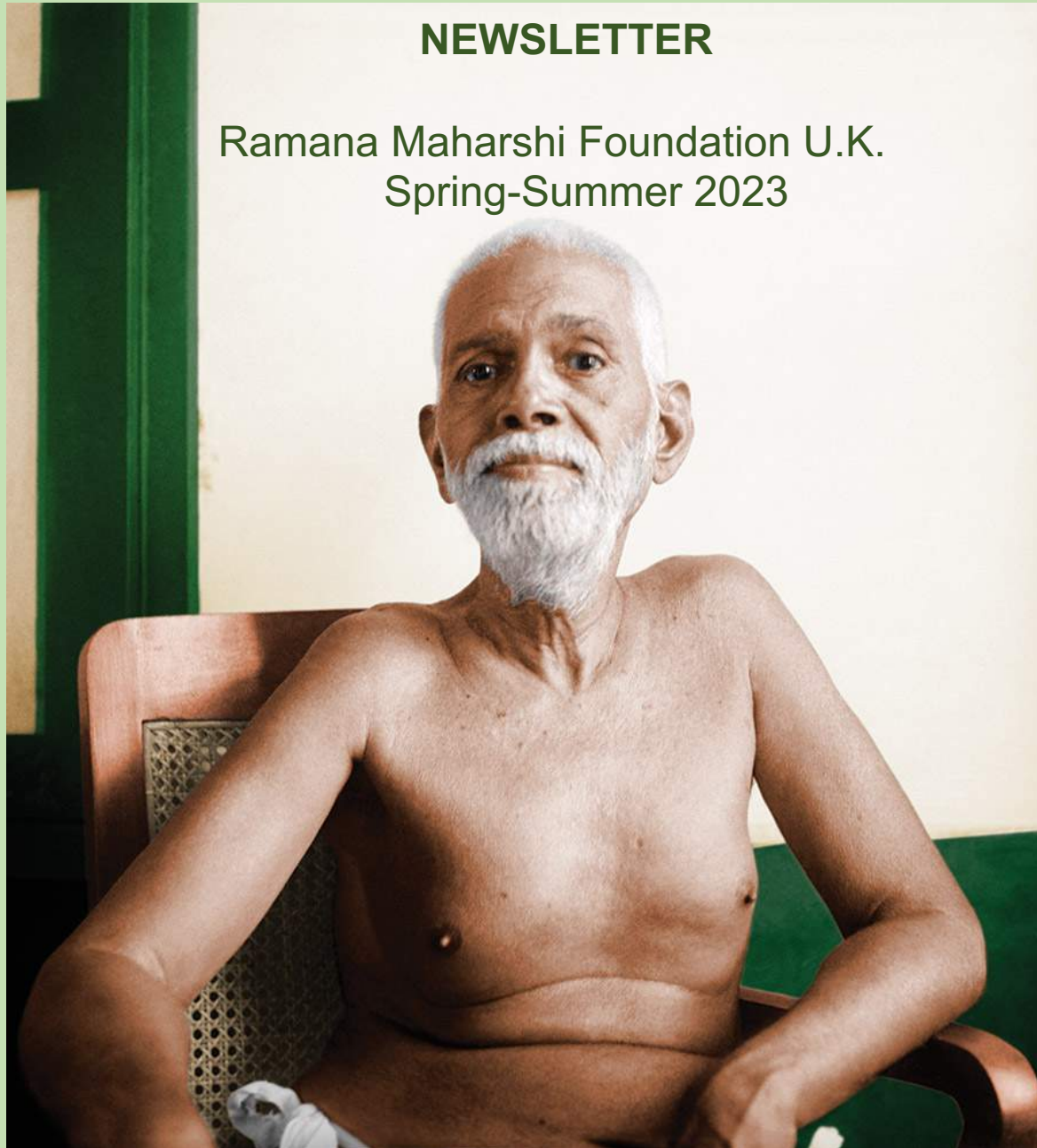
