

# DIRECT PATH

RAMANA KENDRA  
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August - October 2022

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*"Silence is truth. Silence is bliss. Silence is peace. And  
hence Silence is the Self"*

*Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi*



***62. Om satyaya namah***

One who is all satya, one who embodies Reality.

***63. Om prasantaya namah***

One full of peace serene, the embodiment of stillness.

***64. Om amita vikramaya namah***

Boundless victor, one of immeasurable heroism.





Original ink sketch of Arunachala by Sri Ramana Maharshi from Kunju Swami's notebook

# Direct Path

VOLUME XXIV ISSUE 3

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# Call for Articles

As the journal depends on articles from volunteer writers, we appeal to you to send in articles for our consideration. We wish to keep the range of subjects both wide and diverse covering aspects such as: Bhagavan's life, teachings, and experiences related to the practice of his methods; life, teachings, and experiences related to the practice of methods taught by other spiritual masters; teachings and stories from religions other than Hinduism; interpretations of sacred texts and verses; spiritual travel and insights; poetry; feedback and suggestions.

As a guideline, articles can be short (around 750 words), medium (around 1500 words) or in longer format (around 2300 words). Please send in your contributions through e-mail to [editor.dp@rkdelhi.org](mailto:editor.dp@rkdelhi.org)

We look forward to hearing from you!

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# A Different Dictionary

*Advait Shrivastav*



**O**n 26<sup>th</sup> June 1924 – from about 11:30 p.m. to 02:00 a.m. – three robbers entered Ramanasramam. They broke a window of the hall; beat two beloved dogs; burst crackers to give an impression that they have arms; spewed threats, including that of setting fire to the thatched roof; succeeded in moving out the few entities present in the hall; beat the devotees with sticks as they walked out, striking Bhagavan on his left thigh; broke open the cupboards; stole thin strips of silver, a few mangoes, rice, and six rupees; and returned frustrated on not finding much to rob.

When Ramakrishnaswami saw Bhagavan’s swollen thigh, he sought Bhagavan’s permission to wield an

iron bar in retaliation. Bhagavan immediately uttered the golden words: “We are sadhus. We should not give up our dharma. If you go and strike them, some may die and that will be a matter for which the world will rightly blame not them, but us. They are only misguided men and are blinded by ignorance, but let us note what is right and stick to it. If your teeth suddenly bite your tongue do you knock them out in consequence?”<sup>1</sup> In fact, throughout ashram living, Bhagavan disapproved of any behaviour on the part of inmates that could bring the sacred traditions of sadhus into disrepute.

From time immemorial, humans have had unpleasant encounters with other humans, and harboured deep-

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*1 The Mind of Ramana Maharshi by Arthur Osborne, page 77.*

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rooted thoughts of revenge. This self-destructive emotion has become rampant in modern times. We prime ourselves to take revenge on people whom we feel have harmed us and await every opportunity to wreak revenge, whether in the form of verbal or physical violence. But why are we not desperate to make a response of similar intensity towards persons who have done good to us? We accept all the good done without returning it, but are reluctant to accept the bad, nurturing a burning desire to avenge ourselves with heavy interest.

The very act of being born in a human body is a divine blessing. None can return this favour. If we can never completely reciprocate all the good done to us, why do we trouble ourselves by reciprocating the bad? The Almighty punishes to reform through the law of karma whereas a human punishes to take revenge, even through torture, thereby getting tenaciously caught in endless cycles of misery.

Bhagavan has said:

“Since in all selves one same self lives

Whatever one to “others” does  
Is really done but to oneself.”<sup>2</sup>

In the light of these words, spoken by the wisest of men who lived in recent times, one realizes that in wreaking revenge one would be wreaking revenge only on oneself. How comic would it seem if a man would start abusing, beating or murdering himself for someone else’s misdeed. This is exactly how wreaking revenge would appear.

Revenge is ascribed to anger, which, in our scriptures, has been termed as one of the gateways to hell. We can either be present in heaven or hell, not in both. Similarly, we can either take or not take revenge; we can’t keep choosing between the two, depending on the situation or person. Bhagavan says, “However evil-minded other people may appear to you, it is not proper to hate or despise them.”<sup>3</sup>

Since everything is unreal and illusory, for what exactly should one take revenge? Those robbers may have taken away a few items from Ramanasramam but they couldn’t touch the internal, infinite, and eternal treasure that lay within Bhagavan. Nobody can touch ours too. Striving to discover this treasure is always a better choice than planning and plot-

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2 Verse 808 of *Guru Vachaka Kovai* by Muruganar, translated from Tamil by Prof. K. Swaminathan as *The Garland of Guru’s Sayings*.

3 *Words of Grace, Who Am I?*

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ting revenge.

It is easy to write such philosophical paragraphs but very difficult to follow them with perseverance. All of us frequently get intense thoughts of settling some score or the other, but deep within us we know that doing so is one of the biggest impediments to our spiritual evolution. Nobody can afford to waste the blessing of a human birth by thinking and indulging in violent acts. But, sadly, most of us do!

In 2021, Mirabai Chanu, India's all-time best weightlifter, won a silver

medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. When she returned home, she began searching for those truck drivers who would give her free lifts to the training academy – a distance of over 25 kilometres from her village – when she was an unknown face and couldn't afford the travelling cost. Her search was successful and she invited the drivers to her house, served them food with her own hands, and saw them off with gifts. This, dear readers, is the true definition of revenge! ■

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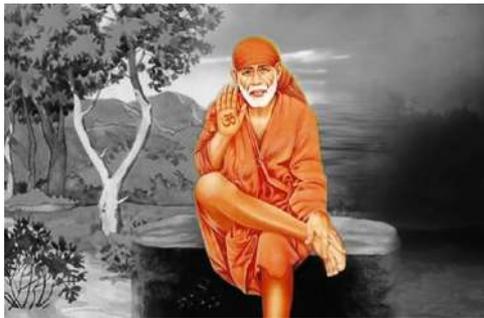
The passing away of Mani Anna ji created a big void in the hearts of devotees. A prayer meeting was held at the Kendra on 20<sup>th</sup> July as a mark of respect. Through the online medium, the Kendra hosted lucid lectures by Michael James, Raghav Kumar ji, Swami Ramana Swaroopananda, and Swami Prakarshananda. The recordings of all these wisdom laden lectures are available at Ramana Kendra, Delhi's YouTube channel. Important events (from Bhagavan's time) falling in the current issue (August - October 2022) are as follows:

- Kunju Swami Day: 7<sup>th</sup> August
- Bhagavan's Advent Day: 1<sup>st</sup> September
- Navaratri Festival commences: 26<sup>th</sup> September
- Saraswati Puja: 4<sup>th</sup> October
- Vijayadasami: 5<sup>th</sup> October
- Viswanatha Swami Day: 22<sup>nd</sup> October
- Deepavali: 24<sup>th</sup> October

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# Shirdi Sai Baba's Recipe: Eligibility to Answer the Query *Who Am I?*

Prof. Vijay Vancheswar



Sages differ in the manner in which they prescribe the route to address the ultimate question that solves the riddle of the very purpose of our mortal existence – understanding our true nature, of who we are – the knowledge of our Self, namely, Brahma jnana.

Shirdi Baba often said, “I give people what they want in the hope that they will want what I want them to want – the knowledge of one’s Self or Brahma jnana.”

Ramana’s prescription to addressing the query of “Who Am I?” was to redirect all questions to the questioner so that the questioner’s nature is understood and realization of the Self dawns. Sri Ramana was also unequivocal in his view that as far

as the body is concerned, it has to necessarily run through all courses of events already set in motion by the force of *Prarabdha* or the storehouse of experiences meant to be undertaken and experienced by the body. However, he emphasized the importance of raising oneself beyond the clutches of one’s whirlpool of causations and effects thrust on one’s mortal frame, by following the path of enquiry or surrendering to the divine will.

The question that arises is: Is this easy? Is this possible for the layman or one who is not yet ripe to disengage fully from the entanglements of the body and its associations through deep rooted *vasanas* or latent tendencies in-built in one’s mental frame?

Indeed, unshackling our deep-

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rooted proclivities and tendencies is not easy. One has to, over a period of time and perhaps lifetimes, progress to a stage where one ripens and becomes eligible to be ready to handle the mahavakya: “*Who Am I?*” Bhagavan reassures us that no effort is wasted and every step we take towards the goal with sincerity will result in gains on the spiritual path. This *pakuva* or ripeness is an evolutionary process and rarely happens in quick time. As mentioned in the Katha Upanishad: The path is ‘as hard as to tread on the edge of a razor’. “*This Atman cannot be attained by the study of the Vedas, or by intelligence, or by much hearing of sacred books. It is attained by him alone whom It chooses. To such a one Atman reveals Its own form.*” (Katha Upanishad, Ch.II-23) Arduous as the above appears, Shirdi Baba reassures and encourages us to develop two important qualities – *shraddha* (faith) and *saburi* (patience). Interestingly there is the story of a rich gentleman who approached Sai Baba and entreated him to give him ‘Brahma jnana’. In reply the sage of Shirdi clarified that this was not something that is transacted as a give-away to one who wants it superficially. The important need is to become eligible to absorb the truth. The eligibility to address and get the answer to the

ultimate question as to “*Who Am I?*” comes as a result of developing ten important qualities which enables one to qualify to seek Brahman. The ten qualifying pre-requisites as mentioned by Shirdi Baba are:

1] **Mumuksha** or intense desire to get free: This demands an earnest and intense desire to seek the source of one’s existence, jettisoning beyond the clutches, temptations and allurements that entrap our worldly existence.

