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RAMANA GYAN DIRECT PATH



“If you would only fix your gaze upon me, you would know that, established in the Heart, my gaze is ever fixed upon you.”

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

RAMANA GYAN DIRECT PATH

VOLUME XIX ISSUE 1

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Editor : Shiromani Vijay

Editorial Board : Dr. Tuk Tuk Kumar, Neera Kashyap and R. Seetharaman

Website : www.ramanakendradelhi.org ; **E Mail:** directpath@rediffmail.com

Cover: Source: 'Padamalai', pages 29-30, verse 36



Letters to the Editor

Synopsis of Mundakopanishad

I really enjoyed reading the synopsis of Mundaka. It is so simply written and yet so thorough. It covers all the points highlighted in the Upanishad. It felt as though I was revising Mundaka.

Sunita Bagla

Readers are welcome to express their views on the articles printed (in not more than 200 words) and send them to **directpath@rediffmail.com**

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Combating Habits

*Vijay Vancheswar**

Bertrand Russell, the well know British Philosopher and Nobel Laureate has said, “The chain of habits are too loose to be felt till they become too hard to be broken”. Indeed habits become second nature to us. Let us regress this concept. What causes habits? They sprout from repetitive actions and behaviour. What leads to this? A propensity or liking for doing certain things draws us towards certain actions. Again, what is the source of this fondness or liking? These stem from our innate *vasanas* or preferences -both latent and overt. What causes our *vasanas*? We learn from scriptures that these result from our unfulfilled desires built up over diverse life experiences, now and in the past. Sri Ramana pointedly kept his left hand over the temple of his mother and the right hand over her right chest for over eight hours during her last hours. He explained that this was to quench her latent *vasanas*.

This prevented them from sprouting again. Unfulfilled *vasanas* lead to our attachment to a fresh ego and having more phenomenal experiences. Such is the nature of *shristi* or creation.

Our interest in spirituality, seriously or frivolously, as the case maybe, is due to some latent tendencies which seek gratification. This proclivity is a positive trait if it relates to spirituality in its true sense However, this trait needs to be nurtured in the right direction. Nurturing requires vigilance and mindfulness. It needs to extend beyond reading, listening and lecturing which are relatively easy to do. Many a time, we get drawn to spirituality as a palliative. This provides an illusion of succor. Alas, these activities do not last beyond a limited time. As seen from our own experiences and those around us, we often tend to become victims of our innate *vasanas*, drawn to it almost irresistibly. What helps overcome this deviation or straying from the

course is vigilance or attentiveness, born out of awareness. Mindfulness as a guide is a very useful protector against our becoming slaves of our habits. Mindfulness needs to be supported with awareness of why and what we think, feel and do. Jiddu Krishnamurthy the speaker and thinker of renown on humanity says, *“If we can really understand the problem, the answer will come out of it, because the answer is not separate from the problem.”* Substantive value accrues to us when sincere intent supports our spiritual endeavour. Bhagavan Ramana has stressed this point indicating that there is no one universal way. The innate *vasanas* of individuals are unique and varied, as are our fingerprints. We therefore tend to see the world and assess things from the prism of our limitations. Because we have become habitual to these, we rarely are aware of our own biases and distortions. It is not surprising that this gets reflected in the multiple interpretations given at times to the teachings of Bhagavan Ramana. Fortunately for us, Sri Ramana spoke very precisely, simply and consistently on aspects that were core to his teachings. These have been validated by his sincere devotees

like Munagala Venkatramiah, Arthur Osborne, Devaraja Mudaliar, Muruganar, and Kunju Swami, to name some. Their accounts validate with consistency and clarity the benefits that accrue through surrender, enquiry, devotion, faith and *satsanga* (the company of the wise). These attributes can ward off the perils of our deep rooted habits. Our desire to know about Bhagavan, his life and teachings is in itself a great blessing. This indicates the presence of a *saatvic vasana*. If it were not so, our minds would be drawn to the world of the mundane and ephemeral. The fact that we are inclined to at least scan the layers of the higher aspects of life and its purpose should give us hope. Hope to overcome our weaknesses and habits. In the words of Bhagavan, *“Let come what comes, let go what goes. See what remains”*. The message: We need to seek what is permanent and of lasting value within us. More importantly, we need to guard ourselves against the temptations of evaluating the habits and behavioural traits of others. The time spent on this could be spent reflecting within. What endures is the understanding of what we really are. Towards this, the Maharshi’s timeless message of self knowledge

is all that really matters. This will purge us of our innate weaknesses, recurring and troublesome habits and our multifarious concerns.

Bhagavan's reply to the query, 'what are the changes that happen when we make progress on the spiritual journey?' is very revealing. He said, 'Your whole attitude to life changes. You become less argumentative, more compassionate and less concerned about the mundane issues of everyday life, with which you were preoccupied earlier'. If we are mindful about how we respond to others and our own concerns, we can develop habits that transform us for the better. *Seven such habits* are worth reflecting upon. *One:* self sacrifice- implying giving up our sense of self importance and ego gratification, *Second:* enjoying uncertainty- by its very nature phenomenal life is mired in uncertainty. Accepting this, we over time learn to enjoy what happens without struggling to change things, *Third:* tranquility and peace: this increases in proportion to how little we bother about our insignificant ego and how much more we connect within, *Fourth:* universal love: the more we connect within, the wider will the span of our love spread, *Fifth:* truth : the core of Sri