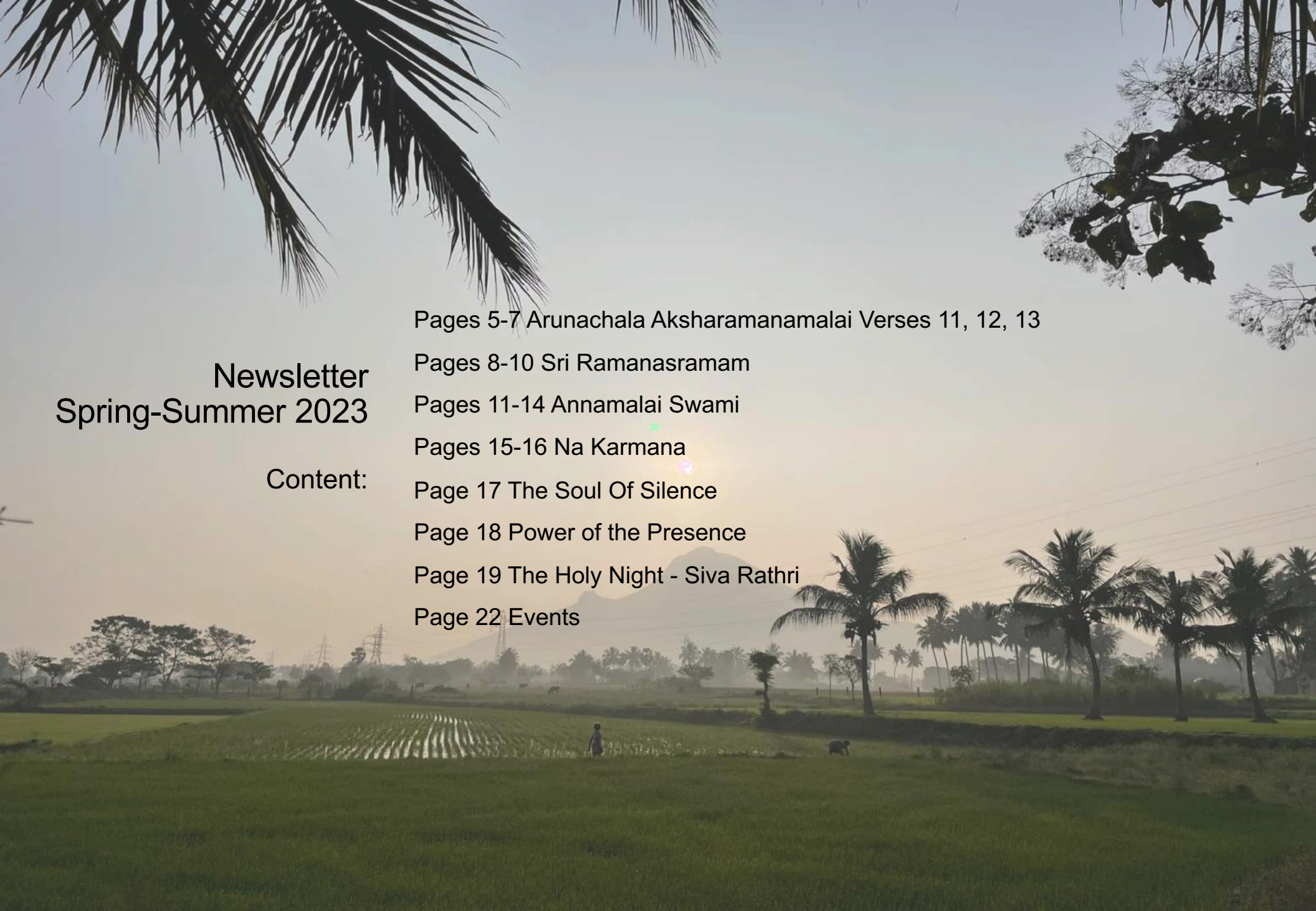


