

RAMANA PERIYA PURANAM

(Inner Journey of 75 Old Devotees)



V. Ganesan

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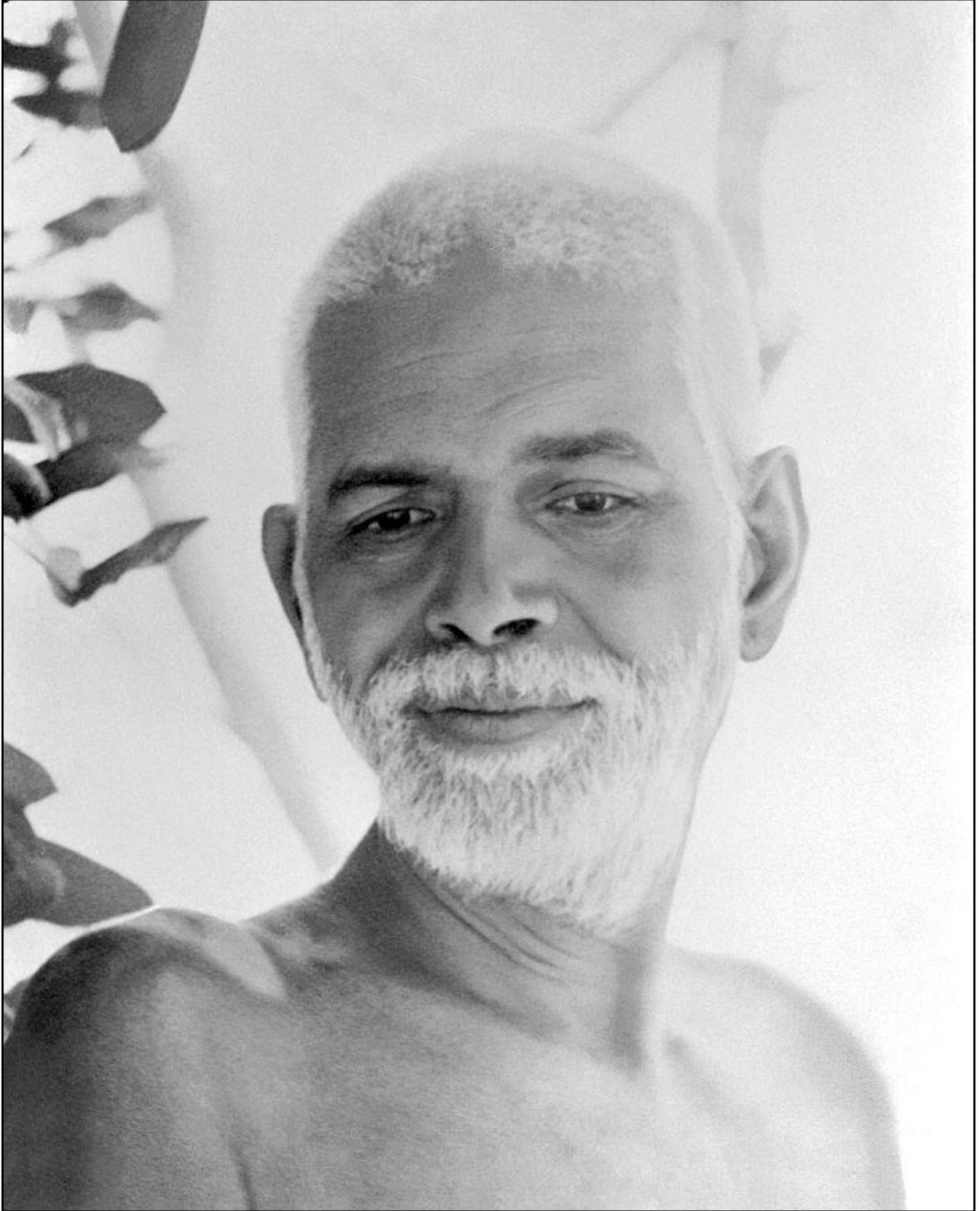
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Cover Photo:

“Dakshinamurti” : Sri Bhagavan seated on a boulder at the Holy Hill (1940-42)

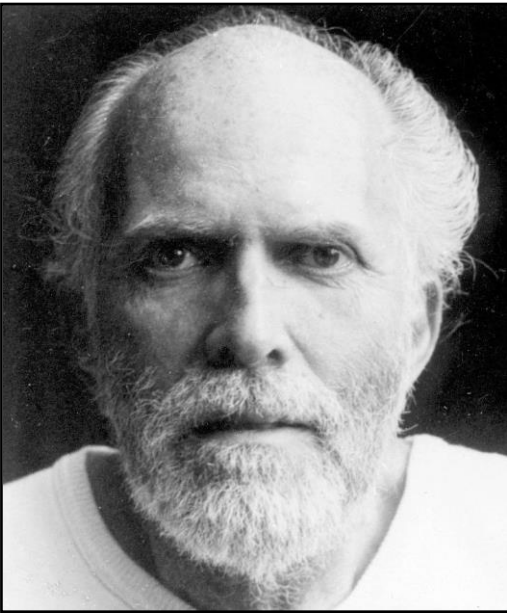
Dedication



**Prostrations to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi,
who has come in so many forms to bless us all.**

