

NEWSLETTER

Ramana Maharshi Foundation U.K.
Spring-Summer 2022



Newsletter Spring-Summer 2022

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He who dedicates his mind to Thee and seeing Thee, always beholds the universe as Thy figure, he who at all times glorifies Thee and loves Thee as none other than the Self, he is the master without rival, being one with Thee, O Arunachala! and lost in Thy bliss!

(Five Stanzas on Sri Arunachala v.5)



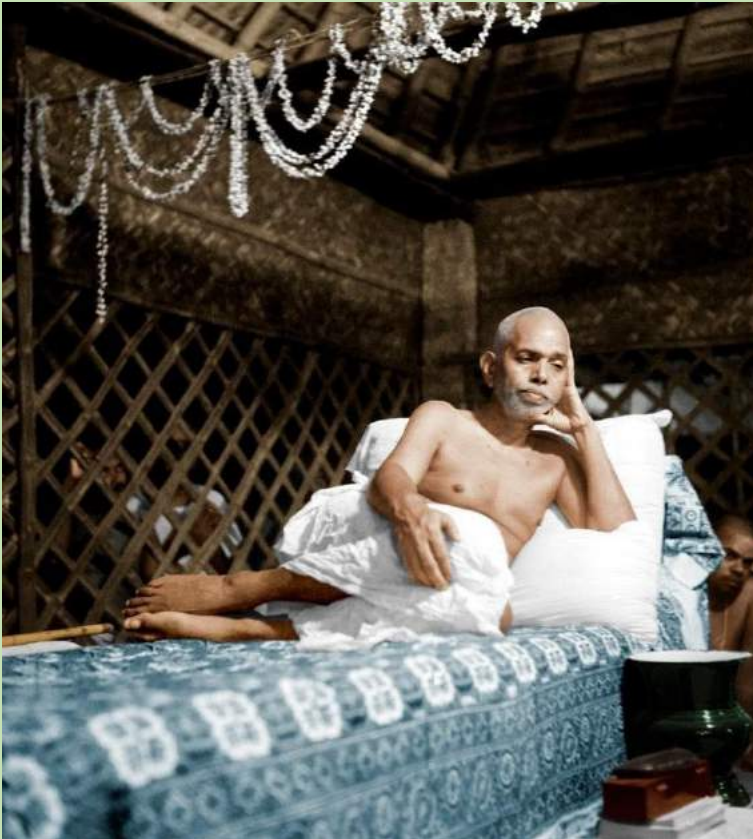
Welcome to this Spring-Summer 2022 edition of the RMFUK newsletter.

This edition leads with an article on **How I Came to the Maharshi** by Lt Col Karamchandani, one of the attending physicians, on how he came to Bhagavan. This is an account that touches one in so many ways. It describes clearly the intense pain that Bhagavan's body was experiencing in those final days before Nirvana and at the same time the intense spirituality that radiated from him undimmed. It is also a wonderful account of someone who confessed to no spiritual connection with Bhagavan but having attended him once is drawn irresistibly back; and has all his prayers answered without speaking a single word to Bhagavan.

The short extract from **Balarama Reddy's Reminiscences** describes that intense spiritual power that emanated from Bhagavan. He likens it to an electric dynamo. **Grant Duff** in his fascinating account in Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi describes it as the Radiance of the Holy One. He also describes Him as gentle to a degree that surpasses gentleness.

Bhagavan only saw the good in others as is so well described in the **story about Kandaswami**, a rich man from Tiruvannamalai.

The final piece in this Newsletter is **Bhagavan's own account** of the wretched state of his towel and cod-piece when he lived in Pachaiamman Koil and which the great poet Muruganar has beautifully woven into his poem **The Sacred Flowering Vines**.



Arunachala Aksharamanamai

Verse 5

ippaḷi tappuṇai yēṇiṇaip pittā
yiṇiyār viṭuvā raruṇācalā

Paraphrase:

Arunachala! Absolve yourself from this blame. Why did you make me think of you? Henceforth who would let you slip from their hands?