2] **Virakti** or a feeling of disgust with the things of this world and the next. Unless one is absolutely disengaged and disinterested with the things, emoluments and honours, which one’s actions would bring in this world and the next, he or she has no right or eligibility to be in the spiritual realm seeking the highest quest – the state of I Am or being one with the Self.

3] **Antarmukhata** (introversion): The power of *maya* generates a very powerful force within us which compels us to look and seek outwards. The ability to look within is a very important pre-requisite for an individual who wants to understand the nature of his or her Self. Unless there is an unwavering adherence to introversion, our mind will trap us into the compelling and enticing allurements of the

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phenomenal world.

4] **Catharsis** from (purging of) sins: Unless one has turned away from wickedness and stopped being a victim of the senses or *indriyas*, there is no way that the theoretical knowledge that one possesses of the Self translates into lived reality that transforms the individual.

5] **Right conduct**: Unless one leads a life of truth, penance and insight, free from the clutches of lust, the chances of realizing the Self are remote.

6] Preferring *shreyas* (the good) to *preyas* (the pleasant): There are two sorts of things viz., the good and the pleasant; the former deals with spiritual affairs and is lasting; the latter is short-lived and deals with mundane matters, but extremely enticing. One who has the ripeness or *pukava* vis-a-vis the spiritual process and journey opts for the arduous but lasting gains that *shreyas* provides. The majority of people fall victim to *preyas*; in turn enhancing the elements of greed and attachment concomitant with matters and events that govern the pleasant. Consequently, the search for the Self alludes the seekers of *preyas*.

7] **Management** of the mind and the senses: Extreme vigilance and attentiveness to how one reacts to any situation, event or activity becomes

paramount here. The body is the chariot and the Self the master; intellect is the charioteer and the mind the reins; the senses are the horses and sense-objects their paths. One who has no understanding and whose mind is unrestrained, loses mastery over one's senses akin to the vicious horses of a charioteer. The individual loses track of the destination (realization of the Self). He or she then gets drawn into the multiple cycles of births and deaths of phenomenal existence. The wise ones are those whose minds are restrained with their senses in control. Like able charioteers steering the horse sensibly, they progress on the path of spiritual development; ultimately realizing their Self and freeing themselves from the clutches of the ego – the body and its cycle of births and rebirths.

8] **Purification** of the mind: Unless one discharges satisfactorily and disinterestedly the duties of one's station in life, the mind will not be purified and capable of realizing the Self. Because, only in the purified mind do *viveka* (discrimination between the unreal and the real), and *vairagya* (non-attachment to the unreal) function, leading to self-realization. Unless egoism (sense of personal volition or doership) is dropped completely, avarice got rid of, and the mind made

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desire-less (pure); self-realization is not possible. Rather it remains more a mental and theoretical pursuit rather than a lived truth. The idea that ‘I am the body’ is a great delusion, and attachment to this idea is the cause of bondage (the principal idea taught by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi). Thus, one has to have the ability and courage of conviction (sufficiently ripe) to be able to cast off this delusion completely.

9] The necessity of a **guru**: The knowledge of the Self is so subtle and mystic, that no one could hope to attain it (except in the rarest of rare cases, as in the case of Bhagavan Ramana – where he mentioned all the preparatory work had already been done in previous mortal experiences). So, the help of a guide, who has accomplished the purpose of life – realization of the Self, is absolutely necessary. According to Shirdi Baba (and also Sri Ramana), what others cannot give with great labour and pains, can be easily gained with the help of a teacher or guru. This of course presupposes the eligibility or meeting of the qualifying criteria of the seeker (as innately deciphered by the master or guru). The guru has walked on the path and can easily take the disciple, step by step, on the ladder of spiritual progress.

10] The last and perhaps the most important requisite, says Shirdi Baba is The Lord’s **Grace**: Nothing happens except by the grace and will of the divine. This can overturn the cycle of entanglements or reduce its intensity and more importantly grant the strength, temperament and guidance to persist in pursuing the path of spiritual progress culminating in dissolution of ego and the realization of the Self. Sri Ramana has recounted the lives of many realised masters as captured in the spiritual texts such as the *Periapuranas*, where the mystical hand of the divine guided the seekers and helped them traverse life’s myriad challenges and adversities to reinforce this aspect. The Lord provides the sincere aspirant with the requisite *viveka* and *vairagya*; enabling the crossing of the ocean of mundane existence with its snarling fangs of entrapments.

In conclusion, Shirdi Baba mentions to the gentleman who sought Brahma jnana, “Unless you completely get rid of your avarice and greed, you will not get the real Brahma. How can one, whose mind is engrossed in wealth, progeny and prosperity, expect to know Brahma, without removing all attachments? The illusion of attachment or the love for money is a deep whirlpool of pain full of crocodiles in the form of conceit and jealousy.

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Only one who is desire-less can cross this whirlpool. Greed and Brahma are as poles asunder, they are eternally opposed to each other. Where there is greed, there is no room for thought or meditation of Brahma. Then how can a greedy person get dispassion and salvation? For a greedy individual there is no peace, neither contentment nor certainty (steadfastness). If there is a little trace of greed in mind, all the sadhanas (spiritual endeavours) are of no avail. Even the knowledge of a well-read person, who is not free from the desire of the fruit or reward of his actions, and who has no dissolution of it, is useless and cannot realize his true nature. The teachings of a Guru are no use to one who is full of egoism and is perpetually engaged in sense-objects. Purification of the mind is very necessary; without it, all spiritual endeavours mean nothing but useless show and pomp. *It is, therefore, better for one to take only what he can digest and assimilate.* My treasury is full, and I can give anyone what he wants. But I have to see whether the person is qualified to receive what I give. If you listen to me carefully, you will be certainly benefitted. Sitting in this masjid, I never speak any untruth.”

So, the question is: How do we sincerely rate ourselves and what is it that we need to do to progress on the

spiritual journey?

If, for instance, we advocate the path of Ramana’s Self Enquiry (Who Am I?) it is important to self-assess our fitness and areas of improvement. Sri Ramana has mentioned that the path of self-enquiry demands a ripeness from the seeker. This would mean beyond everything, dissolution of a substantial part of one’s sense of volition or egoism. In turn this leads to strengthening of the ability to surrender to the will of the supreme. Either way the Ramana path advocates enquiry or surrender (path of jnana or bhakti) as suits the temperament of a person. If on an honest assessment of one’s ability or *pakuva* or ripeness, one understands that some preparatory work is required, it is best, as Shirdi Baba advises, to chew as much as one is able to assimilate; meaning engage in selfless service, diligent recitation of prayers and observing certain code of conduct, that are conducive to the spiritual quest – exercises that prepare one to graduate to the higher stage of enquiry. Logically this makes sense as it prepares one by stages to improve one’s spiritual score card, much as a student pursues a course of study (akin to the basic spiritual foundation being laid), then specialises in an area that interests him [activities that help lessen one’s sense of egoism such as

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selfless service, prayers and meditation (without the sense of pride and ownership), vigilant and sincere reading and reflection of spiritual texts, etc.].

Finally, how does one evaluate oneself? For instance, on each of the ten guidelines mentioned above an honest assessment can be made as to where one stands (indicative only): below average (say less than 50%), average (50-55%), above average (55-65%), good (65-75%) and excellent (75-90%).

One needs to be honest when gauging oneself, so that the right perception leads to better awareness and guides one towards the right action for spiritual development.

Interestingly, how does one gauge where one stands in terms of Grace of the Divine? The positive enablers here are as Sri Ramana says: our yearning

and interest for the spiritual path is a great sign of the Lord's grace – how many have this innate yearning? To possess this is a sure sign of the Lord's grace. Yet again the many blessings we have in life indicate the grace of the Divine. These include a secure family, good spouse and children, good health and well-being, to name some.

Suffice to say one should adhere to the simple dictum given by the Masters – Sri Ramana: 'Patience, more patience, and more of it' and Shirdi Baba: *Shraddha* (faith) and *saburi* (patience). As Bhagavan Ramana says, "All will come well in the end". Om Tat Sat (Bhagavat Gita, v.17.23); the eternal sound pranava representing the unmanifest and absolute reality. ■

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#### Talk 45

A visitor asked: The path of realisation is difficult. Worldly matters are easy of understanding, whereas this is not.

*M.:* Yes. The mind always seeks external knowledge, leaving aside its own inner knowledge.

*D.:* A stay of one day with Sri Bhagavan is good; a stay of two days is better; of three days, more so, and so on. If it is a continuous stay here, how shall we get on with our mundane work?

*M.:* Stay here or elsewhere must be understood to be the same and to have the same effect.

# The Heart Cave

Neera Kashyap

There is a cave in the heart,  
a cave where we rest.

It is not easy to reach for we don't search for it.

When storms breach their embankments and  
our walls crash, we search in the chaos of overarching waves.

We may see it in the stormy blur and stop.  
Or are stopped in a sort of sleeping awareness  
where for a split second or for endless time  
there are no waves, no walls, no turbulence.

No thoughts.

Just a cave with a point of light.

Just a cave with a point of light.

A pinpoint that grabs our all in this cave of rest.

It disappears...

