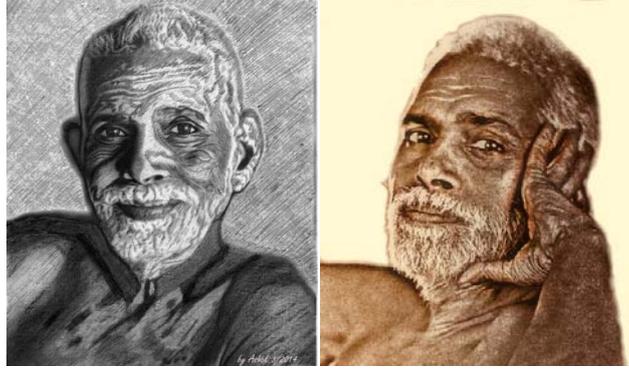


Some Events from the Life of Sage Ramana

Om Namo Bhagavate Shri Ramanaya



(Paintings of Sri Ramana Maharishi by Dr Ashok Naraiian)

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

The topic for our talk today is “**Some Events in the Life of Sage Ramana**”.

Let us first clarify and agree on this word ‘event’.

What is an ‘event’? The Oxford Dictionary says:

‘Event, noun: occurrence of a thing; thing whose occurrence is noteworthy.’

As for the word ‘life’, we shall have to cover the mortal span of this Sage immortal!

Where do we start to look for events that we regard as noteworthy when HIS whole life is of significance for all of humanity irrespective of their age, gender, education, position, wealth, health, country or religion?

Perhaps we should think of these events as finding different pieces of ‘noteworthy’ gold jewellery with the understanding that gold alone is the underlying cause of all these jewellery!

Recap of the Life of Sage Ramana

Some recap from the previous talk ‘**The Life of Sage Ramana**’ would be a helpful refresher. We spoke of his mortal timeline, his immortality experience- referred to as death experience- the *sruti* called Arunachala that hummed in his ears, the train journey from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai, the divine downpour of rains after he had had his head shaved at the temple tank.

We learnt of the state of his *samadhi* in Pathlalinga Cave in the main temple of Arunachala, his assistants and early devotees, his photographic memory and language

skills, the role of Divine Mothers including his biological Mother, his first *upadesa*, his first composition and spiritual works, his love of all animals and his fondness for the cow Lakshmi. Then we had stories from his childhood friends from Tiruchuzhi and Madurai. Above all we learnt of his preferred language of communication, that being silence.

We finished our talk last time with the event of Bhagawan's *mahasamadhi* on the evening of 14 April 1950. That evening, my mother who was pregnant carrying me at that time, vividly remembers seeing in the skies the slowly moving meteor-like star while on the terrace of a house in Burkit Road, T'Nagar in Chennai.

To this day I wonder if this was my own umbilical connection with Bhagawan that draws HIM closer to me each day. It does seem that way as now our Sharma Ji has asked me to speak on the topic "**Some Events in the Life of Sage Ramana**"!

The story of a jaggery Ganesha and sweet offering

Now that we have had a recap of the life of Bhagawan, let me now narrate a story that Bhagawan once told at one of his Q & A sessions. He would come up with vivid visual imagery to convey a key point or two.

The story was about a religiously inclined person who everyday said his prayers to Lord Ganesha before taking his lunch. Once while on his travels, he could not find any wayside temple of Lord Ganesha and hence from his travel bag, he took the jaggery (hard brown sugar) he had with him and made an idol of the elephant god and said his prayers. Having said his prayers, he had to perform the obligatory 'naivedya' - food offering to the Lord. To his chagrin, this person found nothing fresh, no fruit or sweet and hence pinched a little bit of the jaggery from his hand crafted sweet Ganesha and offered that as the 'naivedya'! It had not occurred to this otherwise pious man that he had defiled the very Ganesha that he had just worshipped and had therefore made both the worship and the offering worthless!

(David Godman, page 270 as narrated by Swami Madvathirtha, The Power of Presence, Part One)

I am in the same predicament here word crafting a talk of events using the sweet jaggery of Bhagawan's life. Our prayers that Bhagawan would accept this effort only as surrendering to the divine and as an offering though stolen from HIM!

Siddhas or Suddhas?

That Bhagawan had supernatural powers is undeniable. It is common knowledge that a few of his contemporaries and others in later years are known to have exploited their powers of *siddha* and thereby attract a following over time.

Bhagawan refrained from such activities given his emphasis on absolute purity of the Self and remaining a '*suddha*' at all time. It is clear to us that Bhagawan never deviated from his central message that one should be centred on one's own centre and not waste time chasing material objects even if that be materialised as idols for acts of worship or as *vibhuti* through the power of *siddhi*.

