to push his way through, he disturbed a hornets' nest, so that the enraged hornets violently attacked his leg and thigh. He did not move until they had expended their anger upon him as punishment for the harm he had done. He never moved forward as he now realized that he was not meant to proceed further. With regard to the hornets, he was most apologetic, as he said that he had had no right to disturb their nest so carelessly. So considerate was he.

In 1942 or 1943, a large party of devotees set out one morning in search of this place. Bhagavan had warned them that it would be useless, but they slipped away one by one, not telling where they were going and paying no heed to his admonition. The party was led by Kunju Swamy. They wandered about for a long time and became entirely lost in one of the valleys of the Hill from which they could find no way out, but just turned in circles, coming back again and again to the point where they had started, until they were utterly exhausted and prayed for help. At this point an old countryman appeared to whom they explained their plight. In ten minutes he had put them on the right road for which

they had been so hopelessly searching. Munagala was so done up that he had to be supported home and they wondered if they would ever get him there. When they did eventually arrive and came into the presence of Bhagavan, he told them that they had been foolish to put themselves to all the trouble and suffering. It had been useless from the start. Such a vision was not for such as they.

Who was the mysterious old man who appeared so opportunely? Why was Bhagavan allowed to approach no nearer? Surely there could be no such rule for him? Or was it not perhaps that had he done so, he would have been lost to us, as he would have been completely merged in the holy Being and that time had not yet come? The thing is mysterious.

Once I asked, "Who is Arunagiri Yogi?"

"Who is he but God Himself," succinctly replied Bhagavan, but made no further comment.

There has been considerable discussion as to whether Bhagavan could and did make a Will. A number of people disparage the idea altogether, while others place all the responsibility for it on the evil machinations of those surrounding him, who in some mysterious manner concocted a document which had full legal sanction. There are a number of people who still say that what passes as a Will is no Will at all, although it has been upheld in a Court of Law. As no record of it has been published in any of the Ashram books, I have thought it expedient to give an account of it here.

For twenty years a law case hung over the Ashram, causing a lot of worry to everybody. An old devotee claimed the place as his private property and wanted to take over the management of the Ashram, including Bhagavan. When the Ashram eventually got rid of the bother, some of the old disciples went to Bhagavan for his help and advice. They explained that, even with him there, they had been badgered in this way; there was no knowing what might happen when he was no longer there to protect them, what would he advise? What did they suggest? he asked them. That the Ashram should be controlled by a board of Trustees appointed by him, might be a good idea, they thought. But Bhagavan demurred. Trustees had no real interest in an institution; they would only use it as a milch cow, and when it was dry they would leave it to its own resources. Rather than that, would it not be better to arrange for a hereditary management? The matter was discussed and it was decided that, in that case, the best thing to do was to make a Will. Bhagavan agreed to this suggestion.

There was a retired High Court Judge, an old devotee living in Salem, and to him was entrusted the task of making a draft of the Will. This he did, first doing *pooja* to a portrait of Bhagavan and then praying to him for help and guidance. When it was ready, a number of old devotees collected in the Ashram and a meeting was held in the big room that I had occupied on my arrival in the Ashram. Clause by clause the draft was read and discussed, a few alterations being made; after each clause Bhagavan

would be asked if he had understood and if he agreed, and not until his consent was given to each one in turn did they pass on to the next. Eventually it was re-typed and Bhagavan put a line in lieu of a signature. He also authorised Sambasiva Rao to sign in his place, so the attestation was made doubly sure. A number of people witnessed the document and the Sub-Registrar, who was present, asked Bhagavan if he understood the document, agreed to it and wanted it registered. To all of which Bhagavan answered, "Yes!" So there is no doubt as to the legality of the document and Bhagavan's part in it.

That Bhagavan knew exactly what he was doing and intended to do it, not just submitting to influence as some pretend, is proved by the sequel. A number of years afterwards the authorities of the Ashram decided that the Will was not very satisfactory from their point of view as it seemed to have some legal loopholes in it, and so a new one was drawn up. Bhagavan was lying in his last illness in the new Hall and there he was approached by the Manager and a number of his supporters. They explained their difficulty to Bhagavan and handed him the new document and asked him to certify it. But he would have nothing to do with it. "Is there not a Will already?" he asked, and that finished the matter.

"How can a *Jnani* make a Will?" people say, "it's absurd."

There are no restrictions on a *Jnani*, no question whether he can or cannot own property; he would not be

a *Jnani* otherwise. He is bound in no imaginable way. People gave him presents and these out of his grace he accepted. Property had accumulated under the management of his brother, who alone handled money and was interested in the organisation. The Ashram would obviously continue as a spiritual centre after the demise of Bhagavan, so the natural thing was to listen to the prayers of the devotees and see that it should be protected. The wisdom of this has since been amply proved. Many cases have been brought against the Ashram by discontented people and much propaganda has been made, but there has always been the Will to see that it continued as a going concern, so that people might still come and enjoy its peace and find the Master still present.