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Robert Adams



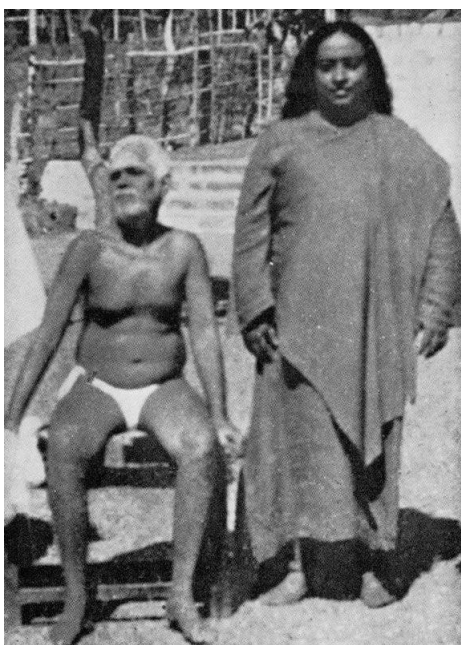
The year was 1992, and I was travelling from San Diego to Phoenix via Los Angeles. At the crowded transit airport in Los Angeles, an elderly American lady approached me and asked, "Are you from India?" When I said, "Yes", she very affectionately added, "This evening, a very pious man is giving a talk on Hindu spirituality in a friend's house. I am going and I would like to take you there." I asked, "What is the name of this pious person?" and she answered, "Robert Adams." I said, "This evening, I am giving a talk at Phoenix. So I cannot come. Please accept my apologies." She was disappointed, but not being one who would easily give up, she said, "I am sorry that you will not be able to come. Will you permit me to give you the transcripts of some of his talks? Could you go through them?" She handed over a bunch of print outs which I started reading on my flight to Phoenix. The very first page caught my rapt attention. Glued to the transcripts, I completed reading them in a state of ecstasy.

I was the editor of *The Mountain Path*. The editorial team at that time was keenly interested in focusing on those blessed devotees who had realized the Self in Sri Bhagavan's presence. We were planning to devote all the issues of 1993 and 1994 to them. The entire team had worked hard to this end and we had collected quite a few articles on the subject, albeit with stiff opposition from certain quarters. I felt that young and new seekers who pursued Self Enquiry would be highly motivated if they read such accounts, as most people feel that the path of wisdom, *jnana marga*, is very difficult and suited only for a chosen few. Whereas the truth is that it is a simple, direct and natural path meant for all. Finding the address of Robert Adams in the transcript, I wrote to him requesting the details of how he attained Self realization in the presence of Bhagavan. I received a long letter: "I am Robert Adams. I was born in New York in 1928. As far back as I can remember, even when I was in the crib, I recollect that a man about two feet tall, with white hair and a grey beard would always appear at the foot of the crib and speak gibberish to me. Being a child, I could not understand anything that he said. When I was about five or six years old, I told my parents about it, but they thought I was playing games. I told my friends. They also laughed at me. I stopped talking about it. These visits by the small man stopped when I was around seven."

Robert Adams also added that he did not know what to do. He could not share what happened with anyone. Then, something strange took place. Whenever he wanted anything, whether it was a pencil, a chocolate or a violin, it would appear through someone when he uttered the word 'God' three times. If he found that someone needed a pencil in class, he would utter 'God' three times and the pencil would be there and he would hand over the pencil to the person who needed it. It happened during his exams too. He was not interested in studying. During his exams, he would utter 'God' three times, and the answers would appear before him and he would write them down. This is how he passed the exams.

When writing a mathematics paper for which he was not prepared, he did the same thing. He held before him the question paper and uttered 'God' three times. He expected the answers to appear as always, but what happened was something entirely different: "The whole room was filled with a light a thousand times more brilliant than the sun. It was a beautiful, warm and shining glow. Everything and everyone in the room was immersed in the light. All the children seemed to be mere particles of light, and I found myself melting into a radiant being of consciousness. I then merged into consciousness. It was not an out of the body experience. This was a completely different experience. I realized that I was not my body. What appeared to be my body was not real. I went beyond the light into pure radiant consciousness. I became consciousness and my individuality merged into pure and absolute bliss. I expanded and became the universe. The feeling was indescribable. It was total bliss and total joy."

After this experience, Robert Adams could no longer carry on his activities as usual. Being a teenager, he wanted someone to guide him. At that time, Joel Goldsmith was regarded as a true Christian mystic. Many people suggested that he approach Joel Goldsmith and therefore he went there. (Years later, Joel Goldsmith kept constant contact with Arthur Osborne and me. He contributed some original and brilliant articles to almost every issue of *The Mountain Path*.) Joel Goldsmith listened to Robert Adams and suggested, "Go to Paramahansa Yogananda in Encinitas. He will guide you." Robert Adams went to Encinitas in a state of excitement and ecstasy. A strange thing happened. There were many people in the presence of Paramahansa Yogananda. Robert, however, was standing outside. Paramahansa told his secretary, "There is a boy outside. Call him in." Robert Adams prostrated before the great man and said, "You are my guru." Paramahansa answered, "No, I am not your guru. Your guru is Sri Ramana Maharshi. The Maharshi is not well, go to him immediately." After coming out, Robert felt the need to read a book in the library. He was browsing through the philosophy section, when the book, *Who am I?*, caught his attention. When he saw the picture of Ramana Maharshi on the book, his hair stood on end, because this was the very person who used to appear before his crib and speak to him. So, with the strong recommendation of Paramahansa Yogananda, he reached Arunachala in 1947.