There are numerous 'events' that devotees have spoken about and many of these have been well documented cures and divine vision. Let us delve into a few of these today starting with Kavyakantha Ganapathi Muni followed by Rangan, Professor N R Krishnamurti Iyer (NRK) and finally Papaji (Harinwansh Lal Poonja). These events would give us all a very wide spectrum of the GRACE of Bhagawan as experienced by these people.

Kavyakantha Ganapathi Muni

Ganapathi Muni was a child prodigy and Sanskrit scholar well versed in the Vedas and Upanishads. To him goes the credit of letting the world know that the young Brahmana Swami of Tiruvannamalai should be called as Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharishi. This happened in 1907 after the young Swami addressed the Muni's his question and defined succinctly the nature of *Tapas*.

"If a mantra is repeated and attention directed to the source from where the mantra-sound is produced, the mind will be absorbed in that. That is tapas."

In 1908, the Muni did severe *tapas* in a Ganesha temple near Chennai. On the 18th day, when he was lying wide awake, he saw the figure of the Maharishi coming and sitting next to him. It is well known that ever since his arrival at Arunachala in 1896, the Sage had never left that place. When the Muni narrated the incident to Bhagawan years later in 1929, this is what the Muni was told by Bhagawan:

"One day some years ago, when I was lying down, I suddenly felt my body carried up higher and higher till all objects disappeared and all around me was one vast mass of white light. Then suddenly my body descended and objects began to appear. I said to myself, "evidently this is how siddhas appear and disappear." I was on a high road, on one side of which, some distance removed from it was a Ganapathi temple. I went in and talked, but what I said or did, I do not recollect. Suddenly I woke up and found myself lying in Virupaksha Cave. I mentioned this immediately to Palaniswami."

(Prof Laxmi Narain, page 245 Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharishi)

Years later, Ganapathi Muni had taken a vow to compose 1000 verses titled Uma Sahasram and have a dedication of it on a particular day at the Arunachaleswara temple in Tiruvannamalai. On the evening of the dedication day, the Muni was still short of 300 verses. When Bhagawan asked the Muni if he was planning to postpone the event, the Muni assured him that the task would be completed here and now. The Maharishi sat silent and in deep meditation. The eager disciples of the Muni watched in tense admiration the sweet flow of Sanskrit verses as they came from the lips of the Muni and wrote them down. The job done, Bhagawan opened his eyes and asked Ganapathi Muni whether all that he said had been taken down. The Muni's grateful response was:

"All that Bhagawan inspired in me has been taken down."

It is noteworthy that the Muni had revised his initial 700 verses at least six times while the last 300 required no revisions at all!

Rangan

Vilacheri Ranga Iyer, henceforth Rangan was a classmate of the Sage. He was one who was not a family member but a classmate of Bhagawan, a confidant, playmate and a *samsari* with worldly problems.

Theirs was no ordinary friendship but one where we learn of the love and empathy that Bhagawan had for his friend Rangan and his family. Bhagawan could read Rangan's inner thoughts like a book in extra large fonts. Who else could have identified with such compassion Rangan's debt and financial woes as well come to his relief at crucial times?

The deeply personal revelations of Rangan about his financial difficulties and incapacity to support his wife and children clearly triggered a compassionate chord in Bhagawan that can only happen between trustworthy friends that they were.

While Bhagawan was the Sage with few words speaking as it were the language of silence, Rangan was of the talking kind full of questions and ceaseless doubts that plagued his mind. Rangan recounts the patience of Bhagawan and these words:

"You have many doubts. You always want me to clear your doubts. But some people come here, sit before me and silently grasp the sole thing to be known. Then without saying anything, they go away."

(David Godman, page 28 as narrated by Rangan, The Power of Presence, Part One)

Bhagawan was both the medicine and medicine man for Rangan. Many a time Rangan would address letters to Bhagawan and when the letters in reply arrived from Sriramanasramam with HIS blessings and *vibhuti* (sacred ash) they became cures for what were deemed incurable and/or certain death.

Rangan's son was saved from a snake bite, his wife of a chronic back pain, his son-in-law of tuberculosis and his daughters from pregnancy problems, madness and drowning.

(David Godman, page 31, The Power of Presence, Part One)

From Rangan we learn that Bhagawan once dispensed some *vibhuti* with his own hands to a person who on applying it was cured the very next day of his leprosy. Yet this very person was not obliged a second time when he had sought *vibhuti* from Bhagawan's own hands for his friend who was suffering from leprosy and had accompanied him.