Ramana's teaching- truth, which is understanding the Self, what we really are, *Sixth:* surrender: unconditionally leaving it to the divine- '*saranagati*'- the path that Bhagavan said would converge to enquiry leading us to our source and *Seventh:* being a renunciate- not in terms of physical or environmental surroundings, but mentally, which gets reflected in the simplicity of our words, deeds and responses. ■

[e-mail: vijay.vancheswar@gmail.com]

{*After over a decade as the editor, due to personal reasons and also as a natural course of transition, Direct Path will have a new editor in Ms. Shriomani Vijay from the October-November issue. Besides the existing editorial team members, she will have the support and counsel of Dr. Tuk Tuk Kumar, IAS (retd.) who joins the editorial team and the management committee of Delhi Kendra. Ms. Shiromani Vijay can be reached at: shiromani.vijay@yahoo.co.in. The editor thanks the readers, contributors, editorial members and colleagues at Ramana Kendra, Delhi for their support and goodwill in making Direct Path a vehicle of spreading Bhagavan Ramana's timeless and invaluable teachings.}



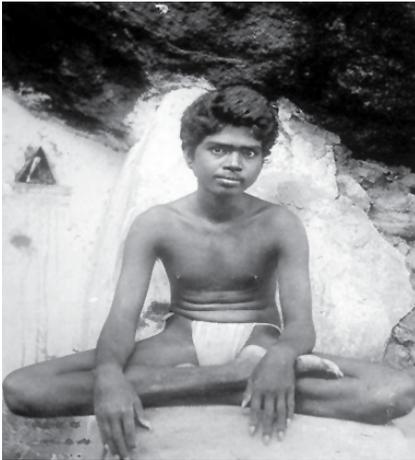
Kendra Bulletin

September 2016*	
1st Sept Thursday	Bhagavan's Advent Day / Kendra Day Delhi
4th Sept Sunday	Shri Prashant Tripathi Ji's discourse
11th Sept Sunday	Swami Prabhudananda Ji's discourse on Katho- Upanishad
16th - 18th Sept	Ramana Swami - Upadesa Saram
25th Sept Sunday	Swami Durgesananda Ji's discourse on Atma Bodha
October 2016*	
2nd Oct	TBA**
9th Oct	Swami Prabhudananda Ji's discourse on Katho-Upanishad
16th Oct	Shri P.N.Vijay's discourse on Bhagacad Gita
23rd Oct	TBA
30th Oct	Swami Durgesananda Ji's discourse on Atma Bodha
<p>*Dates and event details may change or alter depending on availability of speakers. If so, these will be intimated closer to the date by the Kendra office.</p> <p>** To Be Announced</p>	



Bhagavan- Avatar of Lord Siva: His early days and the call by Arunachaleswar*

(Adapted from V.Ganesan's – Mother Azhagammal, Ramanaperiyapuram)



First known photograph of Bhagavan

The year is 1879. The place, Tiruchuzhi, a small, obscure village in Tamil Nadu, South India. It is the day of Ardra Darshan. A festival which celebrates that ancient, eternal moment when Lord Arunachala Siva appeared from a primordial, infinite, fiery pillar of light to destroy the egos of the warring gods and give them enlightenment.

At midnight on this auspicious

day, just as the idol of Siva returned to Tiruchuzhi's legendary Bhoominatheshwara temple, a wail of an infant was heard in a humble home on its northern street. Mother Azhagammal had just given birth to a baby boy. A baby boy who, in time, would be known the world over as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Named Venkataraman as a child, the history of Bhagavan clearly proves that the aspects of fire and light were very important throughout his life. His mother conceived many times. It was only when she was bearing Bhagavan that she had a burning feeling in her stomach. To soothe it, a traditional paste of *neem* and *bilva* leaves had to be applied daily on her stomach. Later, when the child was born, the blind midwife saw a brilliant light.

From his years of innocence, Venkataraman could hear the sound, "Arunachala, Arunachala," within himself. The sound stayed with him

all the time but he did not know what it was. Later, when he became a great master, he was asked about it, "If you could hear the sound all the time, why did you not ask people about it? Why did you not seek an explanation for it?" Bhagavan replied, "Would someone go about checking with people if they breathe? It was built into my system and I thought everyone could hear it too. I did not know it was an aberration." (Similarly, Swami Vivekananda used to see a blue light between his eyebrows from his childhood. When asked why he did not ask anyone about this strange occurrence, Swami replied, "I thought everyone was seeing the light.") Other than this, Venkataraman seemed to be an ordinary boy. Nothing spectacular about him suggested that he was to become a great rishi. After his father died, the family had to split up. Bhagavan's widowed mother went to stay in her brother-in-law's house in Manamadurai. Venkataraman was sent to study in Madurai, about thirty miles from Tiruchuzhi. In Madurai, Venkataraman studied in the American Mission School. Strangely enough,

he had not read any Hindu scriptures. He had only read *Periapuranam*, a devotional composition on the lives of the sixty three saint-devotees of Lord Siva. He himself later said, "I did not know any terms from philosophy or spirituality - *Brahman*, *atman*, *samadhi*, *jnana*, Self, mind - nothing."

In Madurai, at the age of sixteen, he had a death experience. Father Arunachala wanted Venkataraman back in his fold and so gave him a death experience in which he felt his body and mind being symbolically burnt. He saw his body being carried to the cremation ground and burnt. The burning feeling continued till he ran away from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai, entered the Arunachaleshwara temple, embraced its *agni* (fire) *lingam* and said, "Father, I have come at thy bidding. Thy will be done."