Paramahansa Yogananda with Sri Bhagavan

Here is an account of what happened in the presence of Ramana Maharshi: "I arrived in Arunachala at the age of eighteen. I took with me some flowers and a bag full of fruits and offered them at the feet of the Maharshi. He looked at me and smiled; I returned the smile. The very first look of the Maharshi engulfed me in a flood of light, peace, quietude and bliss and it opened my inner eye and I instantly recognized the meaning and purpose of all my experiences - that I was never the body and that I was ever the unborn Self, the eternal silence. The Maharshi exuded compassion, love and bliss on the very first day. He looked at me and asked whether I had eaten breakfast, and when I said, 'No', he asked the attendant to bring fruits and porridge and told me to eat. I lay down and went to sleep in the Old Hall itself, and when I woke up, the Maharshi guided me to a shack and asked me to take rest. In the evening too, he sent me food. I ate and again went to sleep. The Maharshi himself paid great attention to what was needed for my body to rest and relax."

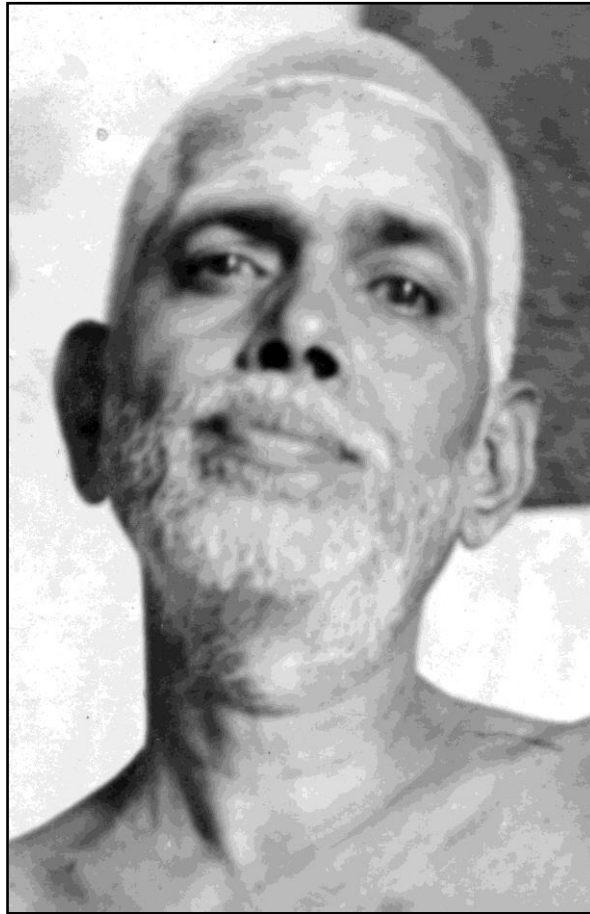
The next morning, Robert went to the Old Hall to meet Bhagavan. What happened in the presence of the Maharshi guided him deep within, while the silence and quietude of Bhagavan engulfed him. When he entered the hall, he saw Bhagavan's attendant, Krishnaswami, approaching Bhagavan again and again to complain about some people. After some time, Bhagavan looked sternly at Krishnaswami and



"The Maharshi guided me to a shack..."

said, "Remember the purpose for which you have come here. Attend to it. Keep quiet!" Robert took this as his very first *upadesa*, or instruction, from Bhagavan to himself rather than to Krishnaswami. From then on, every moment of the three years he stayed there was precious. He dived within, and remained in a state of silence; he neither interfered in anyone's personal affairs, nor in the ashram management. Inwardly, he was established in truth and outwardly he was a recluse. There was no need for him to talk to anyone, not even to Bhagavan. This is why nobody knew Robert Adams, even though he stayed for three years in Arunachala. Later, when I went to verify, one or two old devotees said that there was a young fellow who was possibly mad. His name was, perhaps, Robert Adams. They also said that he always kept to himself and did not have anything to do with others. He never spoke, for all the time he was doing *sadhana*. Robert told me that when Bhagavan dropped his body, it did not affect him because he saw Bhagavan only as the Self. Even when Bhagavan was present physically, he experienced Bhagavan only as the Self. So, he felt no sorrow or loss now as he plunged deeper and deeper into the Self.

