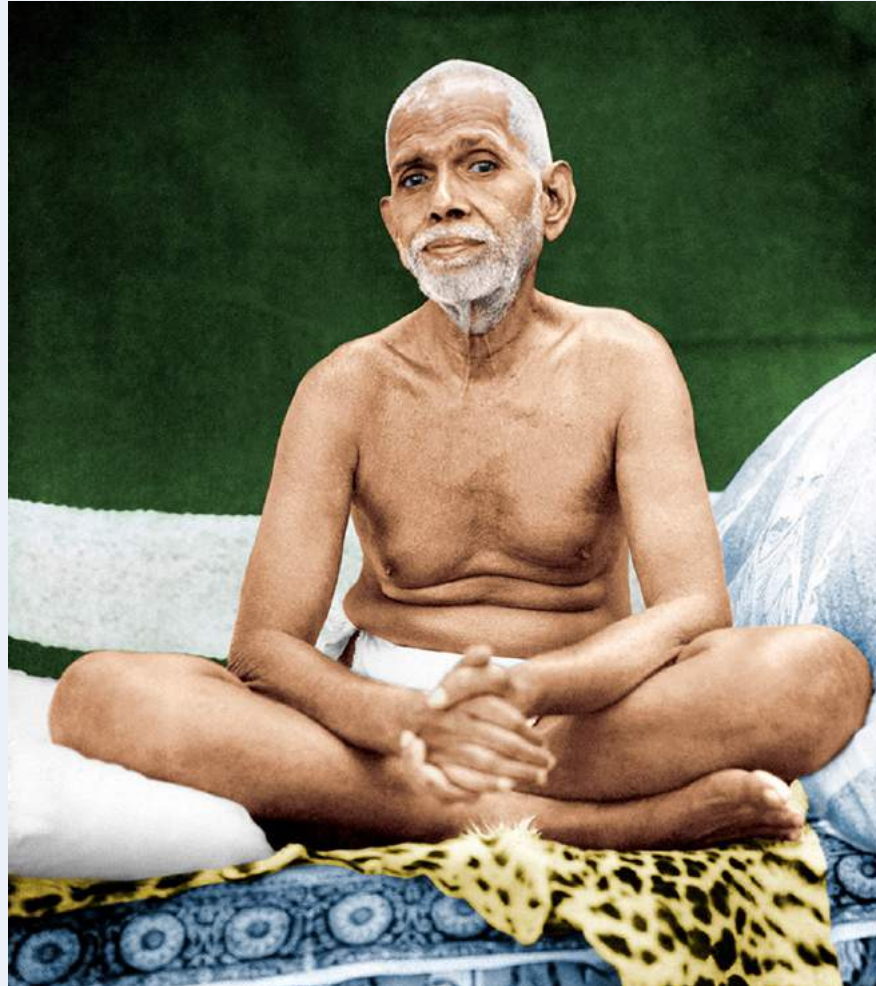


NEWSLETTER

Ramana Maharshi Foundation U.K.
Autumn-Winter 2023



Newsletter Autumn-Winter 2023

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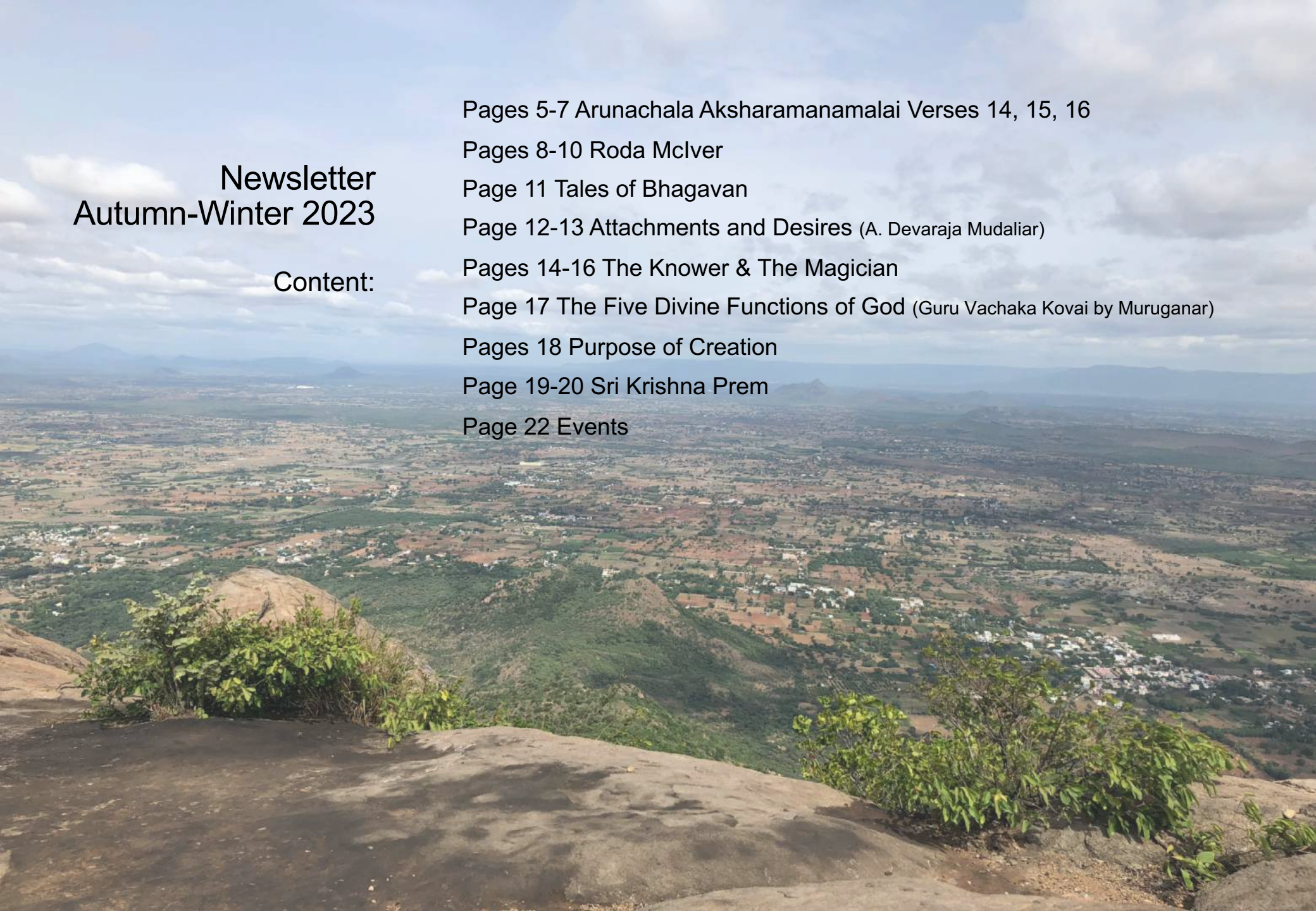