After Bhagavan left home, nobody knew where he was. When his mother heard the news, she was grief stricken and made desperate efforts to find him. Reports trickled in that he had moved far south to Thiruvananthapuram

** Tiruvannamali town was blessed to draw Bhagavan Ramana to its land, guided and instructed as he was by none other than his Father Lord Arunachaleswar . He set foot there on September 1, 1895 and never left the place for 54 years, until he merged with Lord Arunachala on April 14, 1950*

in Kerala. Someone else also sent news that a young Brahmin boy was seen roaming the streets there. She packed her things and left for Thiruvananthapuram. On spotting the boy there, she begged him to come with her or at least look at her. However, he ignored her and fled. She was sure that he was her Venkataraman. She continued to grieve until one day somebody informed her that he had met a person in Tiruvannamalai who wrote his name as “Venkataraman of Tiruchuzhi”. Encouraged by this news, she sent her brother-in-law, a soft hearted man, to look for her son in Tiruvannamalai. On his return, he confirmed the news, “Yes, I saw Venkataraman. He is totally absorbed in meditation. I pleaded with him to come back, but he did not even reply. There was no response; he was just like a rock.” Confident that he would not reject her pleas, Mother Azhagammal decided to go and beg him to return. It was 1898, two years after Bhagavan had left Madurai and come to Tiruvannamalai. Bhagavan was seated on a rock at Pavazhakundru, a small hillock in Tiruvannamalai. On reaching there, his mother pleaded with him, “Come back home. I will not disturb you. I will feed you because you are uncared for here. I will attend to your body. I will not interfere in

your life. You can continue your spiritual life there. Please come back.” There was absolutely no response from Bhagavan. Rock like he remained, motionless and still. (*Muruganar used to say, “Even a big boulder on Arunachala may move sometimes, but Bhagavan will not move. You cannot move Bhagavan.”*)

One day, some residents of Tiruvannamalai who had been seeing this old woman crying all the way up the hill and down, reproached the young ascetic, “Why don’t you give a reply? Either accept or decline! We have been observing this lady cry for the last three days and you do not even reply!” Relenting, Bhagavan wrote a reply on a piece of paper. This reply to his mother is his first written teaching. He wrote, *“The Ordainer, prevailing everywhere, makes each one play his role in life according to his karma. That which is not destined, will not happen despite every effort. What is destined to happen is bound to happen. This is certain. Therefore, the best course is to remain silent.”*

At face value, this looks like a reply rejecting his mother’s pleas. However, these words bear a deeper meaning... *“That which is not destined, will not happen despite every effort. What is destined to happen is bound*

to happen.” Then, what is the role of an individual? If everything is predestined and everyone is acting according to how he or she is being directed to act, then what is the reality of the individual? This doubt raises the fundamental question, „Who am I? With the next sentence, “*This is certain,*” Bhagavan gives a stamp of authority, certainty, for the mind needs the anchor of certainty. The last sentence is, “*Therefore, the best course is to remain silent.*” To remain in silence is a positive step towards surrender. The first step is to surrender. Surrendering in silence is the guiding force that helps one begin the quest for the Self. One cannot do this with a disturbed mind. We all need to contemplate on the hidden wisdom in this first *upadesa*. When we read about the life of a saint, not like a novel or a historical narrative, but with reverence and devotion, a sentence, even a word, can guide us. This first teaching which Mother Azhagammal brought out from Bhagavan Arunachala Ramana is a most important and powerful one. Jesus Christ said to his mother, “Mother, woman, what have I got to do with you? I have come to do my Father’s business.” Bhagavan, through his note and his action, seems to be similarly telling his mother, “I have got this work of my Father,

to spread his message that his true state is the silence which is hidden in the Heart of everyone and that humanity has forgotten it. I have to remind them that Arunachala is the unconditioned awareness of “I AM” in each one’s Heart. The mind clouds it now. Therefore, it has to be removed so that the Heart shines forth in all its splendour. This is my Father’s business. So, oh Azhagammal, my mother, you too accept it.” Bhagavan’s mother went back to the rest of her family in disappointment. Though Bhagavan had given the highest teaching to his mother in 1898, for nearly fifteen years after that, she was too entangled in family affairs. Then, in 1913, disaster struck: she lost all her close relatives except her youngest son and daughter – Bhagavan’s younger brother and sister. Mother Azhagammal was immersed in sorrow. It seemed there would be no descendants. Bhagavan’s elder brother had married, but had died at the age of twenty two, leaving his wife a childless, teenage widow. Bhagavan was not married, and his sister did not have any children even though she was married. Bhagavan’s younger brother, my grandfather, was married but his wife could not have a child. In 1913, Mother Azhagammal took her to Bhagavan in Virupaksha cave and begged him to bless his

younger brother and wife with a son. The very next year, a child was born. In gratitude to Bhagavan, he was named Venkataraman. He was then the only descendant of Bhagavan's family.