NEWSLETTER

Ramana Maharshi Foundation U.K.
Spring-Summer 2023





Newsletter Spring-Summer 2023

Content:

Pages 5-7 Arunachala Aksharamanamalai Verses 11, 12, 13

Pages 8-10 Sri Ramanasramam

Pages 11-14 Annamalai Swami

Pages 15-16 Na Karmana

Page 17 The Soul Of Silence

Page 18 Power of the Presence

Page 19 The Holy Night - Siva Rathri

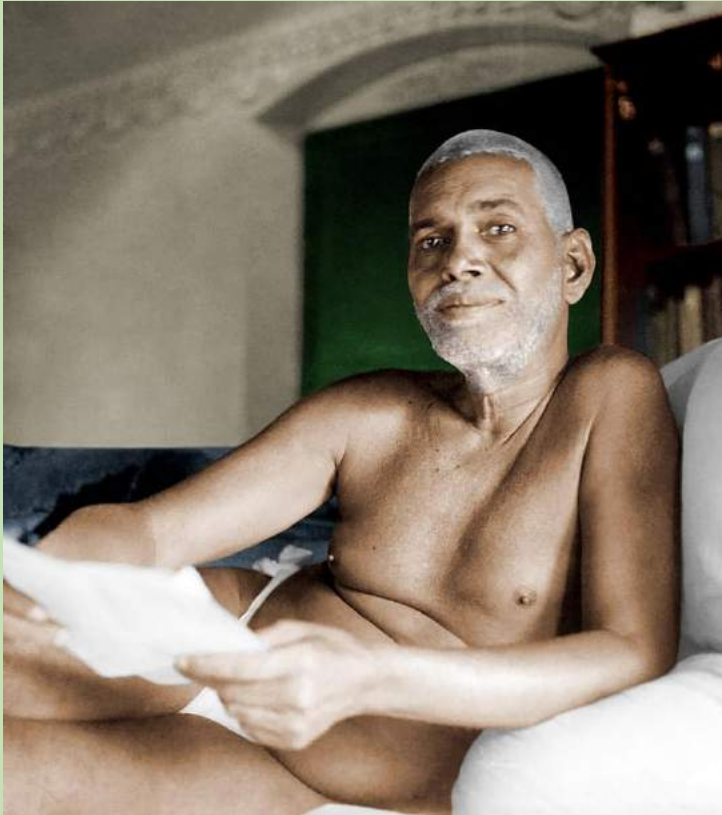
Page 22 Events

“Thou art the inner Self who dancest in the
Heart as ‘I’. Heart is Thy name, Oh Lord!”.

(Arunachala Pancharatnam v. 2)



Welcome to this Spring-Summer 2023 edition of the RMF UK Newsletter.



We continue here with the original Tamil verses, English translation and commentary of verses 11 through 13 of Bhagavan's Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai (the Marital Garland of Letters).

Bhagavan said of himself on several occasions that he did not act of his own accord but rather a "higher power was acting through him". A good example of this is found in the story of how he eventually came down from Skandasramam to his mother's samadhi at the foot of Arunachala, which spontaneously laid the foundation for the future Sri Ramanasramam.

Annamalai Swami, a lifelong devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi, was absorbed in his Master on November 9, 1995. He was 89 years old. The Swami's remarkable story was edited by David Godman and published in 1994 by the Sri Annamalai Swami Ashram Trust.

Na Karmana is the last Vedic chant of both the morning and evening Veda Parayana in Sri Ramanasramam. In 1938, Major Chadwick, with the help of some devotees, translated Na Karmana into English. Bhagavan corrected and approved his English versification.

Swami Tapovan Maharaj, the guru of Swami Chinmayananda describes the eloquently silent darshan he had of Bhagavan who was living on the Hill at the time.

Viswanatha Swami reminisces about the "best Siva Rathri of his life" in 1926. Sri Bhagavan, in response to the request of a devotee to explain Sri Shankaracharya's Hymn to Dakshinamurti, remained silent with a gracious and gentle smile holding the devotees enthralled throughout the whole night until dawn as he silently bestowed upon them the essence of Lord Dakshinamurti's teaching.

Arunachala Aksharamanamai

Verse 11

aimpulak kaḷva rakattiṇiṛ pukumpō
takattiṇi yilaiyō varuṇācalā

Paraphrase:

[Arunachala!] When the thieves of the five senses entered my heart, (to unjustly steal that priceless ruby, the incomparable jewel of the Self, which resides in the jewel box of my heart as my own birthright) did you fail to be present in that heart?