Rangan describes many a tale which seem improbable to us. In one instance, Bhagawan was seen resting inside Skandashramam. Wanting not to disturb him, Rangan had walked out quietly for a walk only to find Bhagawan sitting on a bed outside on his return. While thinking nothing of it, Rangan had entered Skandashramam only to find Bhagawan sound asleep in the very position when first seen.

When Rangan narrated this to Bhagawan a little later, Bhagawan is reported to have smiled and said:

"Why did you not tell me then itself? I could have caught the thief!"

”(David Godman, page 14 as narrated by Rangan, The Power of Presence, Part One)

There are other instances Rangan is reported to have told including one heard from Bhagawan’s mother. In this instance, Mother had seen Bhagawan’s form disappear into a lingam and his form slowly reappeared. While shaken, Mother had only narrated that incident to Rangan and no one else.

(David Godman, pages 8/9 The Power of Presence, Part One)

In yet another instance, Rangan himself is reported to have seen several images of Bhagawan surround him while resting at the peak of Arunachala where the annual Deepam is lit.

(David Godman, pages 9/10, The Power of Presence, Part One)

Professor N R Krishnamurti Iyer (NRK)

NRK had heard of the Sage from his maternal uncle, Appachi Iyer who lived in Tiruvannamalai. The first visit of NRK to Arunachala was in 1914 and from then on there were plenty more over his life time right up to and after Bhagawan’s mahasamadhi in April 1950. During these visits, NRK had the unique privilege of conversing with Bhagawan and having several of his doubts on spiritual matters cleared.

As an academic, NRK lived in Madurai with his wife and children. He had suffered considerably from ill health and had even contemplated suicide. So deciding, he had gone to the terrace and when about to take his leap, a figure of Arunchala Siva had appeared in front of him and chastised him and asked him to return to his wife and children.

Chastened by this reprimand, he never contemplated suicide ever again. But his health caused him much anguish that NRK advised his wife that he feared he would not live long. It was shortly after when all hope was lost by his wife, a visitor, Rangan’s brother (Mani) had come by with vibhuti and kumkum from the Ashram. Seeing NRK’s condition, Mani had applied the kumkum on NRK’s forehead and the vibhuti on the eyebrows. Here is what NRK has to say on what happened next:

“Immediately a thrill of joy shook my frame, infusing me with a feeling of vigorous health. I sat up in my bed and told my wife, ‘I am quite well, my dear, I will not die. Don’t fear!’

(David Godman, page 145, The Power of Presence, Part One)

We have read elsewhere that Bhagawan never gave *diksha* to anyone (there were one or two exceptions) nor did he touch anyone nor encourage anyone that he be touched. One story that NRK was privy to is that at some time after the ‘death experience’, Bhagwan’s cousin Narayanaswami had observed the young Venketraman in a deeply contemplative mood and wondered if he was in meditation and asked him if he too could learn that.

Venketraman instructed his cousin to sit down cross-legged on the floor and close his eyes at which time he pressed the point of a pencil between Narayanswami’s eyebrows. As a result, the cousin Narayanswami had lost all body awareness and was in a state of trance for about an hour. When he emerged out of this, all he could remember was a

smiling Venketraman! However much Narayanswami tried replicating this experience, he was unable to.

David Godman says:

“This little known incident appears to be the first time that Bhagawan used his power to bring about an experience in someone else. It is interesting to note that he intuitively knew how to do it.”

(David Godman, page 147, The Power of Presence).

NRK also tells of an incident when a group of devotees including his friend Rangan had sat at the feet of Bhagawan and started reciting in Tamil the The Ramana Stuti Panchakam. NRK says

“The fourth stanza in the third decad begins, ‘Let me place your soft, holy feet on my head.’

As this line was being chanted, one of Bhagawan’s feet descended, came into contact with the top of Rangan’s head and stayed there for some time. The whole group, including Rangan, was more or less hypnotized by this act and went on repeating the same stanza over and over again. It seems that they were quite incapable of proceeding any further. Only when Bhagawan withdrew his foot and resumed his former posture, was the group able to continue and complete the chanting. The devotees all viewed this as a rare example of pada diksha (initiation by being touched by the Guru’s foot).”

On one occasion, seated before Bhagawan and reciting mentally Aksharamanamalai, NRK describes his experience as follows:

“As I went through the verses I held my breath and fixed my unwinking eyes on the form of the Maharishi. Suddenly the left half of Bhagawan’s form became the left half of a female with a fulsome breast. I began to see in Bhagawan the form of Uma-Maheshwara, the right half being the half of the male Siva and the left half that of Goddess Parvathi.”