In 1914, while still in the clutches of family entanglements, Mother Azhagammal came to visit Bhagavan at Virupaksha cave. She came down with a raging fever. It was diagnosed as typhoid. Bhagavan pleaded with Arunachala, "*Oh Arunachala, fire of wisdom, enfold my mother in your light and make her one with you!*" Needless to say, his mother was saved. *This plea of Bhagavan is not for his mother alone but for each one of us. When we take to Self Enquiry we too will be engulfed in the fire of wisdom of Arunachala.*

On the Advent Day and every other day, as we pay our respects and seek the guidance of the greatest of rishis, who the world had the good fortune to witness, physically when he was in his mortal frame and for all time to come in his ever present state of the Self, we need to constantly reflect and abide by his timeless words of wisdom. That would be our true sadhana.

In 1916, the younger daughter-in-law passed away, leaving her child Venkataraman, my father, to be looked after by Bhagavan's sister. Bhagavan's mother, now fed up with the world,

returned to Bhagavan to stay with him for good. It took eight years for Bhagavan to make her spiritually mature; there are beautiful stories on how he did this.

For instance, being a Brahmin, she was steeped in orthodoxy and Bhagavan had to release her from her prejudices. According to Brahmin orthodoxy, a Brahmin's clothes, kitchen, food and personal items could only be washed or touched by Brahmins. Else, they were considered impure. If touched by a dog or a person from a lower caste, an orthodox Brahmin had to have a purifying bath ! Dogs touched Mother Azhagammal all the time because there were many at Skandashram and Virupaksha cave. Consequently, she sometimes ended up bathing ten times a day!

Taking pity on her, a scholarly devotee Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni told her, "According to the Hindu scriptures, if you touch a jnani, a realized soul, all pollution and sins drop from the body - you need not bathe then." From then on, whenever Bhagavan saw his mother approaching he would know why she was coming to him. After she touched him and went away, he would give a mischievous smile and say, "Some dog must have touched her." Brahmins would not

even eat onions or garlic. One day, Bhagavan brought a small onion to his mother and gently teased her saying, "Be careful, this will be standing there at the gates of heaven to push you out." With comments like these, he slowly freed her from the grip of her prejudices. Her attachment to relatives had gone but her maternal attachment to Bhagavan remained. She knew Bhagavan liked *appalam* (a thin wafer like crisp, only much bigger) and she would ask people to bring the ingredients to make it. One day, when she was trying to make *appalamss*, she called out to Bhagavan, "Why don't you come and help me? I am going to make *appalams!*" Blinded by her attachment to him, she wanted to satisfy his childhood desires. Understanding this, Bhagavan replied, "You make your *appalams* inside the cave and I will make my *appalams* outside." This is how the *Appalam Song* came about. In it, the process of making *appalams* is a metaphor for the process of attaining liberation. Bhagavan interpreted the song in the light of every ingredient used, "Let the ego be crushed in the quern of Self Enquiry, seasoned with *satsang*, good company, softened and flattened, fried in the ghee of Brahman and then eaten by the Self." The song asks, "How should one's soul be ripened?

How should one's ego be pounded, like the flour is pounded?" The answer is, with the enquiry, "Who am I?" This song touched the depth of his mother's soul and transformed her. She was very possessive about her meagre belongings. Bhagavan transformed this quality in a beautiful way. One day, a pious renunciate and resident of Skandashram called Sabapati was wearing a torn cloth that did not cover much. Mother asked him, "Sabapati, why are you wearing this torn cloth?" He playfully replied, "You are wearing a long sari. It is nine yards long, why don't you give me some of it?" She immediately tore two yards from her sari and gave it to Sabapati. Her detachment from her few possessions had begun. Another day, some woodcutters came to Skandashram and cried, "Bhagavan, we are all hungry." Mother Azhagammal would not share the food with others until she had eaten first; she believed that food became polluted if others ate it first. Bhagavan knew this. Still, he told Kunju Swami, "Ask mother to bring the food she has cooked and give it to them." She was hesitant. "Tell Bhagavan that I have not yet eaten," she protested. When Kunju Swami reported this to Bhagavan, he went to her and reproached her, "Oh! That is the reason. You think they are all different from you. Come

and look. They are all standing down there. Do you know who they are? Look at them.” She looked at them and Bhagavan said, “They are all Arunachala *swaroopam*, the forms of Arunachala.” He did not use the word ‘untouchables’. From that moment on, she saw only Arunachala in everyone - there was no difference between her and anyone else. Bhagavan fulfilled his duties to her as a son. Though already an acclaimed master, he had only a few people to serve him. They would fetch water for him and carry it painstakingly uphill. However, for his mother, Bhagavan himself brought the water. He would carry two big vessels filled to the brim, make her sit and pour water over her to bathe her. He also washed her clothes. While he attended to her physical needs and was affectionate to her, he could also be stern when he had to effect a change. Over eight years, slowly but surely, he weaned her away from the limiting confines of narrow mindedness, orthodoxy, superstition and social customs. However, despite being in the presence of a great master like Bhagavan who with all filial affection had the intention to mature his mother, it took eight years. The beauty of their relationship is that Bhagavan’s mother surrendered to it all and allowed the transformation to take place. (The lesson for us here is