Commentary:

The 'blame' referred to here is that mentioned in the previous verse, which would accrue to the Lord [Arunachala], were He to forsake [Bhagavan]. This 'blame' would be inappropriate for the Lord, who is the very form of grace, and also intolerable to Bhagavan, who had formerly been brought under the sway of his grace and ruled by Him. Therefore [this plea for Arunachala to] 'escape this blame' is not just for the sake of either one or the other of them, but for both their sakes, and for the sake indeed of all the people of the world, who deserve to be ruled by his [Arunachala's] grace. Bhagavan says, 'Why did you make me think of you?' because the compulsive force with which Arunachala desired to keep Bhagavan always with Him and rule over him, without casting him away, arose, not through Bhagavan's own volition, but through that of Arunachala himself. Since the thought [referred to in this verse] is not the thought that one conceives oneself in one's own weak mind alone but the thought that the Lord, whose power is limitless, causes one to think, it can never weaken but can only get stronger and stronger by the day. Hence he says, 'Who henceforth would set you free? Therefore he is saying that, like the cat who has tasted milk, jumping up again and again [at the pot suspended from the roof in a rope sling], one's mind, having once gained the experience of meditation upon Arunachala, will never forget Him but will spontaneously, without any effort on its part, engage in joyful, unbroken meditation upon Him. Even if, at some point, Bhagavan abandons meditation upon Arunachala, that meditation will not abandon him, since it has become his own inseparable nature. This is the meaning of the phrase, 'Who henceforth would let go of you?'



Arunachala Aksharamanamai

Verse 6

īṅṛiṭu maṅṅaiyiṛ peritaruḷ purivō
yituvō vuṅataru ḷaruṅācalā

Paraphrase:

[Arunachala] you who give forth to your devotees a compassion which is far greater than that of the mother who gave birth to them and nurtured them! Oh, this is indeed your nature, which is to possess grace.

Commentary:

However inferior the compassion of a mother compared to that of God, because that motherly love stands highest of all in the experience of the people of the world, the author takes it as a term of comparison to illustrate the boundless supreme grace conferred by Him [Arunachala] and says, 'You give forth a compassion which is far greater than that of a mother'. Because there are many kinds of mother roles, *foster mother* and so on, he refers to the mother here as *birth mother* to exclude the others. Unlike most other people Bhagavan never became embroiled in the ways of the world. From 'the innocence of youth' [Aruṅācala Aṣṭakam, v.1], whilst he was still in his teenage years, the Lord has placed the thought of himself in his mind and held him in thrall at his feet. Because of the memory of this act of grace was ever playing in the forefront of his mind and heart, he refers to it as *itu - This!* He uses the words, *Oh, [how great is] this [grace]!* to emphasise how fitting such an act of grace is for the Lord whose compassion is far greater than that of a mother. [In an alternative interpretation], Bhagavan is presenting himself as being fearful, wondering again (as in v.4) what he would do if ever the Lord were to drive him away on some false pretext. As a precaution against this happening, he blabbers incoherently, *Is this then [all] your grace?* in order to forestall any such attempt to abandon him, adopting a mocking tone to reproach Arunachala, a liberty which he can take because of the intimate relationship with Him which already existed between them.



Arunachala Aksharamanamalai

Verse 7

uṇaiyē māṛri yōṭā tuḷattiṇmē
luṛutiyā yiruppā yaruṇācalā

Paraphrase:

[Arunachala!] May you, who possess my very soul, bestow your grace, enthroned in powerful majesty within my mind, so that it does not deceive you, wandering like a straying bullock amongst the objects of the five senses, which are fitting only for the worthless physical frame.

Commentary:

Even if there is only a slight slackening in awareness through inattention, the mind will easily deceive anyone, due to its deep-rooted attachment to the objects of sense, and its natural tendency, which is swifter and more turbulent than the wind, and in so doing it will cause great havoc. Since its essential nature is such, the spiritual aspirant must always exert himself to cultivate a clear awareness of the Real, relying on the grace of the Lord, and allowing no scope for that lack of attention. This is the essential meaning here. Alternatively, splitting the text as *uṇaiyē māṛri* - *transforming you*, the meaning is, 'May you bestow your grace, enthroned in powerful majesty within my heart, shining in your true radiance as the Self, so that I do not transform you, who are the pure consciousness of Self (into the gross world of the five elements, which are a mere appearance in the form of *maya*, through my delusive awareness), and go rushing off (after that false reality through attachment to the objects of senses). This is its principal spiritual import.