(David Godman, page 154 The Power of Presence, Part One)

There were other experiences too that NRK recounts, including the many health crises of his father. There was only one occasion when NRK had directly approached Bhagawan to save his father’s life and had said:

“This one time Sri Bhagawan has worked a miracle and saved my father’s life!”

Sri Bhagawan interjected, ‘Why are you saying “one time”?. Why are you not saying “three times”?’

I was astounded as no other intimation had been given to Sri Bhagawan about the second time my father had been affected with a hernia problem in my village. On that occasion there was only a prayer in Bangalore as a result of the dream I had. What more proof does one need about the omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence of Sadguru Ramana?”

(David Godman, page 170 The Power of Presence, Part One)

Papaji (Hariwansh Lal Poonja)

Papaji was born in 1910 in Lyalpur in West Punjab (now Pakistan) and had served in the British Indian Army. His commanding officer had advised the orderlies in the mess not to serve him any alcohol as he felt that Officer Poonja was always intoxicated. The Officer was right but also wrong! The intoxication of Poonja was always spiritual for he would dress as a woman and dance all night in the privacy of his room imagining to be one of the Gopis in the embrace of Krishna.

On relinquishing his commission in the Army, Papaji went about earnest on his spiritual quest with just two questions that he asked of many saints of that time including Swami Sivananda, Swami Tapovanam and Anand Moyi Ma.

“Have you seen God? Can you show me God?”

He travelled widely in the pursuit of answers for his burning questions and returned home disillusioned and disappointed. Shortly thereafter, a sadhu appeared at his door asking for food which was given to him. Then Papaji asked this sadhu the very same question- *Can you show me God? If not, do you know of anyone who can?*

Listen to what Papaji says:

“Much to my surprise, the sadhu said, “Yes, I know a person who can show you God. His name is Ramana Maharishi and he lives at Tiruvanmalai.” He gave me detailed instructions on how to reach there. I noted these down carefully. But I had spent all the money I had saved from my brief spell in the army on my unsuccessful pilgrimages. Through an amazing coincidence, I came across an advertisement offering job to an ex-army officer in Madras. After I got the job, my employer gave me money to get to Madras and told me that I need not report for duty for one month, thus giving me an opportunity to be in Maharishi’s presence before I reported for work. It was 1944, and I was 34 years of age.

As per the sadhu’s instructions I reached Sri Ramansramam. Before entering the hall, I peeped through the window and saw, sitting on a sofa inside, the same man who had visited my house in the Punjab. I was disgusted. I said to myself: “This man is a fraud. He appears in my house in the Punjab, tells me to go to Tiruvannamalai, and then hops in the train so that he could get here before me.” I felt so annoyed that I decided to leave the Ashram.

As I was preparing to do so, one of the residents asked, “Haven’t you just arrived?” I told him the story as to how I got cheated. The person said, “You are mistaken. He has not moved out of town during the last 48 years. It is either a case of mistaken identity or somehow, through his power, he managed to manifest himself in the Punjab while his physical body was still here. Some girls from America came here once and told a similar story. These things do happen occasionally.” This aroused my curiosity and I decided to stay.

I had lunch in the Ashram. At the conclusion of the meal the Maharishi went to the hall followed by his attendant. As he needed rest after lunch, devotees were not allowed to see him during 11.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. Not knowing this, I followed him. While his attendant was persuading me to come later, the Maharishi overheard the exchange, and I was allowed to get in.

I approached the Maharishi in a belligerent way, "Are you the man who came to see me at my house in the Punjab?" The Maharishi remained silent. I tried again, "Did you not come to my house and tell me to come here?" Again the Maharishi made no comment. Since he was unwilling to answer, I moved on to the main purpose of my visit. I asked, "Have you seen God? And if you have, can you enable me to see Him? I am willing to pay any price, even my life, but your part of the bargain is that you must show me God." He answered:

"No, I cannot show you God or enable you to see God because God is not an object that can be seen. God is the subject. He is the seer. You alone are God."

His words did not impress me. I would have dismissed him and his words without a second thought had it not been for an experience I had.

(Prof Laxmi Narain, pages 235-236, Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharishi)

We could now at this point say, the rest is spiritual history! What an experience that was for Papaji who from the mere look of Bhagawan's gaze into his eyes could feel his body tremble and shake with an emerging awareness of his spiritual heart.