Commentary:

Since thieves will not dare to enter the house [of the heart] to rob it when the owner of the house is there inside it, and since it is impossible for Him, [Arunachala], the indwelling Godhead, ever to leave that house even for a moment, he asks [incredulously], 'When thieves entered my heart, were you really not present within it?' To emphasise the certainty of the affirmation of his presence, he says, 'You were *not* not there.' [In other words], 'You most certainly were there.' [In a similar vein] he has said previously, 'Why this sleep?' as if to say, 'You were definitely present in my heart, nor were you really asleep!' It is for these reasons that later on he says, 'This is but your trickery', as if to say, 'Their entering my heart could not have happened unless they had first gained your permission.' The import is that when the knowledge of Arunachala's abiding presence in the heart arises, there will no longer be any scope for the mischief of the five senses and it will cease totally and disappear.



Arunachala Aksharamanamalai

Verse 12

oruvaṇā muṇṇai yoḷittevar varuvā
ruṅcū tēyitu varuṇācalā

Paraphrase:

[Arunachala!]As the Sun of true knowledge which never sets, you are one and alone in your nature as the universal witness. Who then could blindfold and cover your eyes and enter [my heart] without being noticed? (As there is no one who could enter in this fashion) their [apparent] entry must be a trick of yours.

Commentary:

The special qualifier, ['As the Sun of true knowledge which never sets'] added to the words 'you who are the One' is brought in through the powerful suggestion contained in the word 'masking'. Anticipating a possible reply on the part of Arunachala in the form of a lame excuse such as, 'I must have dropped off to sleep,' Bhagavan refutes it in this manner, ruling it out completely. Thus [by using that epithet] he proves conclusively that they [the robber senses] could never have entered without his [Arunachala's] consent. Even the concept of 'witnessing' is not in any way appropriate [for Arunachala], since it necessarily involves the witnessing of something 'other' than itself, which is a quality of the transactional mind. Thus, the highest, spiritual import [of this verse] is that in the sight of Arunachala, who is transcendent, pure consciousness, the appearance of any kind of phenomenal world of diversity, with its pairs of opposites, good and evil and so on, which are merely the inventions of reflected consciousness, is in truth entirely absent.



Verse 13

ōṅkā rapporu ḷoppuyar villō
yunaīyā rarivā raruṅācalā

Paraphrase:

[Arunachala], you who shine, unequalled and unsurpassed in your greatness, as the meaning of Omkaram! Who could know you as you really are?

Commentary:

The essence of 'Omkaram' is the all-pervading essence which is of the form of pure consciousness, enduring and shining alone [as mere being-consciousness]. Through the wondrously dexterous imaginative power of *maya*, with its ability to perform the impossible, it exists as all that is, but from the standpoint of absolute truth, whose nature is the pure peace of Sivam in which that imaginary world is not, it exists devoid [of any such mayic creation]. He says, 'You whose greatness is beyond compare because *Omkaram* the immaculate Reality which transcends both thought and speech, is the non-dual Self, *Atma-Swarupa* [if you meditate upon Him with a one-pointed mind] He will appear as the unique One, existing as [the import of] *Omkaram*. Since that Arunachala - the pure consciousness of the Self, the very source of the mind, shining within it and lending its light to it - is non-dual in nature, direct apprehension of Him is only possible for devotees in whom the 'I' has been abolished, either through self-enquiry or surrender, and who are entirely one with Him. This is the state of divine silence, the deeply peaceful quietude in which the objectivising ego has died; it is the experience of one's own Self-nature arising from the consciousness of the Heart. As for the rest, becoming separated from Him, the Self, through inattention, and behaving as separate individuals each with their own ego in the foolish belief that it is in fact a fundamental reality in itself, they will not be able to know Him as He really is through the power of their own mind, however intellectually brilliant they may be in grasping the subtleties of worldly knowledge, which is based on mental concepts. Therefore he asks, "Who could know you?"



Sri Ramanasramam

Niranjanananda Swami ('Chinna Swami') who was Bhagavan's younger brother, took up his residence at the foot of the hill near his Mother's samadhi in a small thatched hut. It was found difficult to return uphill every day to Skandasramam by noon, soon after the noon puja at the Samadhi. Therefore, rice, dhal, etc., were carried downhill from Skandasramam, so that those performing the puja could cook and eat there itself and return uphill to Skandasramam in the evening.