*(Published in Arunachala Aksharamanamalai commentary by M.K. Muruganar.
Translated by Robert Butler)*



How I Came to the Maharshi

Dr. Lt. Col. P. V. Karamchandani

Normally, as soon as I place my head on the pillow, I fall asleep. One night, in February 1949, at Vellore, for no conscious reason, I could not sleep and kept tossing in bed. That was something very unusual.

At 1 a.m. a telephone call came from Tiruvannamalai, a place 55 miles away, asking me to reach there by 8 a.m. as Bhagavan Ramana was very ill. Having received the call I fell sound asleep.

I was the District Medical Officer of North Arcot then and Tiruvannamalai was within my jurisdiction. I reached Tiruvannamalai without any emotion. My only thought was that I was on a professional mission of attending on a patient. The sainthood of Bhagavan Ramana had no significance for me.

I examined Bhagavan Ramana. He had cancer of the main nerve, high up in the arm, I gave my prescription and returned to Vellore the same day.

I had conducted my examination of Bhagavan Ramana in a strictly professional manner. I carried no spiritual feelings for him. Nor did he speak a word with me. But he had directed a momentary gaze of grace at me which kept stirring me deeply. Involuntarily I felt a new vista of spiritual consciousness open out before me.

That wondrous gaze of Bhagavan seemed to envelop me with an aura of bliss. The spiritual pull from him felt so irresistible that after a few days I myself arranged a visit to Tiruvannamalai just for the sake of having his 'darshan'. I took my wife with me.

We visited Bhagavan with a sense of curiosity and an indefinable sense of expectation. We made our obeisance and sat by his feet. We did not speak a word; nor did he speak. No speech seemed necessary. So surcharged with spirituality was he, that his spirituality wafted out to us, completely enveloping us. Serenity seeped into us. Our minds attained a state of blissful, ecstatic meditation.

The tumour that Bhagavan was bearing must have given him the most excruciating, nerve-wracking pain. Such writhing pain would make the toughest man wince and moan. But Bhagavan's face was serene, smiling and radiant.

All of a sudden a disciple accidentally touched only the fringe of the thin bandage that was covering Bhagavan's tumour. Bhagavan gave an involuntary start. The disciple felt bewildered and mumbled, "Bhagavan, did I hurt you? It was only the fringe of the bandage that my hand touched." Then Bhagavan smiled his benign smile and softly said, "You do not know the enormous weight as of a mountain that this fringe bears!"

That chance exclamation of Bhagavan indicated the severity of his pain. But his godly face did not bear the slightest sign of his agony. It reflected only joy and peace. He seemed to have switched off his mind from the body to the divine.

The next occasion when I was summoned to Bhagavan's presence was when he had developed anuria. I now went to his Ashram not with the all-important feeling of a District Medical Officer going to visit his patient. I went in the spirit of a humble devotee going to serve a saint of colossal spiritual magnitude. My ministrations as a doctor were to be coupled with the devotion of a disciple.

When I reached the Ashram, I was told that for the past 24 hours Bhagavan had not taken any food, not even a drop of water; that the disciples' implorations in this behalf had failed; and that in consequence, the entire community was feeling most anxious. I was entreated to persuade Bhagavan to eat something.

On examining Bhagavan I found that it was imperative that he should take some fluid. But what if he refused my request too? Ordering him in my capacity as a doctor seemed to be out of question. I felt like asking him as a boon to accept my prayer. I prayed inwardly and held a glass of buttermilk before him. He gazed at me for a second, took the buttermilk in shaking hands, and drank it. My joy knew no bounds. There were relief and jubilation all around. I was thanked profusely. But I felt infinitely grateful for Bhagavan's overwhelming grace. He had heard my silent prayer and granted my boon. Wonderful was the spiritual exhilaration I experienced in Bhagavan's holy presence.

The next time I was called to him was at midnight. When I entered his room, four disciples were there. Bhagavan was saying something to them in Tamil. They told me that he was asking them to leave the room, but that they wanted to stay as, according to them, he was in a delirium. I persuaded them to go. Three of them went away. The fourth one stayed on. Bhagavan turned to him and whispered, "You are not going away because you feel that you love me more than the others!" The disciple now knew that Bhagavan was not delirious. He bowed and went.