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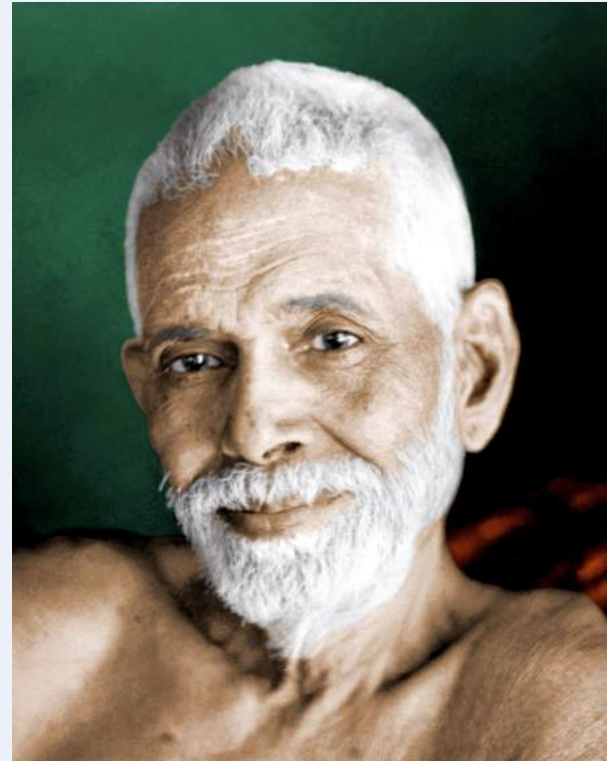
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“The spontaneous effulgence of the Self,
devoid of the ego, is the greatest tapas”.