An improvised kitchen in a small, thatched hut was set up near Mother's samadhi. Dandapani Swami and Chinna Swami were deputed to stay there permanently. As they needed to keep a portion of the food-provisions, those at Skandasramam sometimes did not have enough food. Thus, there was dissatisfaction. The murmur of dissatisfaction reached the ears of Vasudeva Sastri, who was looking after the affairs of Skandasramam. He wrote a note to Ramanatha Brahmachari thus: "Devotees give to Vaasudeva but not to Vasudeva (meaning to Bhagavan but not to Mother)."

Ramanatha Brahmachari showed the note to Bhagavan. After reading it, Bhagavan said, "Oh! How could there be Vaasudeva without Vasudeva?" When Vasudeva Sastri heard about Bhagavan's remarks, he decided not to say anything more about the matter.

Bhagavan's photo, taken when he was in Pachaiamman temple, was kept near him at Skandasramam. Mudaliar Granny used to bring a garland and decorate the picture, light camphor and prostrate before it. There was an oil lamp before it which burned day and night, and a devotee in town supplied oil for this. But the lamp near Mother's samadhi needed oil and oil for this came from Skandasramam. So soon there was not enough oil for the lamp at Skandasramam. Ramanatha Brahmachari, who was responsible for keeping this lamp lighted, was thus put in an awkward situation. He wondered what he should do. Then, one evening Chinna Swami and Dandapani Swami came up to Skandasramam and said, "As Bhagavan is here, let us have his photo!" They took away both Bhagavan's photo and the lamp. The problem of the lack of oil was thus solved.

Bhagavan would visit Mother's samadhi either in the morning or the evening. One day, Chinna Swami said to Kunju Swami, "Please come down in the evening and stay here. I will prepare some dosas early morning tomorrow and you can take them to Bhagavan for breakfast." Early in the morning, when Kunju Swami was washing the dishes in the stream near Mother's samadhi, he suddenly heard a voice: "Any food for *athithi* (a guest)?" Startled, he was thrilled to see Bhagavan standing with a towel wrapped round his head, a shawl round his torso and his stick in his hand. It was a rare darshan. In the meantime, Chinna Swami and Dandapani Swami came out and were overjoyed to see Bhagavan there. They requested him to eat dosa but he refused at first. On their repeated requests he agreed. Bhagavan ate the dosa and drank coffee. He said, "Everyone comes over here because of the tasty food they get here!" and laughed heartily.

A devotee called, Sadaiappa Chettiar, requested Bhagavan to accept his *bhiksha* that day. He said it would be a great opportunity for his elderly sister and his other elderly relatives to have Bhagavan's darshan. His sister could not climb the Hill as she was quite old. Bhagavan agreed. Devotees organised a grand feast that day. This news spread to the town and Nayana, who usually went to Skandasramam to meet Bhagavan, came straight to Mother's samadhi; other devotees also came. It was past 6 p.m. and it was dark and so that night Bhagavan did not go back to Skandasramam. The townsfolk returned to their homes. Bhagavan and the others stayed on at Mother's samadhi. This was Bhagavan's first night there.

But the next day too, someone pressed Bhagavan to accept *bhiksha* and Bhagavan had to spend that entire day also at the samadhi. Once again, he stayed there overnight! Every day somebody or other requested Bhagavan to accept *bhiksha* and he could not say 'no' to them. People competed with one another to offer *bhiksha* to Bhagavan. Thus, compelled to stay night after night, Bhagavan decided to stay on at Mother's shrine. This was a most unexpected development.

Some days later thieves broke into Skandasramam at night and took away some things. Among them were a clock and a wooden plank used by Bhagavan. Hearing of the theft, Bhagavan said, “It is good. Nobody need go there to look after the place any more.”

Bhagavan had decided to stay permanently at Mother’s samadhi out of compassion for the many devotees like Sadaibaba Chettiar’s sister who could not climb up to Skandasramam.

When asked later why he decided to stay on at Mother’s Shrine, Bhagavan said, “It is not of my own accord that I remained here. Some power made me stay here. Something told me that I should not go back but stay on here. It was as if my legs refused to get up. So, I stayed on. That is how this Ashram began. Who knew then that all this would grow up?”