Bhagavan had personally no desire to make a Will nor did he care about property, but he could see our difficulties and it was on that account that he agreed to the above. Nobody pretends that he sat down and wrote it himself; he left that to others, but, personally, I am convinced that he did inspire the document. Anyhow, he gave his full consent to it.

Once he remarked that whatever a *Jnani* said, however absurd it might seem, must eventually come to pass. He signed the Will which said that the Ashram must be maintained as a spiritual centre and that is being done in spite of opposition. Surely in time it will grow from strength to strength, to be known at length to the whole world.

The other day Devaraja told me a story he had forgotten to include in any of his books.

In the early days, when Bhagavan was living in the Virupaksha cave on the Hill, a Sannyasin, a disciple of the Sringeri Shankaracharya at the time, came to him and tried to persuade him to be initiated into Sannyas. Bhagavan refused, but he persisted and would not let it go at that. He continued to argue with Bhagavan for more than three hours. He said that he recognised Bhagavan's greatness but in any case it would be better that he should be initiated, for the Sannyasin was convinced that Bhagavan being a Brahmin, should follow the Sastras. He said that all the necessary things would be brought and the ceremony would be performed in the cave itself. Even if Bhagavan would not agree to wearing the ochre robe, he could at least adopt a *koupina* of that colour. Then he went away, telling him to think it over and promising to return in the afternoon for the final decision.

Shortly after the Sannyasin had left, an old man, a complete stranger, came with a bundle of Sanskrit books into the cave where Bhagavan was living. The old man asked permission to leave them there for a while, saying that he would return later and pick them up. Out of interest Bhagavan had a look at them to see what they were. The first book that he took up (*Arunachala Puranam*) opened automatically at the following verse:

“Those who reside within the radius of three *yojanas* (30 miles) of this place, even if they have not had initiation, shall by my supreme decree attain Liberation, free from all attachments.”

He copied this on a slip of paper, replaced the book and closed his eyes; later when he looked up the books had gone and he never saw the old man again. How they had gone he never knew.

When the Sannyasin returned later for Bhagavan's answer he handed him the slip of paper, which having read, he left him alone and went away, persuaded now that there was no need for any initiation.

It seems that the Sannyasin reported all that had happened to Sri Narasimha Bharathi, the head of the Math, who regretted the episode and told him, "Hereafter don't try to do such things."

EPILOGUE

I cannot do better than conclude with an article I wrote for the celebration of Bhagavan's eightieth birthday which fell on December 17th 1959:

I feel that I should not let the occasion pass without saying a word to those who doubt the continued presence of our beloved Guru amongst us. Though we talk as though he were dead, he is indeed here and very much alive, as he promised, in spite of appearances.

Many will contend that his presence is in no way limited to this single spot, that he permeates everywhere and is to be found in the home of every devotee just as certainly as in his Ashram. But though I must admit the correctness of this view as a theory, in practice I find personally that it does not work out quite in this way.

Once Self-realization has been attained, all the world is the same for us; no spot can be selected as more congenial and powerful than another. Without doubt there are many who had the blessing of His Grace and are Self-realized and live their lives always conscious of His beatific presence wherever they happen to be. And these can vouch for the truth that He is, in fact, to be found everywhere. But for others, like myself, less blessed beings, things are not quite so easy. For many of us find that the world, our families, business troubles, sickness and poverty absorb all our time and attention, so that we cannot even put in a few minutes a day for realizing that He *is* in truth everywhere and very

much alive. For such, a visit to the Ashram acts as a refreshing draught and gives renewed zest to their *Sadhana*.

But people may say that I am hardly the one to judge fairly; I am prejudiced. So I will not restrict myself to my own experience, but rather to the witness of the many visitors who return here after some years of absence. "There is no point in going there," they had argued previously, "he is no longer there."

"Where has he gone?" one asks them. But they are vague in their reply, they haven't much faith that he is anywhere at all, one feels. In spite of this, something draws them back here, they don't really know what, and then those who will sit quiet for a while and try to forget for a few moments their little worries are amazed at the potency of the atmosphere.

Often visitors have remarked, "But one can feel him more strongly than ever. Of course one misses the physical presence, the opportunity to ask questions, the delight of his greeting, the humour of his approach, and most of all his understanding and sympathy."

Yes, one certainly misses all that, but one never doubts for a moment that he is still here, when once one has taken the trouble to visit his tomb.

"Propaganda!" you will retort, thinking that as I live here I have an axe to grind. But actually the truth is exactly the reverse. Everyone knows that I prefer to shut myself off and avoid visitors, so why should I now be so foolish as to encourage them if I did not feel compelled to do so by some force beyond my control?

But there is no need for me to speak. Rather let the Hindu scriptures bear their own witness.