Welcome to this Autumn-Winter 2023 edition of the RMFUK Newsletter.

Grace is absolutely essential for self-realisation and in all three verses of Aksharamanamalai Bhagavan is beseeching Arunachala to bestow his grace upon him. Excerpts included in this Newsletter illustrate how Bhagavan (who is Arunachala) bestowed his grace upon his disciples.

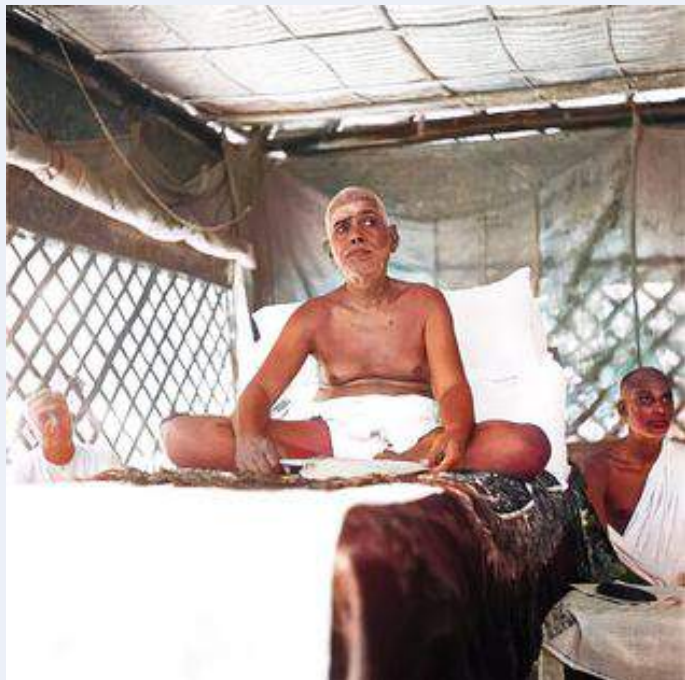
Bhagavan rarely acknowledged that he accepted disciples but there are many instances where he has clearly given initiation by look, by touch or by silence. In this newsletter Roda McIver describes her initiation by look and how later Bhagavan said “my feet are always on her head”. Though he may no longer be with us in his physical body to look at or to touch us, we know that his feet are always on our heads and that he throws his light upon us like he did upon the beggar in Chalam’s story.

The direct teaching to Devaraja Mudaliar reinforces again that even though good things come to us because of *prarabdha* we should accept them without any special attachment to them. Desire for more or repetition of them will only lead to more and more births.

We are often distracted by *siddhis* (miracles) and people who have psychic powers. The story of Goraknath and Allama Prabhu, told by Bhagavan illustrates the transience of this too and the imperative to remain true to the search for the one indivisible being that we really are.

The transitoriness and impermanence of everything around us is further explained and emphasised by the extracts from Guru Vachaka Kovai and The Power of the Presence. In the Purpose of Creation, Bhagavan succinctly explains that the sole purpose of the outside creation is to make us turn within.

And in his advice to Sri Krishna Prem he says again that we need to turn within and see, and then we will realise that not only is everything we see God but that we ourselves are God.