I was left alone with Bhagavan. As usual, he did not speak with me. I was also silent. But the vibrations that emanated from him were celestial. His body must have been in terrific, mortal pain. But his heavenly spirituality was unaffected by it. A rapturous thrill electrified my entire being.

I administered to his body; but I was hardly conscious that I was a District Medical Officer. I was conscious only of an intense desire to worship this illumined soul. I had learnt that Bhagavan did not allow devotees to touch his feet. But I felt a deep urge within me not only to touch his blessed feet but to press them lovingly. I took courage in both my hands and pressed them. The wonder of wonders! Bhagavan let me do so! His grace was abounding. I considered myself in the seventh heaven. I glorify those few minutes of my life.

The next time I was summoned to him was about three hours after midnight. Pain must have been torturing his body. Still, he was sound asleep. Holy silence filled the room. It was the ambrosial hour of the dawn. I did not wish to disturb him. I sat quietly by his feet. Suddenly he opened his eyes. His gracious gaze fell on me. He softly muttered, " D.M.O. ! " The peculiar tone in which he mentioned me indicated that I had been in his sacred thoughts and that he was expecting me. I felt myself blessed. I silently worshipped him. My whole being seemed to vibrate with ecstasy.

At that time I had been feeling restless about promotion to the rank of Major-General (Surgeon General), which was legitimately due to me as the senior-most I.M.S. Officer in the Province of Madras. Howsoever I tried to banish the idea of that coveted promotion from my mind, it loomed large before my mind's eye and marred my equanimity.

Then I said to myself, "Why am I fretting unnecessarily? The next time I visit Bhagavan, I shall request him to grant me this promotion!"

When I visited the Ashram again, I went before Bhagavan with my mind resolutely set on requesting him for that boon. But a marvel happened. As soon as I saw Bhagavan, my mind melted, the resolution evaporated, and I felt filled with strange contentment. A request did formulate itself within me, but it was an entirely different request. I inwardly prayed, "Bhagavan, free me from my craving for this promotion. I don't want anything mundane. Instead, grant me my soul's evolution." My prayer seemed to be instantly granted. Effulgent joy flooded the very depths of my being. I reverently bowed before Bhagavan and he gazed at me benevolently.

My last visit to Bhagavan was on the day he attained Nirvana. I have described it in my *Saintly Galaxy**: how, on visiting him, I found that his body would not last beyond that day; how I silently prayed that he might retain his body till I brought my wife from Vellore as she had always been anxious to witness a great saint's last moments of life; how she brought orange juice for him; how he would not accept any drink at all; how, once again inwardly, I implored him to drink the orange juice to save my wife from deep disappointment; how he accepted my unspoken prayer and asked for orange juice, to the transcendental delight of my wife and myself; and how, shortly afterwards, in utter tranquillity, he passed on.

That was a scene of great sombre beauty.

During my two months' contact with Bhagavan, I did not speak a single word with him. But, what wonderful grace he poured into me through his benign, benevolent gaze!

A peerless spiritual experience indeed!

**(Pp .74-77. Published by Advani Press, Anand Nagar. Forjett Street, Bombay-26)
(Published in the Mountain Path January 1966)*

Arunachala Ramana



A devotee named Amritanantha Yati wrote on a paper a Malayalam verse imploring Bhagavan to say whether he was Hari (Vishnu) or Sivaguru (Subrahmanya) or Yativara (Siva) or Vararuchi. Bhagavan wrote his reply in the same Malayalam metre on the same paper. A translation of it is given below.

“In the recesses of the lotus-shaped hearts of all, beginning with Vishnu, there shines as pure intellect (Absolute Consciousness) the Paramatman who is the same as Arunachala or Ramana. When the mind melts with love for Him, and reaches the inmost recess of the Heart wherein He dwells as the Beloved, the subtle eye of pure intellect opens and He reveals Himself as Pure Consciousness.”