that we should not get disappointed if we see no progress after a few years of *sadhana*.) One day, Bhagavan’s sister came and said, “Mother, you are not well. Come, I have a comfortable house.” She refused and turning to Bhagavan told him, “I want to die only in your arms. After my death you may even throw away my body into some thorn bushes, it does not matter.” Soon after this, she fell seriously ill. On the day of her passing away, from early in the morning, Bhagavan sat next to her with his left hand on her head and his right hand on the right side of her chest. He remained like that for nearly eight hours. The devotees who had gathered there knew that her end had come. They observed the beauty and sanctity of a son elevating his mother’s soul to the Infinite. Kunju Swami who was present later said that the devotees observing this felt it was a physical demonstration of the soul’s journey to the Absolute; it was like heat and light spreading from a flame. When he was sure that the soul and mind had merged in the Self, Bhagavan took his hands off and then said, “When the soul merges with the Self and is completely annihilated, a soft ring like that of a bell can be felt.” It was a common practice that after witnessing a death, all those present must bathe. However, Bhagavan said that in this

case there was no need as there was no pollution. “She did not die. Instead, she is absorbed in Arunachala,” he stated. Later, the devotees who were there enquired, “Bhagavan, what did you do by keeping your hands on her head and her chest? What exactly took place?” Bhagavan explained, “*Innate tendencies and subtle memories of past experiences that lead to future possibilities became very active when my hands were placed on her. Scene after scene rolled before her in her subtle consciousness. The outer senses had already gone. The soul was passing through a series of experiences, thus avoiding the need for rebirth and making possible the union of the mind with the Self or the Heart. The soul was at last disrobed of all subtleties before it reached its final destination, the supreme peace of liberation from which there is no return to ignorance.*”

What is the precept that Bhagavan laid down before us through Mother’s example? When asked what the essence of his teaching was, Bhagavan would reply, “Either ask ‘Who am I?’ or surrender. “They are two sides of the same coin.” Bhagavan clearly demonstrated the nuances of “Who am I?” in the lives of many devotees. However, with the example of his mother, he taught

the aspect of surrender - for his mother had surrendered completely. Mother’s example also shows us what happens when one immerses in Self Enquiry and reaches a state of silence: an experience like the one during Mother’s death takes place. When there is no ego, neither “I” or “mine” - that which rules is only Arunachala. As Bhagavan has said, “Arunachala is the Heart, the Self, the “I AM”. Reaching Arunachala is not in space or in time. It is constantly here and now. It is not going to enter your Heart. It already is the Heart. You only have to turn your attention to it. Bhagavan once said, “The purpose of the outer guru is to give a push and that of the inner guru is to pull.” Arunachala is the outer guru who gives us the push while Bhagavan remaining in the Heart as our Self, pulls us like a magnet. So what is our role? We just have to submit. Wherever we are, we should live in our Heart. Sacredness means that we should go into silence. Wherever and whenever we are in silence, we are in sacredness - and that sacredness is Arunachala. Arunachala is not a Hindu god. It is reality, space, existence itself. Since we have identified ourselves with our bodies and thus have limited ourselves, Arunachala has come to remind us: “There is no you, there is only “I AM”. ■



How Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi changed my life

Gary Weber



When I was in graduate school working on my Ph.D. in the physical sciences, I had an insight. I saw the great turmoil, unhappiness, stress, and confusion caused by the internal narrative, the “blah, blah”, that was never-ending and useless. I decided to see if I could end it, and free myself from its grasp. As I was raised as a devout fundamental Christian in the Pennsylvania Appalachian coal fields, there was no “reason” why I would have even imagined this was possible.

I began looking everywhere, and reading a Zen poem, a profound awakening experience happened, and then went away. However, during that experience, I saw that there were no thoughts, no suffering, and a totally different and more “true” reality, than my “everyday” reality.

Then I began meditating in this Zen tradition and found the work of

Bassui, a 14th century Zen monk, whose process was asking “What is my own mind?”, “What is it that hears this sound?”, “What moves this hand?”, etc.

Soon, a book manifested from a California yoga teacher who talked about “Ramana Maharshi”, and his questions, which were very similar, but much more accessible, detailed and documented. Investigating, I found that Ramana Maharshi lived while I was alive, was in videos, on BBC, in Life Magazine, his last pictures were by Henry Cartier Bresson, and Carl Jung had written the foreword for a book covering years of direct meetings with many, many seekers. It was clear that he was highly regarded and trusted.

I got the pamphlet “Who Am I?” of Ramana Maharshi’s first written teachings. It was a constant companion for years, along with other compilations. Every day, with a 50 to

60 hr/wk job with much responsibility and travel, a wife and two children, I woke at 4 or 5 am, did an hour of yoga and then an hour of self-inquiry, typically “Where am I?”, or “Who hears?” before going to work. I also asked these questions throughout my workday when getting a cup of tea, or every odd numbered hour, for a few minutes.

As attachments were recognised as a major obstacle, Shankara’s *Nirvana Shatakam* manifested from an unexpected source. I looked at every possible category and felt into it to see if there was attachment, and if there was, asked “What has this attachment?”

I also read about hunting down the “I”, so I would feel my way into what it was that was watching the contents of the mind, and carefully explore to see if I could find its root or location.

After about 25 years and 20,000 hrs of practice, I deeply, fully, totally surrendered everything, every attachment, every possession, even my life, to Bhagavan so that I might know the Truth. Within a few days, coming down from a yoga posture I had done many times before, everything stopped...fears, desires, thoughts and the illusion of control and free will.

As there was no “I”, there was nothing to hold the “other end” of these, and never had been. It was clear, as Bhagavan had said that nothing, not even the smallest event was being done by “me”, but that all that occurred was happening through this empty shell of a vehicle, as the Universe/Bhagavan danced it.