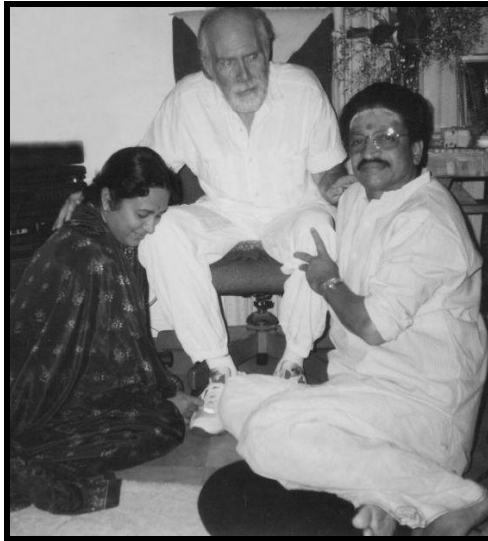
Once, Bhagavan appeared in Robert Adam's dream and said, "Go to Benares. There is an old *swami* there. Stay with him." The *swami* was ninety years old. Robert went to Benares and sat in his presence every day. No conversation was necessary. One day, the *swami* informed people who had gathered before him, "I know my end is approaching in three days. I have not completed my mission. The moment I drop my body, a youth on the road will also die for no reason whatsoever. I will reside in his body and continue my mission." On the third day, just after the *swami* dropped his body, a young boy around fourteen or fifteen years of age was crossing the road. He suddenly had fits and collapsed. After around twenty minutes, the still body rose and disappeared into the forest. This gave further meaning to Robert's belief in the Self. The appearance or the disappearance of the body did not in any way concern him.



"The very first look of the Maharshi engulfed me in a flood of light, peace, quietude and bliss..."

Robert wandered around India, meeting with sages and saints. He did this for a few years. Then, Bhagavan appeared once again in his dream and said, "Go back to your country and spread the teaching of Self Enquiry, how to attain Self realization and how to stay in the state of 'I AM' to seekers in America." Bhagavan very specifically stated, "Do not start an institution. Do not be a guru. No publicity! If more than fifteen people gather around you, go away from that town and continue to spread the teaching elsewhere." Robert Adams travelled, but there were no articles about him and no publicity. None except a select few knew about him. On reaching Hollywood, he was afflicted by Parkinson's disease and was forced to remain there. A beautiful woman named Mary, along with her friends, attended on him. They also helped him disseminate the teachings of Bhagavan's Self Enquiry. He conducted *satsangs* and had small gatherings. His presence was very powerful. He would sit in the hall in silence for twenty minutes and everyone around him would become absolutely silent. It did not matter how many people were gathered there, or who was there. Ultimately, after the period of silence, Robert would speak for a few minutes.

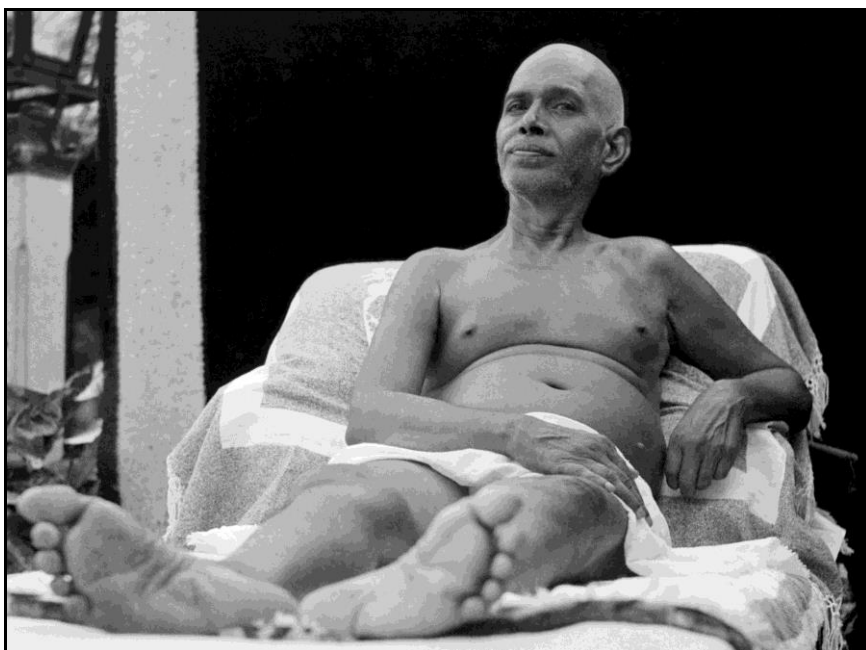
When I wrote to Robert Adams asking for permission to meet him, he replied, "You can meet me in Los Angeles." At the time, the president of the Course of Miracles, Dr. Tara Singh, was at Ramanasramam and he invited Anuradha and me to stay in their headquarters in Los Angeles. "I will arrange for you to meet Robert Adams," he said. He arranged the meeting with Robert in a restaurant. We met there because the master had no institution, not even a house to call his own. I was thrilled, because he had called us for a lunch meeting. It reminded me of Bhagavan, who not only imparted wisdom but saw to it that anyone visiting the ashram partook of its food. As we approached the table we could only see Robert's back, but that was more than enough. The spiritual aura, the peace, the friendliness and the vibrations were palpable even from a distance. Robert had a great sense of humour. I requested him again and again to tell us about Bhagavan for I wanted to hear it from his own lips. He recounted all the incidents that he had earlier written to me - of how he saw Bhagavan at the foot of his crib and the other incidents - and concluded by saying, "In the evening, we are having a *satsang* in Mary's house. Please do come."