This concluded Bhagavan’s stay on the hill of Arunachala. And Mother’s samadhi formed the nucleus of the future Ramanasramam.

(Arunachala Ramana Eternal Ocean of Grace, Book 1 Section 54)

Annamalai Swami



Annamalai Swami came to the Maharshi in 1928 and, at the Sage's behest, undertook the supervision in the construction of the Goshala (cow shed), Dining Hall, Dispensary and various other projects. In the mid-1940s, Bhagavan instructed him to leave the ashram and engage in intense sadhana.

He would then occasionally meet the Maharshi on his walks, but never again in the fifty years that followed did he re-enter Sri Ramanasramam, preferring to live a quiet, austere life in Palakothu . His small ashram borders the western boundary of Sri Ramanasramam and he was well known to many devotees and visitors to Tiruvannamalai.

In the passage below, excerpted from Living By the Words Of Bhagavan, Annamalai Swami relates the incidents preceding his departure from Sri Ramanasramam.

My days as an ashram worker were coming to a close, although I didn't realize it at the time. In retrospect I can remember only one small incident which indicated that Bhagavan knew that my time in the ashram was coming to an end.

I was doing some digging with a crowbar when Bhagavan came and asked me, "Did you decide to do this work yourself or did Chinnaswami ask you to do it."

I told him that Chinnaswami had asked me to do it. Bhagavan was not very pleased. "So, he has given you work. So, he has given you work. Why is he giving you work like this".

A little later Yogi Ramaiah remarked to Bhagavan, "Annamalai Swami is working very hard. His body has become very weak. You should give him some rest". Bhagavan agreed with him. "Yes, we have to give him some rest. We have to give freedom to him".

A few days later I went to Bhagavan's bathroom to help him with his morning bath. Madhava Swami and I gave him the usual oil bath and massage.

When the bath was over Madhava Swami asked a question: "Bhagavan, the people who take *ganja lehiyam* [an ayurvedic preparation whose principal ingredient is cannabis] experience some kind of *ananda* [bliss]. What is the nature of this *ananda*? Is it the same *ananda* that the scriptures speak of"?

"Eating this *ganja* is a very bad habit," replied Bhagavan. Then, laughing loudly, he came over to me, hugged me and called out, "*Ananda! Ananda!*" This is how these *ganja*-taking people behave!"

It was not a brief hug. Madhava Swami told me later that he held me tightly for about two minutes. After the first few seconds I completely lost awareness of my body and the world. Initially, there was a feeling of happiness and bliss, but this soon gave way to a state in which there were no feelings and no experiences. I did not lose consciousness, I just ceased to be aware of anything that was going on around me. I remained in this state for about fifteen minutes. When I recovered my usual world-consciousness I was standing alone in the bathroom. Madhava Swami and Bhagavan had long since departed for breakfast. I had not seen them open the door and leave, nor had I heard the breakfast bell.

This experience completely changed my life. As soon as I recovered normal consciousness I knew that my working life at Sri Ramanasramam had come to an end. I knew that henceforth I would be living outside the ashram and spending most of my time in meditation. There was a rule that only those who worked for the ashram could live there full-time. Those who wanted to spend their time in meditation had to live somewhere else. I thus knew that I would have to leave the ashram and fend for myself, but the thought of losing my regular meals and my room never troubled me.

I made a belated appearance in the dining room to eat my last breakfast. As soon as I had finished eating, I went up onto the hill to look for Bhagavan. I found him sitting on a big rock.

“I have decided to leave the ashram”, I said. “I want to go to Palakothe to live alone and meditate”.

“Ah! Very good! Very good! Very good!” exclaimed Bhagavan.

The decision clearly had his approval. How could it be otherwise since it was Bhagavan himself who gave me the experience which precipitated the decision? After getting Bhagavan’s permission I packed my possessions and locked my room. I also locked all the other places that were in my charge.

I took the bunch of keys to Chinnaswami and told him, “I have decided to go and live in Palakothe. Please take these keys and keep them”.

Chinnaswami was, quite naturally, very surprised. “Why are you leaving?” he asked. “You have constructed all these buildings. You have done so much here. How can you go after doing all this work? Where will you sleep? How will you eat? You will have many troubles because you have no way of supporting yourself. Don’t go, stay here”.