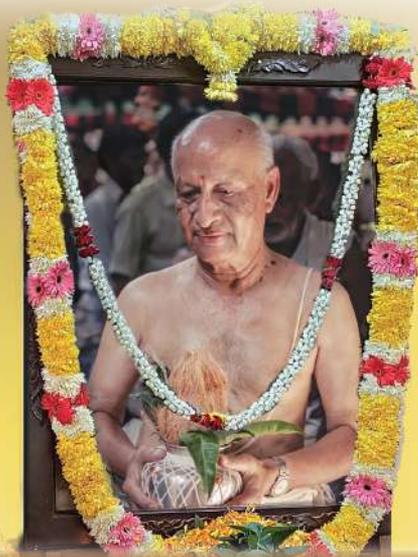
and we search for it again and again  
through prayer, chants, meditation, practices for silence  
that render thought irrelevant.

It's like holding onto a slippery buoy mid-storm.

There seems no other way.

For the pinpoint of rest will come when it will,  
bidden or unbidden.

For its promise is not a mere pinpoint  
but an effulgence of light and rest.



## Sri V. Subramanian

08 Feb 1939 – 19 Jul 2022

Sri V. Subramanian, Bhagavan's grand nephew, also known as Mani Anna to Sri Bhagavan's devotees, merged at the feet of his Master on July 19th.

His selfless contribution and meticulous attention to each aspect of Sri Ramanasramam, as well as to the developmental needs of the Ramana Kendras and establishments within and outside the country, will be vividly remembered. He was Bhagavan's true torch bearer, giving selfless service with humility, surrender and devotion.

As a champion of the teachings, he continues to be an inspiration for the next generation of Ramana devotees. His physical presence amongst us will be deeply missed.

We, at Ramana Kendra Delhi, will cherish the care and support that he always provided, be it in the administration of the Kendra, the resolution of issues requiring coordination with Sri Ramanasramam, or the logistical advice in respect of devotees visiting the ashram from Delhi.

Namo Ramana.

PHOTO MONTAGE CREATED USING PHOTO BY DEV.GOGOI

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# Tracing Bhagavan's Upward-Leading Path: Part II

*Michael Highburger*



In the first segment, we made preparations for the climb. We explored the meaning of the mountain path and considered what taking it would entail.

As we take our first steps, we find ourselves unavoidably bringing some of our worldly habits with us. Though we may hope to shed them little by little, we know that if we fail to do so, our trajectory up the mountain could turn horizontal and instead of climbing upward toward the summit, we will merely amble about on the hillside.

We come to see that the cause for such meandering is not accidental but is born of the fear of heights, the fear of transition and the fear of giving up what must be given up.

We may discover that we are taking non-essential steps. Reading the lives

of saints and other sacred literature, for example, or studying and reflecting on the teaching, are useful only insofar as they inspire us to take our own steps. We want to avoid becoming armchair hill climbers who only observe others venturing up the hill but do not do so themselves, like the accountant who in tallying his wealthy employer's formidable assets, proudly imagines them as his own.

If we find ourselves living in storyland, inhabiting a virtual reality of thought, and casting ourselves as characters in the story, we fail to appreciate that what we truly are is beyond name and form, beyond story and narration, beyond images and themes. When we find ourselves becoming mere spectators of the journey, we will have fallen victim to

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a trick of the ego. The ego wants to avoid its own destruction, and thus it attempts to forestall a genuine ascent, coaxing us into by-ways that resemble the mountain path. It clings to the status quo because spiritual growth is threatening. As true spiritual growth is irreversible, it ensures that we will never be able to return to the same deluded ways of thinking and living. The deluded mind, however, is unable to envision a time when it would not want the option of returning to its former delusions.

It's not a question of whether we fear the path of enquiry, it is almost guaranteed that we do. We sense that once we see through our illusions, our life in its present form will be forever altered. Mustering courage for the path begins with baby steps but in time, we come to see enquiry as non-threatening and the upward-leading path as the means for complete healing.

But suppose, however, that we discover we have lost long years on a vicarious armchair ascent and instead of climbing the mountain we have been tracing a make-believe trajectory? Here, we might be tempted to condemn ourselves. But this will not help us as it is just another trick of the ego. Ego knows that if we condemn ourselves for being poor seekers,

real progress can be forestalled. Yet, if we see self-condemnation as a narcissistic impulse, we can avoid this trap and even avoid condemning the condemner. We take distance from the ego by neither denying mistaken steps nor censuring them. We simply identify mistaken steps, make the needed adjustments, and carry on our way.

### **Fear of the Mind**

When we identify fear at work within us, we do not condemn ourselves for being fearful. The Greek word for 'fear', *phóbos*, means to 'run away from' and gives us a clue about the nature of fear. Fear is in the mind.

Bhagavan urged us to face our fear because the demon we run away from grows larger and more daunting by our running away from it. On the other hand, the demon we face squarely diminishes in stature on the spot. If we resist enquiry and climbing the upward-leading path it may be because we fear what it will reveal about us.

The Scottish psychologist R. D. Laing spoke of three universal fears: the fear of death, the fear of other people, and the fear of our own mind.

But why should we fear our own mind?

Among other things, the mind

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can show us the transient nature of things. The so-called ego is there to insulate us from the hardship of this fact, namely, of having to be cognizant of the passing nature of things. The only true safety is Reality and yet, Reality is poignant. We really don't want it because seeing it clearly through enquiry is disconcerting. When Bhagavan speaks of Self-realisation, we hope that he is referring to realisation of the personality, thus allowing us to retain it. The upward-leading path, however, leads us to see that all we cling to is inexorably taken from us in the course of time, including the personality.

As for whether to risk the climb, Søren Kierkegaard poignantly frames our dilemma:

*To dare is to lose one's footing for a moment; not to dare is to lose one's whole life.*

### **Conditioned Responses**

Fear has diverse origins. Its ability to appear out of nowhere can catch us off-guard. Studies of fear in animals have a lot to reveal about its roots. For example, it has been shown that predispositions to fear can be inherited. In one study, mice were

conditioned to fear a strong scent (acetophenone) by accompanying it with an electric shock. The offspring for two generations exhibited innate fears of the scent without ever having received an electric shock.

Similarly, cows enclosed in electric fences would not go near fences. Later, after placing them in conventional enclosures, they would still not go near fences nor would two generations of their offspring even though the latter had never experienced an electric fence.<sup>4</sup>

Why this is important for the climber is that uncomfortable feeling states that arise in enquiry may be born of epigenetic inheritance from our parents and grandparents<sup>5</sup>. They can also be born of early life trauma or of samskaras from previous births. In short, negative mental states are often related to some unhealed experience.

The data would suggest that we carry epigenetically the residue of our parents' and grandparents' traumas without conscious awareness of them. If trauma can be transmitted epigenetically, then its effects could be passed on to offspring without direct knowledge of it.

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<sup>4</sup> Closer to home regarding epigenetic inheritance are the Ashram monkeys' response to Bhagavan's tiger skin and head when they were laid out for airing. Though never having seen a tiger before, the monkeys perceived grave danger and reacted with great fear.

<sup>5</sup> Defined as changes in a chromosome without alterations to the DNA sequence; thought to be more pronounced in male offspring.

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Unconscious memories of traumatic events from early life are likewise important. As an example, consider the following report from someone sitting in silence before Bhagavan's sofa in the Old Hall. When another devotee entered the hall wearing a strong scent of rose oil and took a seat, the meditator noticed a tightening in the belly and wondered why it should appear so suddenly. Next came a strong feeling of sadness followed by an image from childhood: the day of his mother's funeral when hundreds of fresh roses surrounded her mortal remains. The connection became clear. The sadness in the hall and the mental state at the time of the funeral forty years earlier were linked by the trigger of the rose scent and an early life samskara caused by the untimely death of his mother. The grief from that event had evidently never been fully resolved – perhaps owing to youth – and needed to be experienced more fully. Enquiry into the one who felt sad in the hall that day roused the fortitude to sit with the scent of rose oil and the grief it elicited, thereby helping mend a hidden samskara.

### **Unearthing Samskaric Stratification**

Enquiry is thus a means for accessing orphaned material of the heart – karmic imprinting, vasanas,

samskaras, and any psychological disposition passed down through the generations or from past births. The path of enquiry helps us decipher the enigma of layered samskaras. Encoded within each layer is the secret to its healing. The cause of each layer is discovered in the next layer further down. Once the root layer of a given cluster of samskaras is uncovered and enquiry is brought to bear on it, no further work is needed there. Here we discover the potential of enquiry to wear away the egoic nexus, which is only a clustering of samskaric aggregations. If we mistake the ego for the Self, it is because the light of the Self illumines these samskaric clusters. We rightly identify the light as coming from the Self but mistakenly take the aggregations themselves as the Self, calling them 'I'. By enquiring into each set of layered samskaras one at a time, and ultimately dissolving them, we begin to disabuse ourselves of this notion.

Healing a single stratified cluster of woundedness gives impetus for attending deeper, knottier aggregations. What had once seemed opaque and impenetrable turns out to be layers that can be uncovered in a simple excavation through enquiry. Here, enquiry's reach is vast and can be described as *illuminating*

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*the inner landscape.* For example, the granddaughter of a woman who had been abused in childhood may uncover her grandmother's trauma internally through enquiry without knowing what it is, only experiencing a pain whose origins and causes are unknown. This would apply most obviously in cases where the original trauma had never been part of the overt family history. The focus here would not necessarily be to seek the historical facts in the family ancestry, but simply to acknowledge these raw psychic residues and give them the caring attention needed for their healing.