At the time I had about 1,000 scientists and engineers, four research laboratories, and about a \$250MM budget so I wondered how it would be able to do my job. When I went to work, no one even noticed. I found that I was more efficient, creative, and present in meetings and with others. Surprisingly, “my life” went along better without “me” in it. Something was running my life that was more intelligent, powerful and more connected with “the world” than I was, as “it” could arrange amazing serendipitous events with people I could never have imagined I would get to know, including several billionaires.

After a few months, I left my job, and went to India to study with one of the most famous yoga teachers. Then on to Tiruvannamalai, staying at Ramanasramam, and going to many famous places particularly the Old Hall, Virupaksha cave and Skandashram, and doing Giripradakshina. I even

went down to the Pathala Lingam in the Arunachaleswar temple where Ramana had sat, and watched a complete ceremony in the inner chamber of the temple with only my guide and the priests in attendance. The first night, I looked up at the hill from my room, and there were fires all over Arunachala.

For about four years, I told very few people what had happened, but then was gradually drawn back into research and business management in very responsible positions, and into leading a small Zen group, and then giving workshops.

Soon a book, "Happiness Beyond Thought: A Practical Guide to Awakening" manifested, strongly based on Bhagavan's teachings, including the entirety of Upadesa Saram, Nirvana Shatakam, and some of Bhagavan's recommended verses from the Bhagavad Gita. This book was dedicated to Ramana (who wrote the book) with his famous picture sitting cross legged facing the camera with the caption "*Dedicated to Ramana Maharshi who found me lost and wandering in a dark forest, taught me what inquiry, love and surrender were and brought nobody home.*"

Subsequently, folks began hearing

about this unusual state of natural, persistent, "no thoughts" that had manifested, and I was invited to participate in a Ph.D. thesis on "persistent non-duality", in which of the 36 selected in the study out of 500 candidates, this state was the "best".

This led to an fMRI study at Yale on experienced (roughly 10,000 hrs) meditators, who were primarily Theravadan Buddhists doing Theravada practices, in which of the 100 studied, "my" state was the "most present" and totally unique. This state was, as Bhagavan had said it must be, "sahaj" or "natural", as it was always there without any "doing". This was covered in a Psychology Tomorrow article, "The Neuroscience of Suffering: And Its End" at <http://psychologytomorrowmagazine.com/jeff-warren-neuroscience-suffering-end/>.

Without any "doer", videos, presentations, a website, a blog, another book "Dancing Beyond Thought: Bhagavad Gita Verses and Dialogues on Awaken" based on Bhagavan's selection of Bhagavad Gita verses, manifested. As Bhagavan had also written this book, it was dedicated to him with the same picture and caption used in the previous book. All of my work is free in some format,

as it is He who makes all this happen. This realisation has made an enormous difference in all my work.

In my most recent trip to Ramanasramam, I was drawn to the Old Hall, and Virupaksha Cave. In the Old Hall, there was a direct, and totally unexpected, unmistakable message from Bhagavan. The woman sitting next to me told me later than I had “disappeared”.

In Virupaksha Cave, I was held “captive”, virtually frozen in the right hand corner for four hours while enormous energy poured out of the area around the altar and flowed with great force into “me”. There was no message, vision, story, blinding light, etc., just the sense of a great download being installed. After four hours, it stopped as suddenly as it had arisen, and “I was free to go”.

Despite great initial resistance to Sanskrit and chanting, I now chant many verses from the Bhagavad Gita, Ribhu Gita, Upadesa Saram, Nirvana Shatakam, and the Gayatri (with mudras), each day, and teach them to others.

Serendipitously, a deep bhakti practice also emerged. As I was primarily a “jnana” practitioner, I was not drawn to it naturally, but soon

Bhagavan, Shiva, Dakshinamurti, and Arunachala were the objects of a bhakti practice involving the Gayatri mantra and mudras. This practice moved from “tasting the sugar”, to “being the sugar”, and was very valuable.

I now communicate with folks all over the world with Bhagavan’s message, in many different formats and venues. Many days, all that can be done is to just bow down and sometimes cry, that I was so fortunate as to have been found by Bhagavan. It is difficult to imagine what life would have been like had he not shown his Grace on this humble pilgrim. ■

{Gary Weber is the author of the book “Happiness Beyond Thought” and “Dancing Beyond Thought”. A devout practioner of Bhagavan’s teachings, he is much sought after for his insights and vast experiences relating to the spiritual quest. Gary is ever willing to clarify doubts of people on the path to understanding oneself. A senior corporate executive turned spiritual guide cum friend to many, he resides in Port Matilda, Pennsylvania, US and travels and shares his experiences, within and outside the US. email: happinessbeyondthought@gmail.com, website: happiness-beyond-thought.com}



Reflections with Sri Mahalingam

Direct Path Team

Sri V Mahalingam, Vice President, Ramana Kendra, Delhi is perhaps the oldest among the present devotees of Bhagavan Ramana in Delhi. At 95, he exuded a remarkable sense of balance, equipoise and humility. In an interaction with Direct Path (DP), Sri Mahalingam recounted his early days in Delhi during the Kendra's formative years. He also recalled his days as a youth at Tiruvidaimaruthur not very far from Tiruvannamalai and in the erstwhile city of Madras. Here are some excerpts

DP: When did you come to know about Bhagavan-where, how and at what age?