Anuradha and Ganesan with Robert Adams

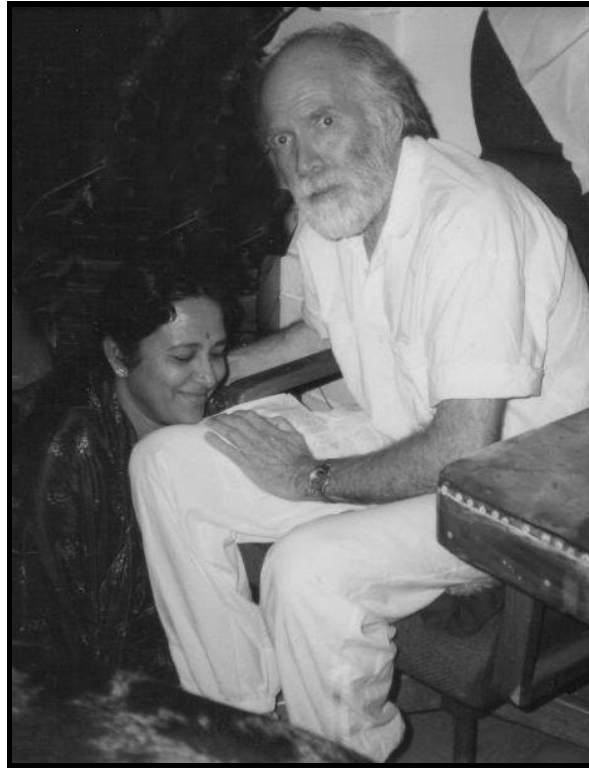
Seventy people had already gathered when I reached there. There was such a profound and serene silence! A special seat had been arranged for Robert since he had Parkinson's. Behind him was a picture of Bhagavan. I too was given a special chair. After Robert sat down, he looked at everyone for about twenty minutes and in those twenty minutes he silenced everyone's minds and put them in a complete state of inwardness. Afterwards, he took the mike and spoke. He announced, "I welcome my master Ramana Maharshi's grand nephew, Ganesan, and his secretary, Anuradha. I would like Ganesan to speak." I spoke for nearly half an hour, at the end of which he happily said, "I entirely agree with every word that Ganesan has spoken today."

I would like to share an incident of great significance that took place when I was there. After the speeches, I sat at Robert's feet. Another person was also there, a John Wilkins, I think, who had been Robert's friend for more than twenty years. Out of the blue, John suddenly asked, "Robert, I want you to tell me: what is the truth and what is untruth? What is reality and unreality? I do not want you to quote from the scriptures or use any philosophical jargon. You must make me experience these right now at your feet."



"The Maharshi exuded compassion, love..."

I was thrilled because I wanted to know how Robert was going to answer these difficult questions. Robert looked happy for some time and then became very serious. He looked at John and asked, "Who are you?" John thought that Robert had forgotten him because of the disease he had. He replied, "I am John Wilkins." Robert gave him the most gracious smile that I have ever seen and said, "I AM is the truth and John Wilkins is the untruth. I AM is the reality and John Wilkins is the unreality." Everyone went into a state of inner stillness. This was not a mere answer; it was a statement that transported everyone into a state of deep silence of the mind.



Anuradha: "Robert, please tell me what service I can render."

Robert Adams invited me to come again the next year, but said that he might shift to Sedona since Bhagavan had selected the place. He invited me over saying that everything had been arranged. Accommodation was given to Anuradha and me in a couple's house. I attended his *satsangs* and he always made me speak. He used to listen to my sharings with great appreciation. One day, Anuradha felt so grateful that she held Robert's hands and said, "I want to do something for you. Please tell me what service I can render." He replied, "Yes, you can give me Ramanasramam food. I am very fond of the food there and I will eat it with joy if you make it for me." Anuradha happily agreed. There were not enough vessels to make South Indian food, so we had to look for these vessels. When someone lent us a vessel, they also said, "We too will come for the lunch." Robert had said that only six people were invited. Then, every two hours Robert would send word that six more people would be coming for lunch. It ultimately added up to sixty people! Anuradha and a few others started preparing the food from very early in the morning, since Ramanasramam food meant *sambar*, *rasam*, vegetables, yogurt, *pappad* and *payasam*. Some people told us that it was enough if Robert was served the lunch; the others could take the food as *prasad*. However, Anuradha was firm that everyone be fed because she remembered that Bhagavan in his lifetime wanted himself to be served last, so that everyone else could be fed. The next day, a sumptuous and delicious lunch was served. Anuradha herself served Robert. Others helped themselves. He had three or four helpings of each dish and was delighted. We were all very happy that Robert ate the food with so much relish. After lunch, Anuradha in all her innocence asked Robert, "Robert, was it like the ashram food or was something missing?" Robert answered, "Yes, it was perfectly delicious. Only one thing was missing - the banana leaf on which the food is served there!"