The urgency for this work begins with the premise that the distorting power of samskaric accumulation grows through neglect. Willfully distancing ourselves from these hidden clusters drives them further into the unconscious, enhancing their harmfulness. What makes life

unbearable is being split off from deep inner wounds, denying and disowning the most sensitive parts within the heart, rather than holding them in compassion, registering the distress they elicit, and bringing about their resolution.

When we embrace the path of enquiry, we cross the threshold from the conscious mind to the lesser-known parts of consciousness to plumb the depths of the heart where grace greets us at the place of our vulnerability. Rather than being overwhelmed by such encounters, we are rewarded with relief, renewal, and courage for the next step. Our willingness to work with whatever the path leads us to helps us to overcome its obstacles and thus, the rallying cry for one on the upward-leading path is simply this: *what's IN the way, IS the way.*<sup>6</sup>

### **Clinging to the Notion of a Separate Self**

The sense realm perpetuates the illusion of an eternal separate self. For the brash senses, the subtlety, stillness, and silence of the Self is not sufficiently salient. The sense realm demands something tangible and stimulating. It clings to memories, imaginings of ideal future conditions,



<sup>6</sup> Mary O' Malley. See also *Talks* §107 where Bhagavan said, 'Suffering is the way for Realisation of God', to which the questioner replied, 'But should He not ordain it differently?' Bhagavan only added, 'It is the way.'

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stories of the me, and any narrative about somebody who will continue through time. Instead of accepting the passing nature of things, we look for something lasting, while all along it is right under our noses. Our membership in the totality of the universe which includes the inanimate earth and vast empty space is not separate from us and yet, the 'me' fears dissolving into it just as the Upanishadic *drop in the ocean* fears merging into the ocean. But what is this merging? It is just recognizing the illusion of separateness and nothing more, after all, the drop is nothing other than the ocean.

We inquire into thought as a refuge and look for what is underneath compulsive thinking. We see that it seeks to divert our attention from any unpleasant sensation. In short, compulsive thinking is our avenue of escape from discomfort and suffering. However, it is fool's gold because not only does it not help us escape suffering but in fact, perpetuates it, and is even the very source of our suffering. Why should we cling to it? Because it gives us the illusion of control. The Self that Bhagavan speaks of is something altogether different. The Self is empty of every compulsion to think or, for that matter, to want anything at all.

To be sure, indulging obsessive thought gives temporary relief, but enquiry into the source of thought brings understanding and exposes the illusion of thought as a refuge. The English words 'idea' and 'idol' both have their etymology in the Greek *eidolon*, which means 'form' or 'that which is seen'. Forms in the mind are mere representations and thus can never serve as lasting refuges. But rather than trying to kill thought, we step back and see thought as thought. We see how we have invested in it to give us momentary satisfaction. When we get below thought, even for a few moments, we see the potency of enquiry and its capacity to free us from delusion. This experience may inspire further efforts and our infatuation with thought begins to diminish.

We enquire into the one who thinks, speaks, and acts. But more than that, we enquire into the hidden motivations undergirding what we think, say, and do. This requires courage because it soon becomes evident that many, if not most, of our motivations are egoic at root. Seeing this fact helps us clarify the upward ascent and become more modest in our assessment of where we are on the mountain.

Samsara tricks us over and again and we want to be careful about resting in our discoveries. When clung to,

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what had formerly been dynamic, liberating insights become fossilized. The poetic expression *gilding the lily* refers to adding unnecessarily to what is already excellent. In the attempt to clutch and retain our insights, we unwittingly maim what is beautiful in them. If we make a home out of them, they become like any other worldly possession and their spiritual benefit is lost to us.

The meditation tradition offers the image of the warrior who goes into battle with a sharp sword. During combat, the sword is gradually blunted, but the keen-edged sword of enquiry which cuts away the illusions of sense experience grows ever sharper with use. The dynamic path that leads us out from samsara to true happiness is cut with this blade of investigation.

If courage is the price life exacts for granting peace<sup>7</sup>, we courageously set out on the path, sword in hand. This is courage born not of any exaggerated sense of self but of the assurances Bhagavan gave us that there are no *ajnanis* and that each of us already contains the fullness we seek. The original endowment is ever unsullied. We need only wipe away the impurities that obscure it to become at

last what we already are.

### **The Path That Knows the Way**

If Arunachala is the embodiment of wisdom, the path up the mountain knows the way. It does not always lead us with clear indications and may at times disappear from view. Each time we go astray, we recall the encouragement offered by our predecessors: *to come to the knowledge you have not, you must go by a way you know not.*<sup>8</sup>

We are guaranteed to lose our way, even stumble and fall. When we find ourselves lost, panic may set in. And when we struggle to find our way back, every hope that we have found the path once again may turn out to be in vain. As we stop in the middle of a dark wood, we fear ever coming upon it again. As dawn breaks, we take stock of our surroundings. The lizard on a nearby rock in the morning sun appears to know where he is, seems to trust that every rock is his home and that wherever he is at any given moment is where he belongs.<sup>9</sup> Not knowing what else to do, we follow his lead and discover that we too are where we belong. We recognize that the piece of ground where we stand is the altar of God. We begin to see

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7 Amelia Earhart.

8 *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, John of the Cross.

9 Drawing on a theme from David Wagoner's poem, 'Lost'.

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that the path was never meant to lead us from *here to there*, as we had supposed, but to lead us from *there to here*<sup>10</sup>, i.e., from a place outside of ourself – from a cherished self-image or the projection of an imagined destination – to embrace that which is within us as our deepest nature. In Bhagavan’s words: ‘The pure bright world of God is not a place to go to. It is in your Heart.’<sup>11</sup>

The acclaimed Swedish poet, Lars Gustafsson described the path in simple language:

*You walk eastwards, the compass persistently shows east, the path faithfully follows the compass, like a straight line, everything is in order, then the path swings northwards. In the north lies nothing. What does the path want now? Soon you come to a huge bog, and the path knew that. It leads [you] around with the assurance of one who has been this way before. It knows where the bog lies, it knows where the rock face gets far too steep, it knows what happens when it goes north instead of south of the [cleft]. It has done all of this so many times.*<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

Enquiry amounts to more than just asking questions. It is the therapeutic deployment of attention and serves as the key to our alignment with Bhagavan.

It has been said that God gave us mouths that close and ears that don’t. We enquire with the ear of the heart, with a listening, searching heart.

In the age of precious little time, there’s value in just learning to sit in silence and hear the sounds of the world, or as one poet calls it, *the sweet sad music of humanity*<sup>13</sup>. Being present to the sounds of passing cars, singing birds, or one’s own breath helps train the restraint needed for true growth, not a growth that comes from knowing the answers but the growth that comes from living the questions.<sup>14</sup>

If the art of climbing is learning to balance the terror of being born with the wonder of becoming human,<sup>15</sup> enquiry gets us in touch with hidden psychic wounds and allows us to heal them. Now less burdened by orphaned samskaras, we become

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<sup>10</sup> A familiar saying.

<sup>11</sup> *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, §194

<sup>12</sup> ‘Ballad on the Paths in Västmanland’, *Lars Gustafsson: Selected Poems*.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Lamb.

<sup>14</sup> Paraphrasing Rilke.

<sup>15</sup> Paraphrasing Carlos Castaneda.

<sup>16</sup> *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*, v. 1.

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more resilient, better able to adjust to adverse conditions, and find we have within us the reserves to be available to a world in need.

As our hearts grow day by day, we find ourselves higher up the mountain. Before us, we glimpse broad vistas; behind us, a world that no longer appears real. When we look up ahead, the path that had begun in laments and cries now begins to hold promise, and

Bhagavan's words resonate all the more, *O Arunachala, Be Thou the Sun for my heart-lotus to bloom*'.<sup>16</sup> At last, we find ourselves better able to trace Bhagavan's footprints, step by step, on this gentle upward slope that leads us further and further on.■

*(series concluded)*

*[e-mail: mhighburger@gmail.com]*

#### **Talk 44**

Mr. Ekanath Rao, an Engineer, asked Sri Bhagavan if solitude is necessary for vichara.

M.: There is solitude everywhere. The individual is solitary always. His business is to find it out within, and not seek it without.

D.: The work-a-day world is distracting.

M.: Do not allow yourself to be distracted. Enquire for whom there is distraction. It will not afflict you after a little practice.

D.: Even the attempt is impossible.

M.: Make it and it will be found not so difficult.

D.: But the answer does not come for the search inward.

M.: The enquirer is the answer and no other answer can come. What comes afresh cannot be true. What always is, is true.

# The Grace of Silence

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Rupa Anand

The world and its rhetoric  
tire me with their noise.  
Into still waters of solitude  
I jump to maintain equipoise.

Waves of chatter, flatter,  
clamour, and din  
arise and subside in the  
seas within.

Patiently I wait  
anchored inside,  
for the cacophony to ease  
and the symphony preside.

Silence is but the  
substratum of sound.  
As the latter recedes  
you hear the background.

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### Talk 23

Mr. Evans-Wentz continued another day: “May one have more than one spiritual master?”

M.: Who is a Master? He is the Self after all. According to the stages of the development of the mind the Self manifests as the Master externally. The famous ancient saint Avadhuta said that he had more than 24 Masters. The Master is one from whom one learns anything. The Guru may be sometimes inanimate also, as in the case of Avadhuta. God, Guru and the Self are identical.