Arunachala Aksharamanamai

Verse 14

auvaipō leṅakkunṅ ṅaruḷait tantēṅai
yāḷuva tuṅkaṭa ṅaruṅācalā

Paraphrase:

[Arunachala], just as a mother, through her very nature, gives love to her child, it behoves you, (whose compassion is far greater than that of a mother), to bestow your grace upon me, who have sought you out and found you, and to embrace me at your holy feet, making me your very own.

Commentary:

Arunachala, just as a mother is by her nature generous, loving and tender towards her child you, who are more compassionate than any mother, are obliged to care for me. It is your duty to take charge of me and to bestow your divine grace upon me. It is your bounden duty to ensure that there is annihilation of the ego and I am completely absorbed into you and have no separate existence.

An alternative explanation is that Avai here refers to Uma Devi, the divine mother of the world who merged inseparably with her Lord at Arunachala; and this merging with Arunachala is what Bhagavan is asking for in Aksharamanamai.

(Adapted from Michael James YouTube Nov '22)



Arunachala Aksharamanamalai

Verse 15

kaṇṇukkuk kaṇṇāyk kaṇṇiṇṇrik kāṇuṇaik
kāṇuva tevarpā raruṇācalā

Paraphrase:

[Arunachala]! Devoid of eyes yourself, you see all, yet do not see, abiding as the eye of the eye for those who see. Who could see you (How, and with what eye)? May you yourself grant me your grace and look upon me (so that I may look upon you with the eye of that grace).

Commentary:

The eyes are nothing more than fleshy spheres, and the other organs of sense are similarly inert. The mind, therefore, which is thought of as a sixth sense, giving its light to them, is termed *the eye* and the Self, the pure consciousness, which illuminates the mind in its reflected light, is termed *the eye of the eye*.

This true seeing or awareness is another, wondrous kind of seeing unlike the differentiated vision, based on mental imagination, in which we perceive in terms of the triad of *seer*, *sight* and *thing seen*. In the state of supreme Reality, Arunachala, the pure consciousness of the Self, exists as Himself alone with nothing else whatsoever.

Thus that wondrous seeing, in which He sees without seeing, is simply Himself, enduring and shining as all those phenomena, which are merely unreal appearances superimposed upon Him.

Since the loss of oneself, the destruction of the *jiva*'s ego is something that needs to be accomplished through his grace alone, Bhagavan says, 'Look upon me with your eye of grace, in order to destroy that very ego.'

(published in Arunachala Aksharamanamalai commentary by M.K. Muruganar)



Arunachala Aksharamanamalai

Verse 16

kānta mirumpupōṛ kavārnteṇai viṭāmaṛ
kalanteṇō ṭiruppā yaruṇācalā

Paraphrase:

[Arunachala]! Just as a magnet attracts iron towards it, draw me to you through the power of your grace. Never again allow me to be separated from you, but grant your grace, merging as one with me, and remaining ever united with me.

Commentary:

He [Bhagavan] has affirmed that no one can arrive at an understanding of Arunachala through the power of the mind alone. Bhagavan prays for Arunachala's grace, saying that He, who is all-powerful and dependent upon nothing, should draw him [Bhagavan], who is entirely powerless and totally dependent, towards Himself through the power of his causeless grace, and merge with him.

(published in Arunachala Aksharamanamalai commentary by M.K. Muruganar)



Roda MacIver

[Roda MacIver (nee Kamdin) hailed from a well-to-do Parsee family of Bombay.]

I first heard about Bhagavan in 1940 from Mrs. Taleyarkhan, a well-known devotee. She gave me some books and photos and told me that the Maharshi was a very great man. I could not understand the books but I was strongly moved by the photos. I felt an urge to go and see the Maharshi and as time passed the urge became stronger and stronger. There was no specific reason for this urge; my position in Bombay was good, both financially and socially, but somehow I was not satisfied. I felt restless, eager to break off, and anxious to move on. And I did so in 1942.