Everyone wanted a *satsang* after lunch. Robert said, "I am not going to talk today. Only Ganesan will talk and he should talk on the topic chosen by me. Your topic, Ganesan, is Bhagavan and the

monkeys.” I must have spoken for about twenty minutes. Everyone laughed a lot and enjoyed the talk. Then, someone from the audience told Anuradha, “We have heard about Bhagavan from Ganesan. We would like to hear about Ganesan from you.” Robert intervened and said, “Anuradha, I will give you a topic. Talk about Bhagavan and Ganesan.” Anuradha gave an account of my childhood, my relationship with Bhagavan, how Bhagavan taught me to serve salt, and a few other incidents. She said, “Bhagavan was known for his ‘*thanga kai*’ or ‘golden hand’. Whatever Bhagavan touched, thrived and prospered. In Ramana Nagar, Ganesan is called ‘the funeral hand’ because he lights the funeral pyre of those old devotees who die in Ramana Nagar and in Ramanasramam.” There was a burst of laughter from the audience when they heard this. Robert pretended to become very serious and said, “All those who are afraid of death, run away from here because the funeral hands are here.” I was at his feet at the time. He bent towards me and said, “Ganesan, extend your hands. I am ready.” At that time, we all thought that he was just joking. When it was time for Robert to leave, Sharmila, who was a good singer and a great devotee, began to sing. Everyone joined in the singing; Robert got up and danced to the tune of ‘Hit the road, Jack. Don’t come back no more, no more, no more’. He was always dressed informally and he was wearing a T-shirt, jeans and a cap turned backwards. He was a simple man, natural, humorous and constantly joking - most of the jokes were at his own expense. We enjoyed ourselves thoroughly.

I want to share an important feature that repeatedly took place in the presence of Robert Adams. The moment I met him – whether it was at Hollywood or at Sedona – he would extend his hand. I always carried in my pocket two small packets of *vibhuti* and *kumkum*, taken from Sri Bhagavan’s shrine as his *Prasad* - even now I do so.

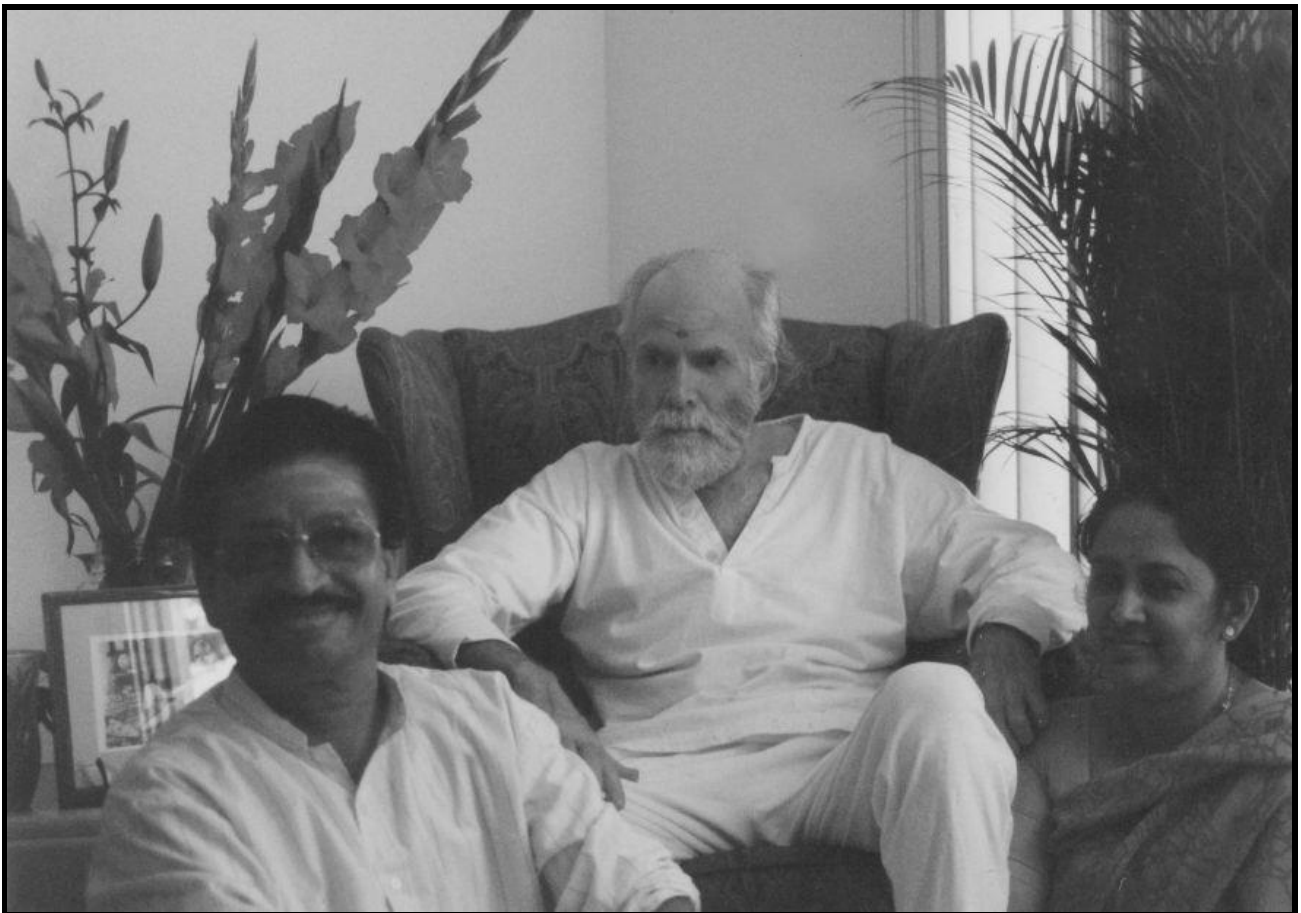
When I first met Robert Adams at Hollywood, he asked me why I was wearing the religious marks of *vibhuti* and *kumkum* on my forehead. I told him that Viswanatha Swami once told a dear friend and fellow devotee, “You have a very broad forehead. It would look appropriate if you adorn it with *vibhuti* and *kumkum* !” After some time, when this devotee met Viswanatha Swami at the ashram, he noticed that this devotee was not wearing *vibhuti* and *kumkum*. Viswanatha Swami did not say anything to him. Instead, he turned to me immediately and in my friend’s presence itself commanded me, “Start wearing them on your forehead – for my sake!” I was never a ritualist and Swami knew that very well. Yet, since such a powerful command had come from him, from that day onwards, I started wearing them - not only as *prasad* from Sri Bhagavan but also as a blessing from Viswanatha Swami. Instantly, Robert Adams said, “Whenever you meet me, please put Sri Bhagavan’s *prasad* on my forehead too!”. I did it and received the added blessings of the “*American Siddha Purusha*”, Robert Adams!