A spiritual-minded man thinks that God is all-pervading and takes God for his Guru. Later, God brings him in contact with a personal Guru and the man recognises him as all in all. Lastly the same man is made by the grace of the Master to feel that his Self is the Reality and nothing else. Thus he finds that the Self is the Master.

D.: Does Sri Bhagavan initiate his disciples?

Maharshi kept silent.

Thereafter one of the devotees took it upon himself to answer, saying, “Maharshi does not see anyone as outside his Self. So there are no disciples for him. His Grace is all-pervading and He communicates his Grace to any deserving individual in silence.”

D.: How does book-lore help in Self-Realisation?

A.: Only so far as to make one spiritually-minded.

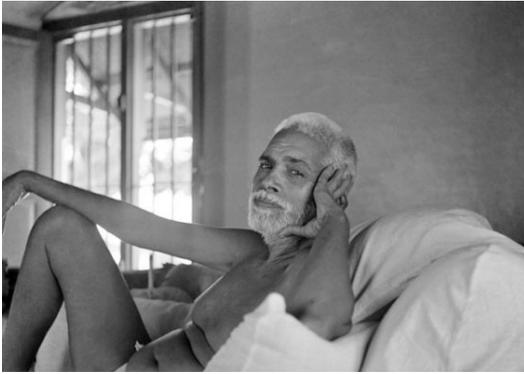
D.: How far does intellect help?

A.: Only so far as to make one sink the intellect in the ego, and the ego in the Self.

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# Sound and Silence

Bharati Mirchandani



Sri Ramana often said silence was the best communication. But we cannot hear silence. Or can we? We can certainly hear noise. I remember being called, rather loudly, by a lady in her 40s, possibly American, having enormous rolls of pink skin barely concealed by layers of white muslin in clothes apparently specially created for the humid heat of Tiruvannamalai. She had arrived at Sri Ramanasramam the previous evening and called me as I crossed the ‘Monkey Garden’ on my way to breakfast. ‘For a saint of silence,’ she exclaimed, ‘he surely has a noisy ashram!’

Those days, a tea stall outside played Tamil pop music full blast each day from 5 am to 8 pm. Added to that, a funeral procession for an elderly person was then paused by the water tank

for celebratory rituals accompanied by jubilant drumbeats, trumpets and chants; sounds of crows being called to bless the food offerings, and lots of people calling each other as though they were yelling across rice fields.

During Sri Bhagavan’s time the highway could not have cut across the ashram, with buses and trucks roaring as they changed gears, interspersed with screeching of brakes and eardrum-piercing pressure horns, use of which was supposedly banned.

The previous night hundreds of goats had been brought to the road outside the gate to be loaded onto tempos *en route* to the slaughterhouse. The frightened goats bleated and pleaded but none was there to assuage their grief.

The variety of sounds that the sky

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around Sri Ramanasramam has to absorb is huge. I realised then that this cacophony actually had worked for me like a dense covering, like a metal armour that protects whatever lies within. How could I explain this to the indignant lady who was apparently expecting sympathy and solace?

She repacked her bags and returned to whichever quiet retreat she had spent 2 months at before bringing her imaginations of silence to the place of the silent saint she had heard so much about.

Most people who visit Sri Ramanasramam have no problem hearing the deep spiritual silence of the place. At first there is shock, surprise, bewilderment, because society doesn't prepare us to hear silence. So, when silence thunders soundlessly within, it confuses the brain. If one is lucky the brain just ignores its need to analyse and explain everything, and one

begins to bask in the joy of silence.

Physics teaches us that sound is vibration that moves in waves through a medium such as air, water or metal. We hear sound only when the external organ of hearing, the ear, receives signals and transmits them to the brain. The brain interprets these and only then we hear the sounds. The ear can perceive sounds only within the frequency range of about 20Hz to 20kHz. Frequencies lower than 20Hz are called infrasound and higher than 20kHz are called ultrasound. Although our ears cannot hear these, we have instruments to measure them. Animals and insects hear frequency ranges different from ours. Our ears hear only a small section of the vibrations that surround us.

But we all have experienced another kind of hearing. One that involves the mind, but bypasses the ears. That is the calm mind. When I had just learnt to drive a car I went often with my mother and her friends to the Sri Sharada Math in Delhi to hear Pravrajika Vivekaprana speak. One day she called me after her class and asked me why I attended so regularly. We had never spoken directly to each other before. I told her that whenever any spiritual doubt bothered me, I came intending to ask during the Q&A session, but invariably during her talk,



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not only would she clear my doubts, but used the exact words of my question to begin her answer! She said that because my question was clear in my mind, her calm mind automatically picked it up and she answered the question without really knowing who it was coming from. She sensed the thought floating in the room.

I met others too who could respond to my thoughts without my having spoken, and not just about spiritual matters, but totally mundane things like ‘I need to use the loo now!’ The more peaceful the mind is, the more sensitive it becomes. The inner sense organs work perhaps more efficiently than the outer ones. There was an episode of *Kaun Banega Crorepati* where a blindfolded girl read a book by smelling it. This episode has been deleted due to complaints by rationalists, but I do know of someone who, inspired by having seen the broadcast, is now working with visually handicapped persons, training them to concentrate and ‘read’ using fingers and nose. If this training leads to meditation and spiritual awakening, some good will have come out of it, but my fear is that many will just end

up feeling even more frustrated and handicapped.

Meditation for the sake of developing siddhis is fraught with danger. Ramana Maharshi never displayed his siddhis, nor approved of any who bragged about their own prowess. If anything, he gently highlighted the futility of those powers. ‘Although the powers appear to be wonderful to those who do not possess them, yet they are only transient, it is useless to aspire for that which is transient.’<sup>17</sup>

Sri Ramana emphasised that the ultimate goal was the only one worth focussing on: To know the Self. ‘The Self is that where there is absolutely no “I-thought”. That is called Silence.’<sup>18</sup> ‘Lectures may entertain individuals for hours without improving them. Silence, on the other hand, is permanent and benefits the whole of humanity. Silence is unceasing eloquence... it is the best language.’<sup>19</sup>

‘Sri Bhagavan observed: Dakshinamurti observed silence when the disciples approached Him. That is the highest form of initiation.’<sup>20</sup>

The dictionary describes silence as the absence of sound. This has a

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17 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi #616

18 *Who Am I?* ed 2001 p12

19 *Maharshi's Gospel*, ed 2002, p10

20 Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi # 519

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parallel in the description of deep sleep as bliss. This bliss is merely the temporary absence of dreams. True bliss is the complete annihilation of the power of thinking and dreaming to cloud the clarity of the Self. The spiritual meaning of silence is better represented by the word ‘stillness.’ This stillness is dynamic, although the ignorant would consider it inertia or laziness. Often Sri Ramana reiterated that one could benefit the world the most by realizing the inner silence, which is peace, and the Self.

The Mandukya Upanishad describes four states for the individual. Jagrat, svapna, sushupti, and turiya. Turiya is unlimited by time and space and to my understanding, is another word for Ramana’s silence; that from which the other 3 states emerge and into which they again withdraw. The state that is the support of the other three states, but remains ever untouched by them. The Upanishad links these 4 states to A-U-M and turiya is silence free from any trace of vibration of any frequency whatsoever. However, when I checked to see if Sri Ramana had ever said so himself, I discovered that he further divided turiya into two states: turiya

and turiyatita.<sup>21</sup>

Sri Ramana describes the A sound as dominated by the satva guna in the waking (taijasa) state, U by raja guna in the conceptualizing/dreaming (svapna) state, and sushupti as avidya dominated by tamas in deep sleep, denoted by the M sound. These three states are limited by time and space and are therefore unreal.

‘If in the jagrat state the heart is not relinquished, the mental activities are stilled and Brahman alone is contemplated, the state is called turiya. Again when the individual being merges in the supreme it is called turiyatita... man has all three states; but the clear-sighted yogi abides only in turiya, and the highest yogi remains in turiyatita alone...’<sup>22</sup>

All experiences, all three states that we experience, have their basis in the reality which sustains them, and into which they merge. This reality is turiya and, when permanent, turiyatita, and is without vibration, beyond description, speech or thought. Silence. Silence within which all exists. Silence which is not an absence of sound, but that which contains the potential of all.

Dear Ramana, my intellect notices

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21 Ibid # 617

22 Ibid

23 Sri Ramanasramam publication, 2004, Foreword by Vimala Thakar

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that your interpretation of the Upanishadic explanation of the symbolism of AUM is different from other translations and explanations. I realise that my readings are coloured by my limitations, while yours are bathed in direct experience. Forgive me for any misunderstandings that I may have expressed. I have relied mainly on direct quotes from texts and translations that were published with your supervision and approval.

Dear Reader, as a friend and co-traveller on the direct path to under-

standing the self, I have shared with you my explorations of silence in the light of Sri Ramana's teachings. In conclusion, I quote from the foreword of the book, *Heart is Thy Name, Oh Lord*<sup>23</sup>: 'Sri Ramana Maharshi had immersed himself in the ocean of living emptiness, which is called Silence. He grew into a demonstration of Formlessness clothed in physical form.'

May we learn from his example of lived Silence, may our petty egos be erased, and may we live the truth. ■

[e-mail:manavi2work@gmail.com]

### Talk 37

"What is Karma?" asked someone.