The time I arrived at the Ashram, the Maharshi had gone up the hill. I was told to wait on the footpath for his return. I was expecting to see a man walking down the hill, but when the Maharshi finally appeared, I couldn't believe that I was watching a glorious sunrise unfold: a distant glimmering of light that, as it approached, became more and more radiant until the blazing sun itself was standing next to me. I was overawed and humbled by this display of utter magnificence. Standing in the glow of that radiant presence, something shifted inside me, some new awareness manifested that I had never had before. I was caught by him and his love, and in that moment my soul became his.

During the next two years I was visiting the Ashram regularly. One day in 1944 when I went into the hall, Bhagavan was reading some papers. I sat down and looked at him. Suddenly he put away the papers and turned his luminous eyes on me. I could not stand the gaze, so I closed my eyes, tears streaming down my face. When I opened my eyes he was still looking at me. My heart got flooded with joy and inner calmness!

Next morning, when I was in the hall somebody asked Bhagavan what was the use of sitting before him, if he does not give initiation? Bhagavan replied that initiation can be given in three ways: 'by silence', 'by look', and 'by touch.' When saying, 'by look', he looked at me. Then I had no doubt that I had received initiation from Bhagavan, my most revered Master!

After a month's stay when I returned to Bombay, there was a complete change in my life. Worldly pleasures ceased to attract me and I wanted to be alone as much as possible. I decided to leave Bombay and settle down at Tiruvannamalai, but did not know where to stay. But I knew Bhagavan was guiding me and so I did not worry much. And it so happened that two days before leaving Bombay I met my husband to be. He told me to go and stay in his house in Tiruvannamalai and so I left happily. Soon after, with Bhagavan's blessings, we got married at Sri Ramanasramam. Bhagavan showed visible interest in the proceedings.

From the beginning, I had a strong desire to touch Bhagavan's feet, but I knew this was not allowed by his attendants. I confided this desire to Mrs. Taleyarkhan, thinking she would keep it a secret. But in the hall, in front of everyone, she told Bhagavan, "Roda has a strong desire to touch your feet." I was so embarrassed. Bhagavan said nothing at the time; but after lunch that day, he stopped near me, said something in Tamil to a nearby devotee and asked him to translate it for me. The devotee said, "Bhagavan says, why should she want to touch my feet? My feet are always on her head." I was overwhelmed with joy. Everyone around congratulated me on my good fortune on getting a blessing like this. People who had been with Bhagavan for years and years said they had never heard him make a remark like this to anyone else.

One day I was feeling some mental agony while sitting in front of Sri Bhagavan. He took out an unburnt charcoal from the urn and said, "Do not burn your mind. Keep the mind as fresh and clean as this coal." From that time onwards I gave up worrying over any problem.

Once two visitors came to Bhagavan. One of them addressing Bhagavan said, “My friend has taken as his guru a man who is not even a sadhu. To show him what a sadhguru should be, I have brought him here.” Bhagavan replied sternly, “Who are you to say who is the right guru for him? By what power can you make out what a man really is? In fact, the guru is not as important as the disciple himself. If one worships with utmost devotion, even a stone would become the Supreme Lord.”

Once I thought what Bhagavan needed was a pretty silver box for the nuts he kept for his birds and squirrel friends. The little tin box he had was old and ugly. No sooner had the thought crossed my mind than someone brought a silver box as I had in mind and offered it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan exclaimed, “A silver box! No. Please take it back. What have I to do with silver boxes?” While saying this, he looked at me as if to say, ‘The same would have happened to you and to your silver box!’

Maurice Frydman once brought a glass of orange juice to Bhagavan, who remarked, “Is that all? It will not be enough”, adding after a pause, “for everyone!” Frydman said that he had brought it only for him as his health was declining. However, Bhagavan would not even touch it. Anything, not shared by all was like poison to him.