Soon, we were back in India and stayed at the Krishnamurti Foundation at Rajghat, Benares. One day, I was told that there was an international call for me. It was Robert Adams. He addressed me by my name, but he could continue no further. His assistant, Richard, spoke to me. He said, “Robert invites you to come to Sedona and spend three months in spring with him. He is very insistent. He would like Anuradha also to come with you since he understands that you cannot travel alone. He will make all the arrangements. Sharmila will pick you up. The other devotees will take care of your needs. Please come for the spring.” Back at the ashram there was a letter for me in Robert’s own handwriting, “Ganesan, please come and spend the whole of spring with me.” I was very moved by the invitation. Anuradha and I landed in San Francisco - exactly at the time that Robert dropped his body in Sedona. Was it one of his practical jokes? I recalled the time when he said, “Take me in your funeral hands!” It was literally true now. There was something that Robert definitely wanted to convey to me. Anuradha and I continued our journey to Sedona where we met Sharmila, a wonderful and beautiful lady. She did not have a house of her own. We stayed with her in three or four different places as she was ‘house-sitting’. The old devotees of Robert wanted me to participate in their *satsangs*. I talked about Self Enquiry, and how by practising this we can attain that state of quietude and silence - the silence that Bhagavan had given Robert and the silence that Robert had given to all the devotees. This was to be carried on. This is why Robert had asked me to come there for three months. I too learnt a lesson from Robert. I understood that one has to look on all the happenings outside of oneself to be a mere dream. This was the knowledge that Robert directly and indirectly imparted to me.

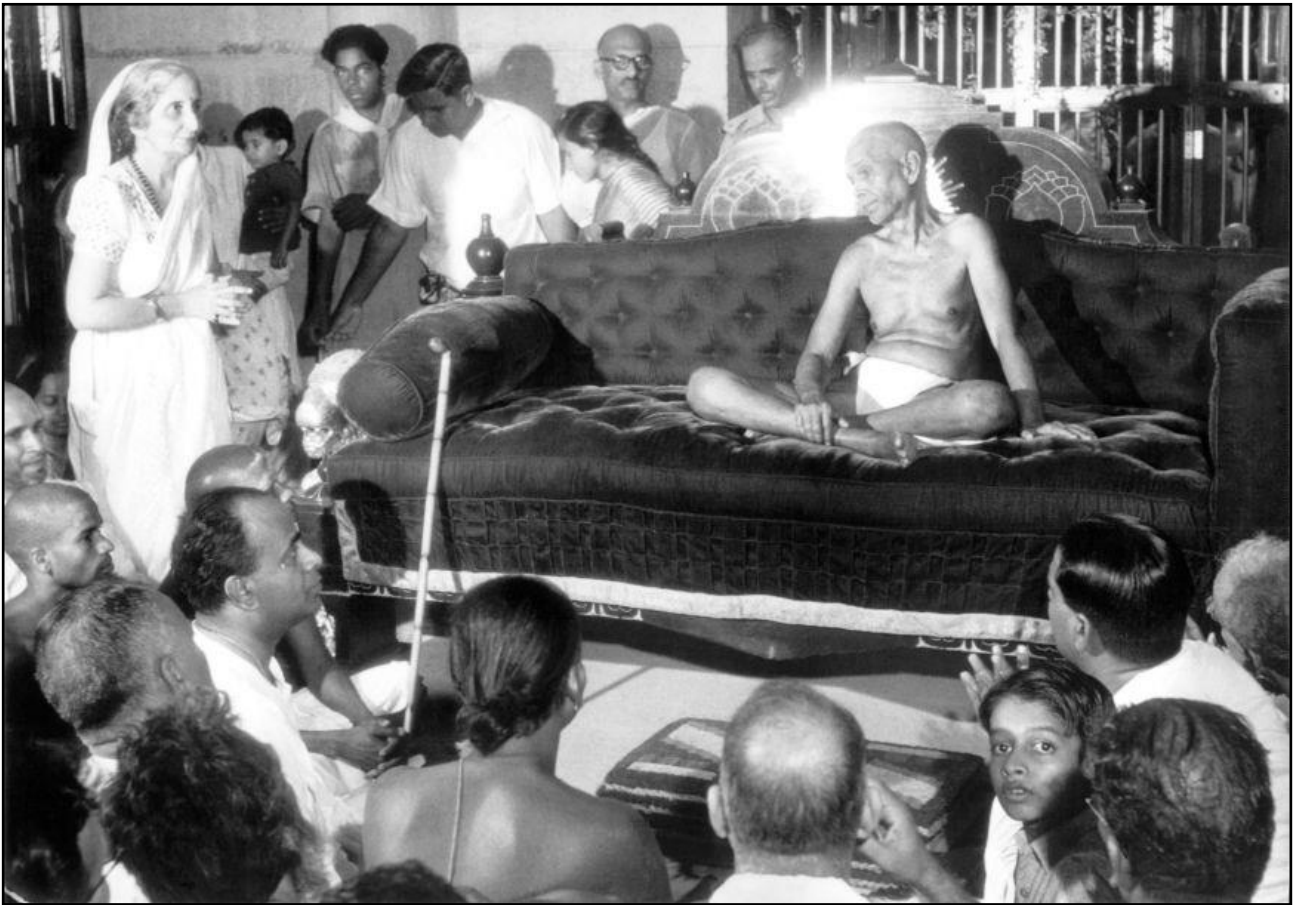
Even during his last days, Robert retained his sense of humour. When he was bedridden, a young man named John attended on him. John knew that he was serving a realized soul. Robert’s wife was not happy with the situation of John serving her husband. She was constantly sending him away; but John had to attend on Robert since Robert was bedridden. One day, Robert wanted hot water and John had to go into the kitchen to get it. Robert’s wife was frying something in a big pan at the time. She became

