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Arunachala! Thou dost root out the ego of those who meditate on Thee in the heart, Oh Arunachala!

The Mountain Path

Vol. 14, No. III, July 1977

Rain Thy Mercy on me
ere Thy knowledge burn me
to ashes, Oh, Arunachala.

—*The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 55

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

(A QUARTERLY)

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—*The Marital Garland of Letters*, verse 1.

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The Arunachala Hill picture in the cover page was drawn by Sri Bhagavan Himself.

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— *Editor.*

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The Mountain Path

(A QUARTERLY)

The aim of this journal is to set forth the traditional wisdom of all religions and all ages, especially as testified to by their saints and mystics, and to clarify the paths available to seekers in the conditions of our modern world.

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THE MOUNTAIN PATH

is dedicated to

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

The Mountain Path
Vol. 14. No. III, July 1977

EDITORIAL

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

A PROPER atmosphere at home is usually the first aid for the beginning of spiritual life in youngsters. If the parents and elders at home are spiritually-minded, children spontaneously follow their example. And as they grow up, the study of scriptures and the lives of saints helps them to understand and follow the Path Divine. Usually the way to the Supreme Self is gradual, beginning with the aspiration for it and following of the paths of Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana, with emphasis on one or more of them combined according to individual predilection, choice and development. Ganapati Muni, the inspired poet-disciple of Bhagavan Ramana, says in his *Uma Sahasram*, " Mother Divine, Consort of Siva ! One gets your glance of Grace by selfless dedicated work or by incessant *japa* or search within or self-surrender ".

Though spiritual unfoldment is usually gradual and slow on account of the accumulated distracting tendencies of individuals it occurs all on a sudden in some. The explanation is that the spiritual urge already developed in them was dormant on account of some impediment or other and that it shines forth on the removal of that obstruction.

Here, for us, in Tiruvannamalai, a remarkable instance is the sudden transformation of Arunagirinatha by the operation of Divine Grace. Sex was his great distraction and when he went to the extreme limit of it, he himself got utterly disgusted with his wretched life and jumped down from the top of one of the towers of the Temple of Arunachala to get rid of it. He did not know what happened but found himself miraculously saved from certain death and utterly transformed as well that very moment. He was born anew and excellent devotional poetry in praise of Subrahmanya, the Son of Siva, known as *Tiruppugazh*, gushed forth from him and he went on visiting various sacred places, thrilling with his songs the band of devotees who followed him. Of the potency of those songs, Bhagavan Ramana has once said : " One need not know the meaning of these songs ; their mere sound-vibration will lift up one spiritually ". These songs and the other poetical works of this saint contain all the wisdom of sacred lore, besides poetical excellence and devotional fervour.

There is a small temple of Subrahmanya beneath that tower, constructed in commemoration of this thrilling event and we find the image of Saint Arunagirinatha also installed there. It is noteworthy that devotees gather together and celebrate this great event of Divine Grace on August 15 every year.

We are reminded here of Bilva Mangala, the author of *Sri Krishna Karnamrita*, and others who had a similar sudden transformation by the operation of Divine Grace.

We have an instance of one word from the Guru bringing about spiritual awakening in the disciple that very moment. It is interesting to note here that the Silence of the Heart is known as the One Word. Sadasiva, later

known with the appellation *Brahmendra,* had renounced worldly life just when he was about to enter it and sought the Feet of Paramasivendra for spiritual illumination. Though he had understood the Way and was following it, his intellectual brilliance stood as an impediment. He was often found engaging himself in keen argument and debate regarding the interpretation of scriptural texts. His Master, Paramasivendra, saw this and to wean him from it, said : " Sadasiva ! Won't you shut up ? " That very moment Sadasiva became silent within and without. He became so unconscious of his body that he moved about stark-naked and was taken by many for a mad man. When people reported to Paramasivendra the sad plight of his disciple, he said with a sigh : " When shall I be mad like him ? " We find this stated in a Hymn in praise of Sadasivendra by Sri Nrisimha Bharati Swami of Sringa-giri, himself a well-known spiritual stalwart. It is worth recalling here that this great Pontiff of Sringeri Mutt had great regard for Bhagavan Ramana's unique spiritual attainment even in early boyhood.