Papaji it seems was spiritually groomed in duality and hence his craving for an external God such as his incessant desire to do japa and embrace Krishna in a dance. At that time of his spiritual evolution, he considered meditation as one for the spiritually lazy for people in the Ashram! Hence he retired to a quiet area at the base of Arunachala to practice his accustomed Krishna japa and enjoy the many visitations of Krishna. With a week gone, he decided to see Bhagawan again before leaving for Madras to take up his new posting.

At this the 'farewell' visit, Papaji with some smugness tells Bhagawan that he was self-sufficient in seeing God and that Bhagawan's help was not required as he had been seeing his Lord Krishna every day and had been playing with HIM!

Let us now hear the ensuing conversation.

B: Very good, very nice. Do you see HIM now?

P: I see HIM only when I have visions.

B: What is the use of a God who appears and disappears? If HE is a real God, He must be with you all the time.

(Prof Laxmi Narain, page 237, Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharishi)

Deflated with the advice he received from Bhagawan, Papaji was not yet prepared to abandon his old ways and left for Madras. Papaji felt that he had got nothing from

Bhagavan other than a good experience (the spiritual awareness centre, the Heart) and some bad advice!

Back to his old ways, Papaji recommenced his daily *Krishna japas* with renewed vigour after settling into a comfortable house in Madras. But soon thereafter, however hard he tried, Papaji was unable to perform his *Krishna japa* and found his mind had now become very uncooperative. Consulting the local Swamis in Madras, presumably at the Ramakrishna Mission, for some guidance to regain his old strength to perform *japas* turned futile.

It is at this time Papaji in desperation said to himself:

“This man (Bhagavan) came all the way to Punjab in some form and directed me to see him in Tiruvannamalai. I went there and got a very good experience. I may as well go to him and see what he has to say.”

(Prof Laxmi Narain, page 238, Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharishi)

We heard earlier how Bhagawan used metaphors, each tailored for a specific teaching and pitched at a level appropriate to the devotee. As with his first visit, Papaji gets the opportunity with Bhagawan after lunch in what would have been a one-on-one session that Bhagawan would have intended.

Given that Papaji had taken a train from Madras to Tiruvanmalai and then a bullock transport to get to the Ashram, Bhagawan pointed out that some stage the train was abandoned and later the bullock cart was let go as he had arrived at his destination. So too Bhagawan advised that the *Krishna japas* have served their purpose and had left Papaji as he had now arrived at a new spiritual destination.

What followed subsequently was another of Bhagawan’s intense gaze that triggered the pores of spiritual awakening of the Self in Papaji. Thus began Papaji’s journey of realisation with Bhagawan’s GRACE.

It was Bhagawan who directed Papaji to return to West Punjab and bring back his family at a time of Hindu-Muslim riots in July 1947 on the eve of the partition of India. Papaji was able to travel in a train compartment of Muslims to reach his home town Lyalpur and bring back to Lucknow some 34 members of his family. This was again the GRACE of Bhagawan through and through.

Bhagawan’s Many Miracles

We have heard this evening of many events which are all remarkably noteworthy – those of Kavyakantha Ganapathi Muni, Rangan, Professor N R Krishnamurti and Papaji.

There are countless other stories we would all be eager to listen to. Take for instance a case where a boy had apparently died of snakebite. His grief stricken mother had repeatedly pleaded to Bhagawan to bring him back to life, but he did not appear to respond to her requests. After a few hours, the Ashram manager had asked the lady to take the corpse away. As she was leaving, she met some kind of a snake charmer who

claimed that he could cure her son. The man did something to the boy's hand where he had been bitten, and the boy immediately revived.

The above story was also narrated by Papaji and he had this to add:

"The devotees attributed the miraculous cure to the Maharishi, saying, when a problem is brought to the attention of a jnani, some 'automatic divine activity' brings about a solution. According to this theory, the Maharishi has done nothing consciously to help the boy, but at a deeper level, his awareness of the problem has caused the right man to appear at the right place. The Maharishi, of course, disclaimed all responsibility for the miraculous cure. "Is that so?" was his only response when told about the boy's dramatic recovery. This was typical of him."

(Prof Laxmi Narain, page 240, Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharishi)

It is only appropriate that we should finish our session with these words of Papaji:

"The Maharishi never performed any miracles. The only 'miracles' he indulged in were those of inner transformation. By a word, a look, a gesture, or merely by remaining in silence, he could quieten the minds of people around him, enabling them to become aware of who they really were."

(Prof Laxmi Narain, page 240, Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharishi)

OM TAT SAT

To tune into the teachings of Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharishi, please visit:

http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/resource_centre/audio-2/

The books and resources of Sri Ramanasramam including their website are acknowledged.