so angry that she was ready to hurl the pan at John. John became so alarmed that he shouted for help, "Robert! Robert! She is trying to hit me with a big pan. What should I do? Please help me." Robert, who was lying down, said, "Duck!" It was typical of Robert - ever half serious and half humorous.

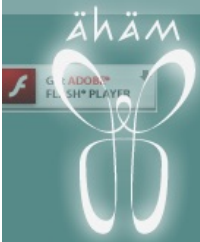
By way of paying homage to Robert, I quote a few passages from Robert's teachings: "The highest teaching in the world is silence - there is nothing higher than this. A devotee who sits in the company of the sage purifies his mind just by being with him. The mind automatically becomes quieter. No words are necessary. Silence is the ultimate reality and everything in this world exists through silence. This means, literally, going deep inside yourself to the dwelling where nothing is happening; this place transcends time and space. This is a brand new dimension of nothingness. That is our real home and the place to which we actually belong. In this state, there is only deep silence - there is no good, no bad and no state of trying to achieve anything. It is a state of pure being. The ultimate freedom is to reach this state of deep silence in which you transcend your body, your affairs and the universe. The other lesson to be learnt is that you are real. What you appear to be is false. Identify yourself with the real you and not the false you. Do not accept everything that you see as reality. The only freedom that you have is to turn within. One day, you will awaken from this dream, for this is also a dream, and you will be free, liberated. There is no such thing as birth or death. Nobody is born, nobody dies and nobody prevails in between. Nothing that appears exists. Only the Self exists. All this is the Self and I am that. You are the absolute reality. You are consciousness, emptiness, and *sat-chit-ananda* - existence, consciousness, bliss - that is your true nature. Why not abide in it and be free? Empty your mind and become still; everything will happen of its own accord. There is really nothing that you have to do - just be still. Be still and know that 'I AM', God. 'I AM' is the Self. Accept that and be free." Salutations to Robert Adams, the great blissful, surrendered devotee of Bhagavan!



*"Ganesan, extend your hands. I am ready."
(Notice the vibhuti and kumkum on Robert's forehead)*



*Sri Bhagavan giving darshan in the 'New Hall'
(Ganesan can be seen in the foreground, right)*



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V. Ganesan

Grand Nephew of Sri Ramana Maharshi



V. Ganesan presides over Sat Sanga at AHAM, June 2013

Born in 1936, up to the age of 14 years old, Ganesan grew up in the presence and proximity of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. His sacred memory of the Great Master is rich in its content; and, even at that tender age he could see Sri Ramana as the greatest compassionate human being.

On April 14, 1950 – the day the Great Master chose to leave the body – the adolescent Ganesan stood near the entrance to the room where Sri Ramana was lying and was fortunate to witness the brilliant flash of Light that later moved towards the top of the Holy Hill – Arunachala.

Ganesan obtained a Master's Degree in Philosophy; and, then came to stay permanently at "Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai" – the sacred abode of Sri Ramana Maharshi – taking care of the Old Devotees of Sri Ramana. He did it as his sole sadhana (spiritual practice). In that way, he collected the reminiscences of Sri Maharshi from those Old Devotees – more than 75 of them – which have never before been recorded.

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