(Published in The Collected Works of Ramana Maharshi)

An Electric Dynamo

N. Balarama Reddy

In the first year of my settling in Tiruvannamalai, I remember one afternoon when I was sitting in the hall and Bhagavan was explaining a particular spiritual point to me. During the discussion he asked me to go to one of the two almirahs that were up against the west wall and bring him a certain book. I searched for the book but was unable to find it. I returned to Bhagavan, informed him of my failure to locate the book, and again sat down against the south wall facing him.

Presently, I saw Bhagavan slowly and majestically walk over to the almirah, open it, and immediately pull out the book he asked me to find. He closed the almirah and, to my surprise, instead of walking back to the couch, he came and sat on the floor right next to me, on my left. He opened the book to the page he wanted me to read and, holding it in his right hand, held the book before my face and asked me to read the particular passage.

Bhagavan's attendants had told me that his body was like a furnace. Only then, when he sat so close to me, did I understand what they meant. I felt spiritual power emanating from his body like an electric dynamo. I was thrilled to the core of my being.



Radiance of the Holy One

Grant Duff

Grant Duff (Douglas Ainslee), a scholar and a senior government official in Madras Presidency in the 1930s, was nephew of Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff, Governor of Madras in the 1880s.

I do not know what happened when I saw the Maharshi for the first time, ***but the moment he looked at me, I felt he was the Truth and the Light.*** There could be no doubt about it, and all the doubts and speculations I had accumulated during the past many years disappeared in the Radiance of the Holy One. Though my visits to the Ashram were brief, I felt that every moment I was there was building up within me what could never be destroyed.

There it did not take long to see that I was in direct contact with one who has passed beyond the boundaries of the senses and was indeed already merged in the Absolute of his true Self, although manifesting here for our benefit for a few years. [When asked how he got such an impression, Grant frankly confessed] I cannot reply; as I should to one who asked me how I saw the sun on looking out of the window, by saying that I did so by the use of my eyes and incidentally of all other senses collaborating. I do not need any algebraic or other proof of the existence of the sun. I do not need any other proof of the Divinity of Ramana Maharshi.

Should those who have it in their power to visit the ashram delay, they will only have themselves to blame in future lives. ***Never perhaps in world history was the Supreme Truth – Reality, Sat – placed within such easy reach of so vast a multitude.*** Here and now through no special merit of our own, we may approach Reality. The sole difficulty is that of paying for the journey, but the reward is Knowledge of the Self.

The Maharshi has extraordinary insight into other beings. He sees and knows everything about all those who come before him. ***The Maharshi has particularly appealed to me because of his extreme politeness and gentleness. He is gentle to a degree that surpasses gentleness.*** My visit to the Sage of Arunachala has been the greatest event of my life.

Extracts from his poem:

With Sri Ramana of Arunachala

I've wandered far; Yes I have been

From land to land to land:

Sages I've seen, great kings and queens

The lovely, wise and grand,

But only there - at the Asramam

By Arunachalam -

Have I known that joy without alloy,

I am! I am! I am!

(from Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi)

Sri Bhagavan Saw Only the Good in All

Kunjuswami

Generally Sri Bhagavan never talked about either the good or bad qualities of others. However if he heard of the death of someone he knew, he would praise his good qualities. Sometimes we used to feel that we should die in order to hear good things about us from Sri Bhagavan! But of course we won't be able to hear those words! The moment we heard the news of the death of someone, we would immediately go and sit before Sri Bhagavan to listen to his comments on the departed soul.

In Tiruvannamalai, there was a rich man by name Kandaswami. His conduct was not particularly good and the local people detested him. He used to come and see Sri Bhagavan occasionally. In his last days, he suffered from poverty. Once he wanted some special gruel and sent word through someone to the Ashram. He was staying in a dilapidated temple opposite the Ashram. Sri Bhagavan arranged for gruel to be sent to him. This was sent on three successive days. On the fourth day, Kandaswami passed away. We informed Sri Bhagavan of this. We thought Sri Bhagavan would not have anything good to say about this man. What a surprise! Sri Bhagavan said, "Nobody can keep his body and clothes as clean as Kandaswami. He was next to Injikollai Dikshithar in cleanliness. He used neither oil nor soap. He would come to the tank at eight in the morning and start washing his *dhoti* and towel. By the time he finished his bath, it would be 12 noon. His hair and beard were spotlessly clean." We were really ashamed of ourselves. Sri Bhagavan was unique in seeing only the good in others.