Mahalingam: I was about 14(1935) when a relative of mine imitated Bhagavan Ramana's quiet meditative posture ! With his longish fingernails he pointed that he may soon shift to Tiruvannamalai, Bhagavan's abode. While this person did not move to Tiruvannamalai, my opportunity to

go there came much later. During my early days in Tiruvidaimarudhur (which is more or less equidistant from Tiruvannamalai and Kumbakonam), I used to get the benefit of a clear view of Arunachala hill, almost every day... this was due to my work in the meteorology department, which required a daily telescopic scanning of the sky in the direction of 'Conas, Coimbatore'(a military establishment) to estimate the likely weather pattern for the day. Tiruvannamalai town happened to be in the range of my vision! In 1942, I was transferred to Madras (erstwhile). Soon after, my first visit to Tiruvannamalai materialised- thanks to a trip organised by my office colleagues to Sathanur dam, via the famous Gingee fort.

2 DP: When did you first visit Ramanasramam?

I shifted to Delhi on transfer in 1962. In 1966, I visited Ramanasramam with my wife for the first time.

3 DP: You could perhaps have seen Bhagavan in person? You could not. Did you not try to go to Ramanasramam while Sri Ramana was in his mortal frame? Any regrets at not seeing him ?

Mahalingam: It is a stroke of divine dispensation that I could not see Bhagavan in person. Interestingly, during my stay in Madras, a colleague in office remarked while on the topic, that it is difficult to see Bhagavan as the *Sarvadhikari* was a very stern individual and would not grant permission for Sri Ramana's darshan! Somehow this dissuaded me from undertaking a visit there. I had to bemoan my misplaced judgment and the strange ways of fate...yes not seeing Bhagavan in his mortal frame is something that I regret deeply; however, I console myself with what Sri Ramana often said, "You attach too much importance to this temporal body...I am always there"

4 DP : Have you met anyone who lived with or was very much involved with Ramanasramam when Sri Ramana lived there? Any recollections..?

When I first visited Ramanasramam in 1966, I met Sri Muruganar, one of the foremost devotees of Bhagavan. I also visited the ashram President's

house. In addition I got to meet Sadhu Om, another well know and devout follower of Ramana's teachings. Sadhu Om rendered some nice songs on Bhagavan on the same evening of the day I met him. I was fortunate to meet Arthur Osborne whose books on Bhagavan are very popular. By then, Ramana Kendra was already registered as a Society (1963). Both Arthur Osborne and Muruganar were immensely pleased at the efforts made by us in Delhi through Ramana Kendra to spread the teachings of Bhagavan.

5 DP: When did you come to Delhi? Were you involved in the early stages of setting up the Delhi Kendra? Any particular instance that is memorable in those days involving Prof. Swaminathan?

I came to Delhi in 1962. My office friends (Messrs. AK Iyer, M C Menon and K C Subbiah) and I attended a Ramana Jayanti celebration held at the Sarojini Nagar Ganesh Mandir in 1964, presided by Prof. Swaminathan. We in Delhi, functioned as a group led by Prof. Swaminathan. We used to meet at the Prof's house and also at the residences of devotees of Ramana regularly on Sunday evenings. On these days, two accomplished pundits of 'Veda' would recite the 'Veda



Sri Mahalingam (3rd from left) seen with the DP members from left: Uma Seetharaman, Seetharaman, Krishnan (ex-secretary of Ramana Kendra) and Vijay Vancheswar, editor- Direct Path

Parayana and perform ‘*Pooja*’ to Bhagavan in front of his portrait. Prof. Swaminathan was a very erudite scholar and used to give us the essence of Sri Ramana’s teachings often comparing its similarities with the teachings and themes of the Taoist and Zen philosophy. His talks would be followed by *archana* and recitation of *arunachala siva sloka*. On 14 April 1971, a function with the then President of India V V Giri as the chief guest was held to formally release the commemorative postal stamp of Ramana Bhagavan.

The Kendra was inaugurated on 1 September 1974 by the then

Vice President of India B D Jatti. Thereafter, the activities and functions in the Kendra gained momentum. Prof. Swaminathan was always a tower of strength in enabling the Kendra get its rightful recognition amongst important people in the Delhi government and related establishments. But for him we would not be where we are in Delhi Kendra now.

6 DP: How do you find the Kendra now as compared with its functioning in its early days?

The Kendra has come a long way and is now serving its role in disseminating Sri Ramana’s messages

and teachings to earnest seekers of the Truth. I am happy to see the role of 'Direct Path' publication as well as the satsangs and other functions that happen regularly to facilitate the building of awareness about Maharshi and his teachings.

7 DP: Given your vast experience, do you have any suggestions for running the Kendra in the days to come?

Mahalingam: Things are going well as per the wishes of Bhagavan Ramana. I will be pleased if we in Delhi

Kendra can regularly conduct 'veda parayanam' on Sundays and perhaps dedicate more focus to Ramana's teachings as the core theme of our satsangs. This will help maintain the tradition of keeping our attention on the direct path of self enquiry advocated by the great advaitic sage Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. I would again like to convey my heartfelt *namaskars* to Prof. Swaminathan who reinforced my faith and devotion to Bhagavan. I live my life in deep gratitude to the benevolence of my satguru, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Namaste! ■



It is said that for money you can have everything, but you cannot. You can buy food, but not appetite; medicine, but not health; knowledge, but not wisdom; glitter, but not beauty; fun, but not joy; acquaintances, but not friends; servants, but not faithfulness; leisure, but not peace. You can have the husk of everything for money, but not the kernel ”

- Arne Garborg-Norwegian Writer

“All Our Miseries Derive From Not Being Able to Sit Quietly in a Room Alone”

-Blaise Pascal-French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and philosopher.