Attendant Krishnaswami would beat monkeys who played mischief in the hall or tried to stealthily take away the fruits. Once Bhagavan told him, “It is not the monkeys that are receiving your beatings. It is I. The suffering is mine.” When some devotees complained to Bhagavan about their trouble with the monkeys, he said, “All this land was once a jungle in which the monkeys could roam about freely. It has been their natural habitat for centuries. We are trespassers. Is it fair to complain? Why not put up with a little inconvenience.”

(Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi)

Tales of Bhagavan

An old Telugu man with a long beard, an iron pot and a chopper for cutting wood made his abode in the Draupadi temple. He would beg some food in the town, boil something or other in his iron pot on a small fire of wood cut with his chopper and eat it during the day. For hours together he could be seen standing and looking at Bhagavan. He would spend the night in the temple, which was dilapidated and abandoned and surrounded by jungle. Once Chalam found him standing all alone in front of the temple and gazing at Arunachala. "I sleep here," he said when Chalam asked him what he was doing in the forsaken temple. "What, sleeping here all alone? Are you not afraid?" exclaimed Chalam. The old man seemed indignant. "Afraid of what? Bhagavan throws his light upon me. All through the night I am surrounded by a blue radiance. As long as his light is with me, how can I be afraid?"

The incident made Chalam deeply humble. Bhagavan's love and light was given in full measure to a poor old beggar, while those who pride themselves on being his chosen disciples are left high and dry because they have themselves to attend to.

(Ramana Smrti Souvenir)



Attachment and Desires

A. Devaraja Mudaliar

I had still further proof of Bhagavan's great kindness and love for me, however undeserved. I had planned to carry out something in conjunction with someone else who was then staying permanently near the ashram. Neither at that time, nor even now according to my lights, was there anything so very objectionable about what we had planned.

But suddenly one afternoon, out of a trivial and altogether inadequate circumstance, a quarrel arose between us and what we intended was called off. The next morning, I happened to be sitting very near Bhagavan's couch, at his feet, and Bhagavan, apropos of nothing in particular and with an expression of love and pity, turned to me and said in a low voice "We should not make elaborate plans to get anything. I don't object to your enjoying what comes your way of its own accord".

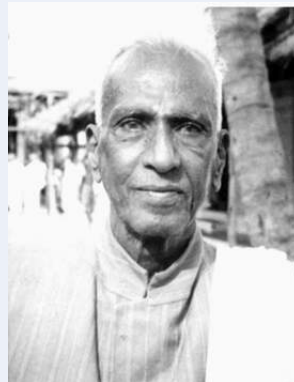
Then I knew beyond all doubt that it was Bhagavan who, foreseeing some harm for me in what I had planned, brought about the sudden and unexpected quarrel the previous afternoon and aborted our plans. When Bhagavan told me this, I asked him, "Does that mean, Bhagavan, that if a thing comes to me without any planning or working for it and I enjoy it, there will be no bad consequences from it?"

Bhagavan then hastened to add, “It is not so”, and explained, “Every act must have its consequences. If anything comes your way, by reason of *prarabdha* you can’t help it. If you take what comes, without any special attachment and without any desire for more of it or for a repetition of it, it will not harm you by leading to further births. On the other hand, if you enjoy it with great attachment and naturally desire for more of it, that is bound to lead to more and more births.”

I cannot adequately describe with what paternal solicitude Bhagavan gave me the above advice. It amounts to what Dattatreya once said he learnt from the python, seeing that it never goes out in search of food but only swallows what comes near it. It is an advice which Bhagavan gives as a golden rule for all of us, in all conditions. I felt grateful and blessed and sang [before Bhagavan]: “Even a mother has not such love as thou has bestowed on meThou art dearer to me than my life. Thou will not cast me aside on account of my faults”.

Because Bhagavan willed this as special grace to me, this advice of his is ever fresh in my mind though I may not always have come up to the standard expected by him in acting on it.