M.: That which has already begun to bear fruit is classified as *prarabdha* Karma (past action). That which is in store and will later bear fruit is classified as *sanchita* Karma (accumulated action). This is multifarious like the grain obtained by villagers as barter for cress (greens). Such bartered grain consists of rice, ragi, barley, etc., some floating on, others sinking in water. Some of it may be good, bad or indifferent. When the most potent of the multifarious accumulated karma begins to bear fruit in the next birth it is called the *prarabdha* of that birth.

### Talk 38

"When one of the present attendants came the first time to Bhagavan, he asked: "What is the way for liberation?" Maharshi replied: "The way already taken leads to liberation."

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# The Journey from Here to Here

*Gabriele Sames*



**B**orn and raised in Germany, and holding Australian nationality, I have pursued my spiritual life in India on and off since the mid-1970s. In 2002, I came to the Holy Feet of Arunachala Ramana for the first time, and, feeling a strong resonance, Bhagavan and Sri Ramanasramam have since become the focus of my sadhana.

In mid-February 2020, I returned to Perth to renew my Indian visa, planning to be there for no more than two months. Before I knew it, however, Covid happened, the borders were closed, and, with Australia having some of the toughest restrictions in the world, I was prevented from leaving for another two years.

Having been a devotee of Sri Bhagavan Ramana for twenty years,

studying His teachings and practicing atma vichara, I was reassured with Bhagavan's promise that He is always with us wherever we are. Indeed, when I mentioned to a friend that I was in exile, he responded, "No, this is God's will." How precious to once again receive a pointer as to the perfection of it all.

Faced without choice of movement for the first time in my life, I came to see my duration in Australia as a blessing in disguise which brought up all kinds of necessary challenges and demanded deep trust in the equanimity of "Thy Will Be Done". These two years passed in surrender, accepting my natural homesickness for Tiruvannamalai, understanding that everything was occurring as a teaching, and knowing deeply that Bhagavan was

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taking care of it all.

At Tiruvannamalai, Bhagavan's teachings had saturated me as I attended Sri Ramanasramam, walked giripradakshina, and visited the magnificent Arunachaleshwar Temple. Along with the afternoon readings at the Ashram and occasional dharma talk with other devotees, I treasured solitary time meditating in the various halls, listening to the Vedas, attending pujas, and participating in the evening Tamil Parayana.

While in Australia, I participated in a group of 25-30 people reading and discussing non-dual texts such as Yoga Vashishtha and the words of Sri Ramana. While sharing at such meetings, I noticed how deeply Bhagavan's teachings had sunk in and how strongly my conviction of His message had grown. Sometimes surprised at this spontaneity of expression, I was reminded of how Bhagavan's main teaching is in silence and historically reflected in the direct experience of those devotees who came to Him to clear their doubts. Often bearing lists of questions, their queries evaporated as soon as they sat in front of Him. Mysteriously,

they had received answers without Bhagavan saying a word, leaving fully satisfied and, in some cases, with a profound understanding.

At Ramanasramam, the teachings are strongly anchored in the walls, ceilings, and floors where Bhagavan sat, walked, and worked. Those who come with an open heart undoubtedly feel His presence and absorb his precious teaching. It is all quite inexplicable and boggles the mind, that is, before enquiring as to who or what it is with a boggled mind.

Bhagavan is definitely always present, saying, "Where will I go? I am here."

So, my extended stay in Australia could actually have been necessary. Without the emergence of Covid, certain vasanas might not have surfaced at Tiruvannamalai. Feeling Bhagavan's guidance and grace at work far from His ashram, I met the challenges without much resistance. There was never a feeling of distance between Ramanasramam and Perth. And now I am happily back at His Holy Feet here in Tiruvannamalai. ■

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### Talk 35

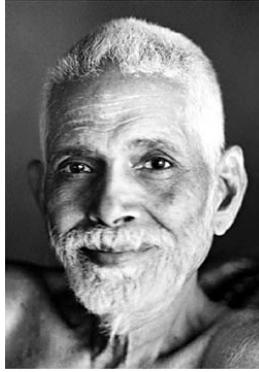
An educated visitor asked Bhagavan about *dvaita* and *advaita*.

M.: Identification with the body is *dvaita*. Non-identification is *advaita*.

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# The Curious Case of Bhagavan's Portrait

*Swagat Patnaik*



Over the years Bhagavan's picture has given me enormous solace. His deep compassionate eyes have mesmerized me almost every day since 2018. Through all the ups and downs of life the benevolence of Bhagavan has always soothed my heart. What began as a simple ritual of sitting in front of Bhagavan's picture for some time has now taken on a life of its own. Whether I sit for five minutes or forty minutes, Bhagavan's compassionate eyes become a mirror to my heart each time. I realize that Bhagavan's eyes respond almost magically to what is brewing in my heart. On days when my heart and mind foment discontent or greed, I observe that his eyes take on a morose and solemn look. Whereas, when my mind is at peace,

his eyes don a radiance.

In fact, this has led me to feel that Bhagavan knows me more than I know myself. In especially turbulent times it is difficult to see one's follies and we all tend to overestimate our own virtues. During these times Bhagavan's eyes would lose some of their luster and I would know that I need to take a deep look at myself. This repeated reliance on Bhagavan to always show me the truth about myself has led me to rely on him more and more. Bhagavan's presence has become personified in my joys and sorrows. This has led me to admit, albeit grudgingly, that Bhagavan may have been controlling my fate all along.

Sitting with Bhagavan's picture brings up different emotions which

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may have been brewing just below the surface. Compelled to look at one's pettiness one wonders how the master still looks at us with such grace. The sheer joy of looking at him forces one to acknowledge the good fortune of having slipped into his fold. With time this current of joy grows in magnitude till all pettiness drops away and one feels only the master's presence. Meditations in Bhagavan's presence are such that the tormenting bull of mind is assuaged with the tender grass of Bhagavan's grace. This repeated exposure to quietude helps one discover that the world's many attractions are not as satisfying as they appear to be.

Now, after many years, even the thought of not being able to sit in front of the master produces painful longing. Such longing forces one to spend at least some time during the day in the master's presence. These longings silently accompany us during the many activities of the day and help us remember Bhagavan's eyes for solace and guidance. This brings us back to the present moment, at least until one's mind runs towards another new attractive object.

The curious case of Bhagavan's image showing different shades of emotions is not limited just to me. Even my wife who sometimes sits in front of Bhagavan's image has reported similar

experience of Ramana's expression changing to reflect the mood of the *sadhaka*. This begs the question, what is it that brings about such changes as none sees the image being changed by anything external. Perhaps, the subtle relaxation in the body and changing levels of focus help a *sadhaka* become more attuned to the inner world and the deity. And this connection is projected onto Bhagavan's portrait as different expressions. A skeptic may point out that this sort of experience can be projected onto any image. But a deeper investigation would suggest that such happenings on any other image would not hold such deep significance to the observer. One can't stare at a random image for years and continue to do so with all one's heart (*shradha*). Unless one feels a certain humbling divinity, it is nearly impossible to meditate on an image without losing interest in it over time.

Furthermore, dare I suggest, meditating on Bhagavan also gives glimpses of the path of self-enquiry. As one is observing different shades of Bhagavan's expression one automatically asks who is it that is witnessing Bhagavan? How does one know that one is observing Bhagavan's eyes? Is not the one checking changes in Bhagavan's image the one meditating on Bhagavan? One is forced to con-

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sider carefully, to whom do all these thoughts come? And thus, the search for the ever elusive 'I' automatically ensues. In this way, Bhagavan continues his work of guiding *sadhakas* on the path of self-enquiry. His presence continues to answer devotee's questions and brings peace to their minds.

At the end of the day, the master again shows his presence before one is thrust into sleep. This way the master relieves the devotee of innumerable sufferings of world. On a few occasions, I had forgotten about the master during the day but even then, in one

way or other, Bhagavan has always shown his presence.

It is quite strange that although I have never met Bhagavan in person, I do not miss his presence. His words, through his writings and the accounts of senior devotees, have a living power. A similar unmistakable experience is also felt while being at Arunachala. I believe it is his benevolence that he continues to attract and guide us on the path of self-enquiry. I hope that all of us discover this radiant presence and tread on the path of his teachings. ■

[e-mail: [swagat.iisc@gmail.com](mailto:swagat.iisc@gmail.com)]

#### **Talk 47**

A Malayalee visitor expressed his concern for the misery of the world and his opinion that 'Quest for Self' looked selfish in the midst of such suffering environments. His solution appeared to be selfless work.

M.: The sea is not aware of its wave. Similarly the Self is not aware of its ego.

Note: This makes clear what Sri Bhagavan means by quest for the source of ego.

#### **Talk 48**

A visitor asked Sri Bhagavan, "You are Bhagavan. So you would know when I shall get jnana. Tell me when I shall be a Jnani." Sri Bhagavan replied, "If I am Bhagavan there is no one besides the Self - therefore no Jnani or ajnani. If otherwise I am as good as you are and know as much as yourself. Either way I cannot answer your question."

---

Talk 11

“Can destiny (*karma*) ever come to an end?”

M.: The *karmas* carry the seeds of their own destruction in themselves.

Three or four days ago Mr. Desai, Retired Sub-Judge, asked Bhagavan (with reference to what is said in *Ramana Gita*), “How to direct the prana or life-current into the *sushumnanadi*, so that as stated in *Ramana Gita* we could achieve the severance of the *chit-jada granthi*?” Bhagavan said, “By enquiring ‘Who am I?’”