I told him that I would not change my mind. I also tried to give him the keys, but he refused to accept them. I didn’t want another argument with him so I just handed over the keys to Subramaniam, who was also in the office, and left.

It was an abrupt change in my life. Within a few hours of having the experience I was walking to Palakothu, knowing full well that I had left all of my old working life behind me.

(Excerpt from Living By the Words of Bhagavan, Annamalai Swami - printed in The Maharshi)



Na Karmana

(Translated into English verse in 1938 By Major Chadwick)

Na Karmana, which is chanted at the end of the morning and evening Veda Parayana comes from the Kaivalya Upanishad, and it extols renunciation and one pointedness in the Supreme Self. It is also referred to as the sanyasa sukta.

na karmanā na prajayā dhanena tyāgenaike amṛtatva-mānaśuḥ |
pareṇa nākaṁ nihitaṁ guhāyām vibhrāja-detadyatayo viśanti ||

vedantavijñāna-suniścitārthāḥ sanyāsa-yogādyataya- śśuddhasattvāḥ |
te brahmaloke tu parāntakāle parāmṛtātparimucyanti sarve ||

dahraṁ vipāpaṁ parame'śmabhūtaṁ yatpuṇḍarīkaṁ puramadhyasagastham |
tatrāpi dahraṁ gaganam viśoka-stasmin yadantasta- dupāsitavyam ||

yo vedādaḥ svaraḥ prokto vedānte ca pratiṣṭhitaḥ | tasya prakṛti-līnasya yaḥ parassa
maheśvaraḥ ||

'Tis not by means of action immortality is gained, nor even yet by offspring, nor possession of much gold, but by renunciation by some it is attained.

The Sages who their senses have all thoroughly controlled attain that Sat than which high heaven's Supremacy is less, 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.

The Soul Of Silence

By Swami Tapovan Maharaj*

SILENCE is Truth. Silence is Bliss. Silence is Peace. And hence Silence is Atman. To live this Silence as such is the Goal. It is *moksha*. It is the end of the endless cycle of births and deaths. Sri Ramana Maharshi was an embodiment of such Silence. He was the Silence Itself. Therefore he did not *preach* the Silence. Only when one comes back to the 'noisy' from the Silence, can one preach the Silence. How can the Silence preach Itself through Silence?

Nearly thirty-five or forty years ago, I had the good fortune of having the *darshan* of Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai when he was living there in a cave along with his mother and brother. One midday, a young *brahmachari* at that time, I went up the Hill to the cave, saw the Maharshi and, placing a bunch of bananas at his feet, bowed and sat before him. At the same moment some monkeys jumped on to the scene, scrambled for the fruits and ran away with them.

Maharshi looked lovingly into my face. That was all. He spoke but silence — not a word passed between us. A supreme, dynamic and divine Silence prevailed. An hour passed by, all in Silence. He rose for his meals (*bhiksha*). I too rose from my seat, bowed again and walked down the Hill. The divine Silence sank deeper and deeper into me at each step! Someone came running behind and pressed me to take some *prasad*. Thankfully I declined. I was full — full with the Silence. Maharshi called him back and advised him not to press me. Then I left the cave and walked away.

* [Swami Tapovan Maharaj the guru of Swami Chinmayananda]

(extract from an article in *The Mountain Path*, January 1980)

Power of the Presence

The experience of the peace conferred by the Maharshi's presence, testified to by so many devotees, accords with his reply to a visitor who asked which of the many spiritual teachers claiming one's allegiance one should follow: "Choose that guru from whom you get *santi* (peace)".

The Maharshi was fond of the story of Tattvaraya who composed a *bharani* in honour of his guru and invited an assembly of learned men to hear the work. The pandits raised the objection that a *bharani* could be sung only in honour of a warrior who had killed a thousand elephants and certainly not in honour of a mere ascetic. The poet said: "Let us all go to my guru and settle the matter in his presence". They went to the guru and took their seats and the poet reported the pandits' objection. The guru sat silent and so did all the others. Thus, days passed, with no thought at all occurring to any of them. At the end of this long, silent session the guru made a slight movement of his mind and the assembly declared with one voice: "Vanquishing a thousand elephants is nothing beside this man's power to quell the rutting elephants of our egos." And they called upon Tattvaraya to proceed to read his *bharani*.