Sometimes the erring mortal is redeemed by means of unbearable suffering. The case of the Saiva Saint Appar is an instance. When he, in early life, took a wrong track utterly unintended and unsuited for him, he got an unbearable stomach-ache and returned home to see his saintly sister, Tilakavati, who had dedicated herself to the worship of Siva. She pointed to him his error and advised him to surrender himself utterly to Siva. Her words were like nectar and Appar immediately took refuge in Siva and the stomach-ache disappeared like a bad dream on one's waking up. Appar began his pilgrimage singing hymns in praise of Siva. Wherever he went or stayed, he used to clean the precincts and pathways of temples. And so, service of fellow-beings constituted part of his life of devotion.

Appar is known by the name *Tirunavukkarasu*, which means Lord of Poetical Utterance. His hymns are grand, melodious and melting the heart. He was greatly loved and adored by the boy-devotee of Siva, *Tiru-Jnāna-Sambandhar*, who was fed with the Milk of Grace by the Mother Divine, when he was but a child of three. He was born to bless others, he had no problem of his own and he is looked upon as an Avatar of Subrahmanya. In this context, it is interesting to note that Appar is traditionally identified with Ganesa, the elder son of Siva.

Bhagavan Ramana also was seen by Ganapati Muni as Skanda (Subrahmanya) in human form and praised as such in *Sri Ramana Gita*, a redaction in melodious Samskrit verse of Ramana's teachings. Any one who has studied Bhagavan's life could easily see the absence of any serious *sadhana* in it, as he was evidently born for the redemption of others. Born with the remembrance of Arunachala, he happened to go through an account of the Lives of the Tamil Saints. A touch of Divine Grace transformed him and within a few minutes he realised his true identity as the immortal Self, absolutely beyond death and travail. Called to Arunachala when he was but a lad of seventeen, he remained there unknown and silent for many years until some earnest seekers discovered his greatness and many resorted to him in course of time for peace of mind and spiritual enlightenment. Prominent among the early devotees was Ganapati Muni who after initial preparation through the discipline of incessant *japa* got his instantaneous glimpse of the Self Supreme at the feet of his Master Ramana through his teaching of the search for the Source in a very few words. The great Silence behind those words did the miracle. When the disciple is ready the Master's Grace prevails.

We are reminded here of the four spiritual aspirants, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata, who went about in search of enlightenment, uninterested in anything else, met Siva Himself seated under a banyan tree wrapt in Supreme Silence and got illumined immediately. That aspect of Siva is well-known as Dakshinamurti, the Lord facing the South. In every Temple of Siva there is the image of Dakshinamurti and His four disciples seated in front of Him. This aspect of Siva revealing ultimate Reality through Silence is described in the well-known verse :

Chitram vata-taror moole
Vriddāh Sishyā Gurur yuvā
Gurostu mounam Vyākhyānam
Sishyāstu chhinna-samsayāh

"What wonder is this under the banyan tree ! The disciples are old and the Guru is young. The exposition of the Guru is in Silence and lo ! the disciples are utterly rid of all doubts."

Visitors would have noted that there is an image of Dakshinamurti just before arriving at the entrance to Sri Ramanasramam. Bhagavan Ramana's teaching too was mainly in Silence. Acharya Sankara has explained the significance of Dakshinamurti's teaching in his *Hymn to Dakshinamurti* and Bhagavan Ramana has rendered it into Tamil verse. Devotees of Ramana are fond of the Samskrit verse meaning, "We bow to the line of Gurus beginning with Dakshinamurti and coming through Sankara to Ramana (of our times)."

Dakshinamurti sārambhām
Sankarāchārya madhyamām
Ramanāchārya paryantām
Vande Guruparamparām

GRACE OF GOD

Devotee : *Jiva* **is said to be bound by** *karma.* **Is it so ?**

Maharshi : **Let** *karma* **enjoy its fruits. As long as you are the doer so long are you the enjoyer.**

D. : **How to get released from** *karma ?*

M. : **See whose** *karma* **it is. You will find you are not the doer. Then you will be free. This requires grace of God for which you should pray to Him, worship Him and meditate on Him. That** *karma* **which takes place without effort, i.e., involuntary action, is not binding.**

Even a *jnani* **is acting as seen by his bodily movements. There can be no** *karma* **without effort or without intentions (***sankalpas***). Therefore there are** *sankalpas* **for all. They are of two kinds (1) one, binding—***bandhahetu* **and the other (2)** *mukti-hetu* **- not binding. The former must be given up and the latter must be cultivated. There is no fruit without previous** *karma ;* **no** *karma* **without previous** *sankalpa.* **Even** *mukti* **must be the result of effort so long as the sense of doership persists.**

— from *TALKS,* p. 108.