It is distinctly stated in the Upanishads that the life-force of a *Brahmanishtha* never leaves his body, but inheres in the heart itself. If the *Samadhi* (tomb) is properly maintained and approached, it will confer inestimable bliss on the devotee, granting him boons. This view is supported by Tirumular's "*Tiru-mantram*", a Tamil classic, which states that the *Jnani*, whether in the embodied or disembodied state, is Brahman Himself and, as the Guru of all his children, personally takes care of them and blesses them. This authoritative work also proclaims the omnipresent character of the *Jnani* after giving up his body. Again, the Agamas state that, even if the *Brahmanishtha* has decided to cast off his coat and take up his abode elsewhere, he leaves in his old body one of his sixteen *kalas*, which is all powerful, to shed forth his blessing.

If it is felt that Sri Ramana is still actually in our midst and his presence is to be found most easily at the spot where he lived so long and his body is buried, surely this is only natural. Is it not the tradition amongst all great religions of the world, with no exception? Even the Muslims revere the graves of accredited saints, while the Buddhists go on tiresome pilgrimages just to pay reverence to some relic. People do not take all this trouble unless they feel there is a very good reason.

When Sri Ramana lay dying, people went to him and begged him to remain for a while longer as they needed his help. His reply is well known.

“Go! Where can I go? I shall always be here.”

The power of Sri Ramana, who gave up his physical form has not diminished. He is everywhere, like the light in a room shed by an electric bulb. But the light is found to be far stronger near the bulb, the source of light, than in any other part of the room, though no spot is in darkness. What wonder, then, if the power of our Guru is found near the place where his body is interred?

There is no need for me to lay down the law, even though my personal experience can vouch for the truth of what I say. I am satisfied to rely on the words of the Scriptures. Or, if you prefer it, on your own testimony after you have visited the Ashram and found out for yourself.

And so I end the few personal reminiscences I have of my Guru. These are doubtless inadequate as I never thought that I should write anything, but my friends have been urging me on, telling me that it was my duty to put on record my experiences of Bhagavan. When I did eventually sit down to write, I found that it was easier than I had expected as I had often talked with others of the various incidents recorded here and in this way kept my memory green. I have mentioned as few names as possible, only when it seemed that the content required it. Personalities did not count before him. He was unique, for a Self-realized soul is a rarity and can be met only over long periods of time. In the *Bhagavad Gita* (VII. 3. Besant Trans.) Sri Krishna says:

“Among thousands of men scarce one striveth for Perfection; of the successful strivers scarce one knoweth Me in essence.”

GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

Abhishekam: Anointment of Temple images with milk etc.

— *Kumbha*: At the dedication of a temple, pots of water are consecrated for several days and finally poured over the images amidst general rejoicing. Crowds attend such ceremonies.

Avatar: Incarnation of God. God deliberately takes on a human form for the help of the world in times of religious decline. Krishna is an example.

Brahmanishtha: One in the most advanced state of Realization. No more is possible for such, all has been achieved.

Jnanam: Divine Wisdom, Supreme Knowledge.

Jnani: A Self-realized soul; e.g. Ramana Maharshi. He lives in permanent state of God-consciousness.

Kala: There are sixteen life-forces or Kalas pertaining to the human body.

Karma: Action fashioned by past thoughts and desires. Every action begets another. There are three Karmas: Prarabdha, Sanchita and Agami: those actions that have begun to bear fruit in the present birth; those that will bear fruit later; and those at present being accumulated to bear fruit in the future. Or Prarabdha, fruits of previous Karma eaten in this life; Agami, seeds gathered while so eating; Sanchita, such seeds which sown will sprout in the future, becoming Prarabdha in the next life.

Kaupina: Narrow strip of cloth carried between the legs, folded back and front in a cloth tied round the waist, worn for modesty by naked Sadhus.

Mantra: Sacred word used for repetition or initiation.

Math: Hindu monastery.

Moksha: Liberation.

Mownam: Vow of silence.

Pooja: Worship done with flowers, etc.

Prarabdha: See Karma.

Prasadam: A small portion of anything eatable presented to the Guru or Deity usually returned as a blessed gift.

Purna: The Full, Complete, Plenum.

Sadhana: Discipline, that which is being practised.

Sadhu: A religious aspirant, one who is practising Sadhana.

Samadhi: Lit. "bringing into one," Transcendental State, see text.

Satsanga: Association with the good.

Shankaracharya: Named after the great Shankara. Head of one of the five great Maths founded by Shankara.

Siddha: One who has attained powers, spiritual or may be thaumaturgic.

Siddha Purusha: Perfect Being. One identified with God Himself.

Tapas: Lit. burning away, spiritual austerities.

Upadesa: *Desa*, instruction, *Upa*. near. Spiritual instruction from the Guru.

Vasana: Latent tendencies. These are closely bound with Karma.

Vedapatasala: Vedic school.