(Published in Living with the Master, Reminiscences by Kunjuswami)

The Towel With A Thousand Holes

Sri Bhagavan's Own Story

Bhagavan talked of his early days, how when he went about with only an old cod-piece and a small, tattered towel it was naturally not easy for anyone to think of him as a Swami. He said, "When I was at Pachaliamman Koil, I had a small towel which was tattered and torn, almost to rags, with threads having come out in most places. Once a cow-herd boy made fun of this torn rag, by telling me, 'The governor wants this towel.' I replied, 'Tell him I won't give it to him.' I never used to spread it out in public. I used to keep it rolled into a ball and wipe my body, hands or mouth, as the occasion demanded. With the towel so rolled up into a ball, I used to wash it and dry it in a place between two rocks, which place was never visited by any of those who were with me. Even my cod-piece would be tattered. When the top end used to become worn out, I would reverse the cod-piece and use it with the bottom end topmost. When going into the forest I would secretly mend my cod-piece with thread taken out of it with prickly pear thorn for needle. So, nobody knew or suspected the wretched state of my towel and cod-piece.

One day somehow, one of those who used to be with me in those days went to the place where I used to dry my clothes and thus by chance discovered the state of my clothes. They then wept that they had allowed such a state of things, that they had committed an inexcusable sacrilege (*apachara*) and so on. They had with them, in trunks, whole pieces of cloth and so many towels etc., all meant by them to be used for me. Only they did not know how badly torn my towel and cod-piece were, otherwise they would have long ago substituted others for them."

He added, "Our Muruganar has mentioned these facts in his songs and has described that I had Indra for my towel, (i.e., a towel with thousand eyelets or holes) and a cod-piece stitched by means of a prickly pear spike. But one who does not know the facts may not be able to understand what exactly the poet meant."

The Sacred Flowering Vines, Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai (v. 1660)

His loincloth all stitched together with a thorn,

A hand-towel with a thousand holes he bore,

Like thousand-eyed Indra, guilefully disguised.

In the grace that Venkata, mother-like, amply supplies,

Let us in ecstasy pick the blossoms from the vine.

OBITUARY

Gurudas Bailur 25 July 1935 - 9 February 2022 We were very sorry to lose our long-standing member, Gurudas, on the 9th February this year. 'Guru' was born in Bhaktal, Karnataka. A brilliant student from an early age, he was educated at St Xavier's College in Bombay from where he gained a place at Balliol College, Oxford, although he was unable to take this up since he had to support his family. Instead of which, however, he came very near the top of the highly competitive examinations to join the elite Indian Administrative Service.

He had a long and distinguished career in the IAS, the last nine years of which were based here in London at the Commonwealth Secretariat. His speciality was in studying, fostering and promoting farming methods, which entailed travelling all over the world. He was involved, amongst many other things, in organising the visits of Prince Charles and President Jimmy Carter to India. The Tuesday evening meetings of the Study Group took place, before Covid, in his home in Cricklewood, meetings in which, with his wide and deep knowledge of Vedanta and Hindu scripture, he was our much valued pundit.

A central and very popular member of the Foundation he was also a member of our Committee for the last years of his time with us. He is survived by his wife, Jayanti, his daughter Savita, his two sons Sateen and Sanjay and three grandchildren.

EVENTS

Satsangs on Bhagavan's Compositions - second and last Saturday of every month with Michael James via Zoom

In-Person Meetings in London - 1st or 3rd Saturday of every month. Our first meeting is on Saturday 7th May at 2pm at Colet House, London W14 9DA. (Details for future meetings to be confirmed)

Meditation Group - Every Thursday at 7pm via Zoom

Study Group - Every Tuesday at 7pm via Zoom

A Newsletter is distributed in Spring-Summer and Autumn-Winter

To join or subscribe to any of the above, email: ramanamaharshifoundationuk@ramana-maharshi.co.uk

**Abiding in pure being,
transcending thought through
intense love,
this alone is the truth of supreme
devotion.**

(Upadesa Undiyar v.9)