(My Recollections of Bhagavan Sri Ramana by A. Devaraja Mudaliar)



The Knower & The Magician

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

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

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

While he was feeling supremely happy in his fool's paradise, he heard of a great *jnani*, Allama Prabhu, to whom people were flocking day in and day out in large numbers, to sit at his feet and imbibe the bliss of his Being, and to benefit from the Truth of his spoken words. Needless to say, this *jnani* was in fact Lord Sankara Himself incarnate in that form to help mankind. He explained to all who came to Him that all our bodily experiences are false; being based on the non-existent separateness of individuals; also that unless the Self be realized as the witness-Light before whom the three states of waking, dream and sleep pass and re-pass, one cannot remain unaffected by the experiences of mind-stuff, pleasant and painful, and that the Fourth State is the permanent aspect of Being, experienced in and as the Centre (*akasa*) of the Heart. This State is one indivisible whole in all beings, on realizing which all sense of opposites and triplicities vanish. In brief, His teaching was that you are the Absolute Reality, the One unique witness of all - indeed, rather that the very "all" does not exist, for the word implies something outside itself as a non-existent duality, whereas there is only the One conscious Being-Awareness, which you are. To be That is the only real Bliss.

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

The *Jnani* requested to be excused from making such a hazardous experiment. But when Gorakhnath persisted in his request, He took up the sword and struck it against his body. Of course, the metallic sound came out and echoed for a while. In all seeming humility, Allama Prabhu pretended to be greatly impressed by the man's attainment. Said he: "It is indeed a great power you have attained; all glory to you! But now that I have granted your request to test your body, you must now grant me my request to subject my body to the same experiment. Please take the sword and kill me with it!"

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

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

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

(At the Feet of Bhagavan by T.K.Sundaresa Iyer)

The Five Divine Functions of God

(Guru Vachaka Kovai by Muruganar)

666. Know that according to His will, law and plan, every moment of every day the five functions of God [creation, sustenance, destruction, veiling and Grace] will be going on perfectly and unceasingly in the universe, which is full of moving and unmoving objects.

667. Every moment [i.e., many millions of times in a second] each atom [in the universe] is destroyed and newly created. Since this is going on unceasingly, it appears as if they [the objects of the universe] are the same [objects] existing continuously. Know thus.¹

Question: *Why do we see such permanency and constancy in the waking state?*

Bhagavan: *It is seen on account of wrong ideas. When someone says that he took a bath in the same river twice, he is wrong because when he bathed for the second time, the river was not the same as it was when he bathed for the first time. Somebody may say that he is seeing the same fruit every day, but really, a lot of changes are taking place in the fruit. On seeing the brightness of a flame, a man says that he sees the same flame, but the flame is changing every second. As the oil gets less and less, the flame keeps on changing. The waking state is also like this. The stationary appearance is an error of perception.*

Question: *Whose is the error?*

Bhagavan: *Paramata [the knower].*

Question: *From where did the knower come?*

Bhagavan: *On account of the error of perception. In fact, the knower and his false knowledge appear simultaneously, and when the knowledge of the Self is obtained, they disappear simultaneously.²*

¹(Guru Vachaka Kovai translation by Sadhu Om)

²(The Power of the Presence, Part 1 Page 252)

Purpose of Creation

This morning before I left, Dr. Sayed, Philosophy Professor of Allahabad University, put a question. “Bhagavan”, he asked, “what is the purpose of creation?” Usually Sri Bhagavan gave His replies in Tamil, Telugu or Malayam and got them interpreted.

This time Sri Bhagavan spoke directly in English. He put a counter question: “Can the eye see itself?” Dr Sayed replied “Of course not. It can see everything else, but not itself.” “But if it wants to see itself?” Dr. Sayed paused and said, “It can see itself only reflected in a mirror”.

Sri Bhagavan seized the answer and commented, “That is it. Creation is the mirror for the eye to see itself.”