“The yogi may be definitely aiming at rousing the *kundalini* and sending it up the *sushumna*. The *jnani* may not be having this as his object. But both achieve the same result, that of sending the Life-force up the *sushumna* and severing the *chit-jada granthi*. *Kundalini* is only another name for *atma* or Self or *sakti*. We talk of it as being inside the body, because we conceive ourselves as limited by this body. But it is in reality both inside and outside, being no other than Self or the *sakti* of Self.”

Desai: How to churn up the *nadis*, so that the *kundalini* may go up the *sushumna*?

Bhagavan: Though the yogi may have his methods of breath-control, *pranayama*, *mudras*, etc., for this object, the *jnani*'s method is only that of enquiry. When by this method the mind is merged in the Self, the Self, its *sakti* or *kundalini*, rises automatically.

The next day a visitor asked Bhagavan, with reference to the words *dhimahi* in the *gayatri*, “What is the idea meant? I am not able rightly to grasp it.”

B: The words only mean fixing the *aham* in the Self, though literally they mean, “We meditate”.

Visitor: I am not able to form a conception of the ‘*Tat*’ or the Self. Then, how am I to fix the *aham* in the *Tat*.

B: Why should you bother to conceive the *Tat* which you don't know? Try to find out the ‘I’ that you know, what it is and whence it arises. That is enough.

1 + 0 0 0 0 0 0 = 1 0 0 0 0 0 0  
SELF + IMAGININGS = THE WORLD

### Kookie Contributes

"Children," beamed Ramya teacher, one morning in the Std. V classroom at Nirmal Montessori School.

"Tomorrow is Zoology Day and to celebrate, you can all bring your pets to class!"

The excitement was huge.

I'll bring my pup, Honey!



Our cat's HISS. I bet she'll scare Honey into hiding under the table!

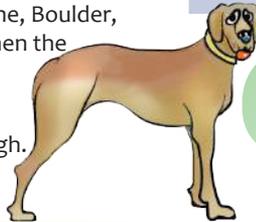


Pooh! just cats and dogs. My rabbit Fluff can jump right over the table!



Jayant felt gloomy. He didn't have a pet to show. Worse, Vikram had said he would bring his Great Dane, Boulder, and set him on Jayant when the teacher wasn't looking.

What if he really did? He was quite mean enough.



Wow, my son's really growing up, eh? Soon you'll be a doc too!



Jayant wished his parents would get him a tiger pet... even a cub would do. But somehow, he didn't think they would.



Not a chance, Amma. I may need a doc, tomorrow. It's *Bring your Pet* day and Vikram says I'm going to wind up inside his Great Dane.

Don't worry, we'll take care of Vikram!



Jayant's mother was a doctor and seemed quite pleased to hear about Zoology Day.

The next day, Std V had to assemble in front of the classroom and wait for their teacher. Jayant told his friends his pet too, would be coming in.

She's Kookie. She's small, but boy! Can she run fast, why she even flies. And she's a lovely chocolate brown

Run AND fly? Hey WHAT is she?



Secret! Wait and see!"

1 + 0 0 0 0 0 0 = 1 0 0 0 0 0 0  
EGO + THOUGHTS = UNIVERSE of MAYA

1 + 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 = 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1  
SELF + AWARENESS = ONENESS



Just then Vikram came up with Boulder. The latter was a huge but peaceful dog, who never had to make an effort to scare people into fits. Actually much nicer than his master, he was an animal not much given to either barking or biting as his looks were more than enough to make people decide that the risk wasn't worth it.

"Watch out, he's going to gobble you up," threatened Vikram.

Jayant took out a biscuit, placed it near Boulder. Boulder was always ready for a snack - he crunched it up in a flash. "Good dog, Boulder," said Jayant.

Then Vikram went crazy.

Boulder wagged his hindquarters uneasily. He was big but not brilliant. Exactly who was he supposed to attack? Surely not this biscuit-donating child?



How dare you feed my dog! Boulder, bite him!

Get him! Be a dog, you lazy mutt!



Vikram! Stop that at once!

Ramya teacher was hurrying towards them, furious. But Vikram was too angry to stop.

Then Jayant pulled out a matchbox from his pocket and shook out Kookie. She flew on to Vikram's collar.



C'mon! Bite!

Yeeesh! COCK-ROACH! Gerroff!



Kookie was used to people screaming and scuttling when she made an appearance but sunshine, she felt, was almost as bad as pesticide. It looked much safer inside Vikram's shirt. She climbed over his collar...



Vikram did a little dance trying to tear off his shirt and then fell over the now thoroughly nervous Boulder, who promptly bit him.

Teacher grimly hauled away a howling Vikram and Jayant drew a deep breath. Pet Day had already been quite an experience.



Bhagavan Sri Ramana had a deep respect and affection for animals and many that would not normally trust humans came to him willingly, shared his food and space and expressed their love. He did not 'keep pets,' but animals spontaneously came to him to be petted. His was a life of spiritual beauty lived in harmony with humans, animals, trees and indeed the whole earth.

1 + 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 = 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1  
SELF + AWARENESS = CONSCIOUSNESS

---

## Narayan Seva



**D**onating food to the needy is nothing short of helping the Almighty in His work. Our ancestors have rightly termed this act as ‘Narayan Seva’, meaning service to Narayan (the Almighty). Narayan Seva was one of Bhagavan’s loving acts towards all.

Ramana Kendra, Delhi started Narayan Seva on 1<sup>st</sup> May. There are two variants of Narayan Seva at the Kendra. First: Ramana Kendra, Delhi performs Narayan Seva every first Sunday of the month for which devotees are welcome to contribute financially through cheque, cash, or online transfer. Second: if devotees want to celebrate any personal event such as birthday, anniversary, shraddh, etc. (on any day of the month), they

can inform Mr. Narayanan at 95552 07533 or Rajesh ji at 99999 39903 one week in advance and the Kendra shall organise the food and distribute it as well. Devotees are welcome to join. The set budget for this is Rs 5,000, which the devotee would be required to donate.

On 1<sup>st</sup> May, Raman ji and his family helped in conducting the seva. On 31<sup>st</sup> May, Sushma ji, a long-time devotee, took the initiative for the seva. Over 80 people participated in the Narayan Seva on 5<sup>th</sup> June. Mr NG Krishnan and the Kendra team (Mr. Narayanan, Mr. Mariappan, Mr. Rajesh, Mr. Lalit and Mr. Rajkumar) worked diligently towards making this a success.

On 8<sup>th</sup> June, over 150 people participated in the seva. This was the highest



ever turnout at Ramana Kendra, Delhi and perhaps symbolic of Bhagavan's grace and blessings. Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh (IAS, Retd) observed her mother's 25<sup>th</sup> Punya Tithi. The efforts of the Kendra team were impeccable in conducting this event.

Even the heavy rainfall on 30<sup>th</sup> June couldn't prevent the dedicated team to carry out the seva at the Kendra. Over 100 people participated in this seva which was offered by Mr. Balaraman.

Nearly 100 people joined on 3<sup>rd</sup> July. A similar turnout was witnessed on 8<sup>th</sup> July when Sushma Shekhar ji performed the seva in remembrance of her father-in-law. After a few days, in the next seva, 90-100 people came. Jayanti ji offered this seva in on the occasion of her son's birthday.

### **Messages from Devotees**

This is nice, Mr. Anuraag. It is all

Sri Ramana's grace. It is a good service to the poor. I thank you for the efforts taken.

*Justice K. Ramamoorthy*

(President, Ramana Kendra, Delhi)

Excellent news, Anuraagji. This is such a great initiative.

*Dr. Anand Ramanan*

(President, Ramanasramam)

Amazing, Anuraag!

*Aruna ji.*

I am pleased to see the recent activities at the Kendra. We all are blessed.

*N. V. Krishnan*

(Former secretary of Ramana Kendra, Delhi)

I am truly blessed to receive your message, Anuraag. It makes me believe my Ma is at Bhagavan's feet. Thank you so much.

*Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh*

Thank you for sharing these pictures with me, Anuraag. Good initiative by Sushmaji.

*Neelam Bhatia*

Sir, these events and pictures are indeed very beautiful. Thank you.

*Pranita Ojha*

Thank you for sharing the pictures of today's Narayan Seva, Anuraag. It's indeed a blessing and very heartening.

---

*Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh*

Wonderful. How satisfying!

*Uday*

Great effort, Anuraag ji. Thank you for sharing.

*Ajith Kumar*

Great service to mankind.

*K. A. Singh*

This is so heartening to know, Anuraag. I appreciate the team's efforts under your guidance, and Shri Balaraman and Shri Krishnan's munificence.

*Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh*

That the tradition of Narayan Seva is being carried forward with dedication by the Kendra, under your guidance, is most commendable. Bhagavan must be pleased, I believe.

*Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh*

Anuraag, this is a beautiful way of celebrating Bhagavan's unbounded munificence. May the Kendra, under your able stewardship, carry the tradition forward.

*Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh*

### **Talk 50**

Sri Bhagavan read out, from the Prabuddha Bharata, Kabir's saying that all know that the drop merges into the ocean but few know that the ocean merges into the drop. This is para bhakti, said he.

### **Talk 134**

A question about the Heart was raised.

Sri Bhagavan said that one should seek the Self and realise it. The Heart will play its part automatically. The seat of realisation is the Heart. It cannot be said to be either in or out.

*D.:* Did Bhagavan feel the Heart as the point of Realisation in his first or early experience?

*M.:* I began to use the word after seeing literature on the subject. I correlated it with my experience.