(Ramana Maharshi, K. Swaminathan)

The Holy Night – Siva Rathri

Viswanatha Swami

Siva Rathri is the holiest of the days sacred to Lord Siva and the devotees fast the whole day and keep on worshipping Him during the four quarters of the whole night. Ceremonial Puja is performed at temples and houses also to Siva Linga (the emblem of Lord Siva) clothed and adorned with ornaments and flowers after bathing it with holy water, milk, curds and honey accompanied by the chanting of Sri Rudra and other Vedic Hymns. His Thousand Names are chanted in worship. Various offerings are made of food preparations and fruit. There is prolonged beautiful waving of lights and the Puja finishes with the waving of burning camphor, denoting the complete melting of the mind in the Fire of Pure Awareness, known as Lord Siva.

At Tiruvannamalai many devotees go round Arunachala (a distance of 8 miles) that night either meditating on Lord Siva or chanting His Name and Hymns of Praise of Siva. Going round the Hill at dawn or dusk or at night alone silently, the Presence of Arunachala becomes a living experience.

Here I am reminded of the best Siva Rathri of my life in the year 1924. Sri Bhagavan sat down at about 8 at night near His couch where He used to rest. A small desk was in front of Him with a soft light nearby and there were only a very few devotees seated in front of Him. One of them requested Sri Bhagavan on behalf of some others to explain the meaning of Sri Sankara's Hymns to Dakshinamurthi, which Sri Bhagavan Himself had rendered into Tamil verse. Sri Bhagavan was silent with a very gracious, gentle smile. A few minutes passed. The devotee repeated his request to Sri Bhagavan. There was no answer and Sri Bhagavan remained silent with the same expression of remarkable grace. Within a few minutes all the devotees including the questioner understood that Sri Bhagavan was teaching them in silence what Lord Dakshinamurthi did ages ago to the four sons of Lord Brahma, viz. Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata. (The story is well-known that these four sons of Brahma were created by him out of his mind to assist him in the creation of world systems. But the sons wanted rather to find out the source of the mysterious universe around them and went about with one-pointed mind in search of such knowledge. Lord Siva appeared to them seated under a banyan tree wrapt in glorious silence and they got enlightened at the very sight of Him, and sat at His Feet in silence. This aspect of Siva is known by the name Dakshinamurthi and we find this image of His in every temple of Lord Siva on the southern side facing the south. Moreover, Dakshina means knowledge and He in whose presence knowledge of the One Self of all spontaneously dawns is known as Dakshinamurthi.)

The passing of the hours of that night went by unnoticed by any of us as Sri Bhagavan had drawn our minds and kept them in tune with Himself. Suddenly there was dawn and Bhagavan got up smiling and went out with His kamandalu for His morning walk. All of us came out of our wonderful samadhi in the presence of Bhagavan that whole Siva Rathri night.

It may not be out of place here to say that every day and every night was like that with Bhagavan. I have often experienced the power of His dynamic silence especially during the still hours of the night. Siva Rathri really means Absolute Pure Awareness of Lord Siva in which all else gets dissolved.

(The Mountain Path, April 1972 extract from the article The Holy Night)

Silence in the presence of Bhagavan had no feeling of constraint about it. It was a living, vibrant silence. It was in silence that the power of his Presence and the emanation of his Grace was most keenly felt. The same is to be felt now also.

(The Mountain Path April 1964, Arthur Osborne)

Silent Worship

520 Enthroning in the heart the Lord supreme,
His true, unceasing natural worship
By the mind steady, self-absorbed
Proceed in perfect silence.

521 The pure desire for Grace, free from
Other attachment, practising
The state of silence sans an object,
Such merging in and being That
Amounts to mental worship true.

(The Garland of Guru's Sayings, Sri Muruganar)

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 at The Study Society, Colet House, London W14 9DA.

Study Group - Every Tuesday 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

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

Abide in stillness, without any stir of tongue, mind, or body and behold within the effulgence of the Self, the ocean of Bliss, the experience of Eternity, absent of all fear.

Atma Vidya, v.5