Now I asked whether Sri Bhagavan meant ‘e-y-e’ or ‘I’. Sri Bhagavan said that we could take it figuratively as ‘e-y-e’ and literally as ‘I’.

(Sri Ramana Reminiscenes by G.V. Sbbaramayya)

Sri Krishna Prem*

Smt. Kannakamma was kind enough to narrate these touching anecdotes:

“Sri Krishna Prem was in the Ashram. He would always carry a shoulder-bag in which he kept in a glass-case the images of Radha and Krishna. Only when going to bed would he remove it from his shoulder. After his first *darshan* of Bhagavan he said he wanted to see the places hallowed by the presence of Bhagavan. Sri Viswanatha Swami was asked to act as his guide. Early in the morning the two left for Skandashram. They went to various places and finally returned to Skandashram. Overwhelmed by the serene atmosphere Sri Krishna Prem sat down and started meditating. He was lost in it, Sri Viswanatha Swami, with his practical wisdom, noticed the passage of time, and whispered into his ears: ‘We are now in Gokulam (birthplace of Lord Krishna). Sri Krishna has gone to Brindavan; we should also go there; so, please get up!’ Sri Krishna Prem meekly followed the Swami back to Ramanasramam.

“Sri Viswanatha Swami recounted the story of the journey in detail to Sri Bhagavan, the places visited and the ruse he employed to bring Krishna Prem out of his meditation. Bhagavan gave a broad smile and said, “Very good, very good! Calling this ‘Brindavan’ is quite apt!”

Sri Krishna Prem was a staunch Vaishnavite, who saw only Vāsudeva in all the worlds perceived. ‘*Sarvam Vāsudevamayam jagat*’ ‘Everything is pervaded by Lord Vāsudeva’. Quoting this, he asked Bhagavan: “Is not this the highest ideal?”

Sri Bhagavan nodded His head in agreement and said: “Yes, yes! It is an exalted state of Consciousness. The Vaishnava cult is based on this. Yet, who is it that thinks ‘all that is perceived is Vāsudeva’? Is it not you, yourself? Do any of the things perceived come forward announcing themselves as Vāsudeva? While seeing the earth, trees and plants as Vāsudeva, don’t you wish to see yourself as He? If you see everything as Vāsudeva learn to see yourself as Vāsudeva, you will become Vāsudeva Himself. After that there will be no need to perceive each and every other thing as His Form. If he who sees is transformed into Vāsudeva, then that which is seen automatically becomes Vāsudeva! Archarya Sankara’s ‘*Drishtim Jnanamayeem Kritva*’ (Infusing perception with *Jnana*) is simply this.”

The Vaishnava experience is that God is both our Master and the Inner Self.

How wonderfully has Sri Bhagavan explained this!

**(Sri Krishna Prem first came to India in the early 1920s. He abandoned his conventional life as the English Professor Ronald Nixon and joined his guru in the foothills of the Himalayas as an initiated Hindu monk. At his death in 1965, he was a revered saint known throughout India and with disciples spread across the globe.)*

(Moments Remembered - Reminiscences of Bhagavan Ramana by V. Ganesan)

Seeing the Self

Once a devotee asked Bhagavan, “Have you seen Shiva, Nandi and Kailas?”
Bhagavan replied: “No, never. But the Self I see every moment”.

(Suryanarayana - Ramana Smrti)



EVENTS

Satsangs on Bhagavan's Compositions / Questions put by Devotees - second and last Saturday of every month with Michael James via Zoom

In-Person Meetings in London - 1st or 3rd Saturday of every month at The Study Society, Colet House, London W14 9DA.

Study Group - Every Tuesday and Wednesday at 7pm via Zoom

Meditation Group - Every Thursday at 7pm via Zoom

Two **Newsletters** are distributed - one in Spring-Summer and another in Autumn-Winter

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He knows what is best and when and how to do it. Leave everything entirely to Him. You have no longer any cares. Each one is looked after by God. There is no need to let Him know your needs. He already knows them and will look after them.