08<sup>th</sup> May

Explaining verses 16-17 of *Upadesa Saram*, Michael James said that merely withdrawing the mind from other things isn't sufficient; one must focus one's attention on the Self. By doing this the mind is automatically withdrawn from everything else. The most straightforward way to know ourselves is to attend to ourselves.

--- AS

Online link to this talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEFVhhwekS8>

15<sup>th</sup> May

Shri Raghav Kumar covered verses 32-33 of *The Song Celestial* which encapsulate a seeker's journey towards knowledge of the innermost non-dual Self by overcoming obstacles in sadhana. Deep-rooted desires disturb the mind. Such obstacles are resolved by following Guru's instructions diligently. A jnani sees *I* as the truth of all that exists.

--- Rashmi Vyas

Online link to this talk: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icM\\_OHAn6Dg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icM_OHAn6Dg)

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22<sup>nd</sup> May

Explaining verses 34-36 of *The Song Celestial*, Raghav ji said that the main obstacle in sadhana is ignorance, which leads to the samsaric cycle of kama, karma, and vasanas, each feeding the other. Guru's teachings result in quietening the mind into its natural sattvik state and deep-rooted wrong notions get resolved.

--- Rashmi Vyas

Online link to this talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mus6oXisSw>

05<sup>th</sup> June



Swami Prakarshananda explained the importance of Self-enquiry. He said that when one enquires sincerely, the goal becomes clear in one's mind. Seekers who pursue Self-enquiry ultimately lose the false I and become firmly established in the real I which has been described by Bhagavan in *Upadesa Saram*.

--- Deepti Bhadauria

Online link to this talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWPGRui07wE>

12<sup>th</sup> June

Explaining the eighteenth verse of *Upadesa Saram*, Michael James said that the first thought is 'I'. This is the subject, aham (ego). All other thoughts are objects that arise only after this first awareness of I. Thus, to know the mind we need to investigate only this 'I' thought.

--- AS

Online link to this talk: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DNk6K\\_ojdc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DNk6K_ojdc)



19<sup>th</sup> June

Explaining verses 37-38 of *The Song Celestial*, Raghavji said that one who is alike to honour and dishonour, and to friends and foes, and has left off all actions, transcends the three gunas. Established in the Self, such a jeevanmukta

---

needs no worldly objects for happiness and has no duties left to be performed.

--- Rashmi Vyas

Online link to this talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6dnu5xXKY>

26<sup>th</sup> June

Raghav ji talked about the qualities of a jnani soul and explained that jnanis primarily revel in their source, the very Self, and realize themselves as the source of happiness. Raghav ji added that Atma-vichara provides no prescriptions of do's and don'ts, but gives clarity on the Self and how to abide in Ananda.

--- Ajith Kumar

Online link to this talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MityDzzVzy0>

03<sup>rd</sup> July



According to Swami Ramana Swaroopananda, Bhagavan's Atma-vichara is an efficacious technique, revealed as a direct path to the Self seated in our Heart. He added that in Atma-vichara one has to sit and experiment earnestly, having faith in Bhagavan and remembering Arunachala, since devotion and Atma-vichara complement each other.

--- Ajith Kumar

Online link to this talk: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv8\\_A10vSW8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv8_A10vSW8)

10<sup>th</sup> July



Throwing light upon verses 19-20 of *Upadesa Saram*, Michael James said that from the pure awareness 'I Am', the 'I' thought arises, appears, and disappears. When one investigates the source of the 'I' thought, it permanently subsides back into its source and one discovers 'I am I'.

--- AS

Online link to this talk: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBuPN\\_tX9E0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBuPN_tX9E0)

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17<sup>th</sup> July

Raghav ji said that the non-acceptance of Ishvara's will causes stress and anxiety. If we, even in the slightest sense, feel that the world is troubling us, it means that we have not yet completely surrendered. Bhagavan says that Self-enquiry ultimately leads to surrender, which gives rise to complete peace and happiness within, irrespective of worldly circumstances.

--- Deepti Bhadauria

Online link to this talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQDDI13yHQg>

#### **Talk 24**

Mrs. Piggott: Why do you take milk, but not eggs?

M.: The domesticated cows yield more milk than necessary for their calves and they find it a pleasure to be relieved of the milk.

D.: But the hen cannot contain the eggs?

M.: But there are potential lives in them.

D.: Thoughts cease suddenly, then 'I-I' rises up as suddenly and continues. It is only in the feeling and not in the intellect. Can it be right?

M.: It is certainly right. Thoughts must cease and reason disappear for 'I-I' to rise up and be felt. Feeling is the prime factor and not reason.

D.: Moreover it is not in the head but in the right side of the chest.

M.: It ought to be so. Because the heart is there.

D.: When I see outside it disappears. What is to be done?

M.: It must be held tight.

D.: If one is active with such remembrance, will the actions be always right?

M.: They ought to be. However, such a person is not concerned with the right or wrong of his actions. Such a person's actions are God's and therefore they must be right.

D.: Why then the restrictions of food given for such?

M.: Your present experience is due to the influence of the atmosphere you are in. Can you have it outside this atmosphere? The experience is spasmodic. Until it becomes permanent practice is necessary. Restrictions of food are aids for such experience to be repeated. After one gets established in truth the restrictions drop away naturally. Moreover, food influences the mind and it must be kept pure.

The lady told a disciple later: "I feel the vibrations from him more intensely and I am able to reach the 'I' centre more readily than before."

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## Letters to the Editor



We have started this new segment, Letters to the Editor with the aim of relating more closely with our readers. We would truly welcome feedback and suggestions. These should be sent directly to the Editor: [editor.dp@rkdelhi.org](mailto:editor.dp@rkdelhi.org) with the subject line: ‘Letters to the Editor’

Dear Advait,

Warm congratulations on the May-July issue. The whole issue seems so full of light, colour, and wisdom. I am sure this will herald more readers and attention, for the magazine certainly deserves it.

I appreciated and wholeheartedly agreed with your editorial. I read Michael Highburger’s article with the attention he deserved. He has a knack of saying exactly what the seeker needs. Bharati’s article was, as always, luminous. The art work to the poems added depth and grace. Neera’s letter was a joy to read.

*Sharada Bhanu*

Dear Anuraag,

Thank you for the latest issue of *Direct Path*. As in the past, it is well presented and easy to read. I enjoyed reading it in one go. My congratulations to the editorial staff for this achievement. Keep it up.

*N. V. Krishnan*

(Former secretary of Ramana Kendra, Delhi)

Dear Advait,

Congratulations! The latest issue of *Direct Path* is extremely well brought out, professionally designed, and appropriately sequenced. The articles are very meaningful and insightful. Please continue the very good work that you are doing. May Bhagavan Ramana guide you in spreading and benefitting from his timeless message of “Oneness and Truth” for the benefit of all existing as well as new readers.

*Prof. Vijay Vancheswar*

---

Dear Anuraag,

Thank you for sharing the latest issue of *Direct Path*. Compliments to the editor and the editorial team for coming out with an uplifting edition.

*Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh*

Dear Advait,

Thank you so much for sharing the excellently curated May-July 2022 issue of *Direct Path*. My poem has taken a new life with the beautiful artwork and format. I'm quite speechless and overwhelmed seeing my poem published in this magazine.

*Gayatri Majumdar*

Dear Advait,

As always, the colourful presentation of *One Plus* was impactful and skilfully done. I also enjoyed reading the reminiscences of Rajaji and Morarji.

*Natarajan Venkatesan*

Dear Advait,

The summaries of the Sunday lectures on *The Song Celestial* are quite apt and informative.

*Raghav Kumar Dwivedula*

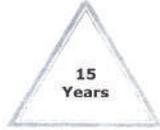
Dear Anuraag,

Though I am somewhat late, I want to convey my deep appreciation for organising the discourses on the verses selected by Bhagavan from the Bhagavad Gita. Raghav Kumar ji was very lucid and communicated subtleties of the text most effectively. The virtual versions did not miss out on any fine points.

I look forward to more such uplifting satsangs from the Kendra.

*Dr. Tuktuk Ghosh*

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### Talk 21

Mr. Ellappa Chettiar, a member of the Legislative Council of Madras Presidency and an influential Hindu, asked: “Why is it said that the knowledge born of hearing is not firm, whereas that born of contemplation is firm?”

M.: On the other hand it is said that hearsay knowledge (*paroksha*) is not firm, whereas that born of one’s own realisation (*aparoksha*) is firm. It is also said that hearing helps the intellectual understanding of the Truth, that meditation makes the understanding clear, and finally that contemplation brings about realisation of the Truth.

Furthermore, they say also that all such knowledge is not firm and that it is firm only when it is as clear and intimate as a gooseberry in the hollow of one’s palm.

There are those who affirm that hearing alone will suffice, because a competent person who had already, perhaps in previous incarnations, qualified himself, realises and abides in peace as soon as he hears the Truth told him only once, whereas the person not so qualified must pass through the stages prescribed above, before falling into *samadhi*.

**“When the mind turns away from the objects, it beholds its source, consciousness. This is Self-abidance.”**

**Ramana Maharshi (Upadesa Saram-16)**

*With Best Compliments*

*from :*



**Rajneesh Joshi**

**36/75, Punjabi Bagh (West)**

**New Delhi - 110 026**

*The results of Karma (Action) pass away,  
and yet leave seeds that cast the agent  
into an ocean of Karma.  
Karma yields no salvation*

*Ramana Maharshi {Upadesa Saram (2)}*

*With best compliments from :*



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