Beyond T.S.O. (Beyond Time, Space, & Object)

Swami Anubhavananada



If we observe these, we come to know space is an unchanging parameter. We can ask a question, where the Earth is moving? We can ask a question, where is the water? We can ask a question, where is fire, where is air? But we cannot ask a question, where is Space? Space is an unchanging variable. Time is a changing variable. Constant change is called as time. And the funniest part is, these two things are mutually acceptable

How is time born? When a relationship between the Earth and the Sun is established, time is born!! Friends! Time, Space are not realities; you are the Reality beyond time and space! Time and space, are born only after the mind is born.

If there is no mind born, it is neither time nor space. In sound sleep, few questions crop up—first

where we are; second question, when are we; the third question, what are we? When-time, where-space, what-object? Over! So what is the meaning of going beyond time, space and object? Sleep? Bhagavad-Gita tells this only:

*yaa nishaa sarva-bhootaanaam
tasyaam jaagarti samyami*

*yasyaam jaagrati bhootaani saa
nisha pashyato muneh (Bhagavad-
Gita 2.69)*

Wise people are awoken to that which is beyond time, space and object. Otherwise people are awoken to that which is lost in time, space and object. And what are these time, space and object? It's only our imagination!

When we are interested, time is not a problem. When we are not interested, time is a problem. So where is time? When the mind is born, time is born! When the mind

is born, a sequence is established. This is one of the most important principles to know about time. If we are able to arrest sequence formation, we can transcend time and go beyond it. We need to transcend the mind! Only then we can transcend time, space and object.

Time, Space and Object are not realities, these are projection of the mind. Nobody wants to die, so is the case with the mind! Mind doesn't want to die. So to survive, mind has three foods-one food is past memories; second food is future worries and the third food is in the present-comparisons. To go beyond Time, Space and Object, we need to stop one of these.

When we learn from our experiences, we do not make impressions on our mind. When we don't learn from our experiences, we make impressions on our mind. When impressions are not made it is called as wisdom. And, wisdom is light, impressions are heavy.

Now, take everyday examples. Sometimes we had touched the fire in our childhood. And, we got our fingers burnt. We have learned from that- when we touch the fire, we get burnt. Consequently, we don't

have likes or dislikes for the fire, because we have learned from our experience.

Now take the case of relations in your life. It could be your husband, wife, brother or in-laws. We may not like some of them. The reason for this is we have not learnt from our interactions. We need to learn from each of our interactions. If we consciously learn from our interactions with the people in question, over time the old habit of creating impressions and developing a bank balance will diminish.

Spiritual life is all about living in this wisdom. Wisdom dawns when we sincerely observe our mind. If we reflect on our interactions, we will find that most often when we talk to others, we talk about our past. Realising this, we need to take a vow not to talk about our past. If we can do this to ourselves, we will find that our interest in the past of others will decrease dramatically ! Slowly, the mind will start reducing its pace and intensity of thinking. Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi says:

**maanasam tu kim maargane
krithe**

**naiva maanasam marge
arjavaath (Upadesa Saaram - 17)**



Path leading up to Virupaksha Cave



The Samadhi spot of Sage Virupaksha in the cave



View of Annamaliar Temple Towers from Annamalai Hill



Swami Durgeshananada addressing the audience during a satsang on Sunday, July 28'16



Brahamasri Nochur Venkatraman addressing a well attended talk on 'Bhagavan's teachings on Enquiry as a route to Self Realisation' at the Kendra on Saturday August 20, '16



Section of the audience in rapt attention to the words of Brahmarishi Nochur Venkartraman during his talk



A view of Arunachala Hill with its five distinct peaks- “Panchamukam” (meaning Five Faces in Tamil) denoting the five elements that constitute the Universe – Earth, Air, Water, Fire and Sky, Ether or Akasa. Another interpretation is that the five faces represent Lord Siva, his consort Parvati, their two sons, Ganesa and Katikeya (Muruga) and the gatekeeper of the Lord as well the upholder of dharma, the Bull or Nandi



Kinder indeed art Thou than one’s own mother, such is thy love, Oh Arunachala !



Oh undefiled, abide Thou in my heart- so that there may be everlasting joy, Oh Arunachala !

Going beyond Time, Space and Object means ‘working on the mind’ as opposed to ‘working by the mind’. When we work on the mind we manage it not driven by it as in the case of the later.

If we start devoting time to working on it similar to the way we focus on physical exercise to work on the body, we will need to do three things - *First, Don’t talk unless you are invited; Second, Don’t talk unless you are convinced. Keep quiet! Third, Don’t judge and give opinions on any every other issue that crops up in a discussion.*

When we thus start working on the mind, we become extremely mindful of our actions. For instance, knowing that usually when we talk to someone, it is nothing but a recollection of our past experiences, we should ask ourselves, ‘Is it necessary to talk? This can become. simple spiritual sadhana. Remember, Ramana has said, “Silence is the most eloquent language”

Bhagavan to do this beautifully *“ishwara arpitam na icchayaa kritam” Upadesa Saram - 3.*

He says, Follow the path of devotion. When we follow the path of devotion, the mind becomes

single pointed, and pure. Thereafter attend this to your breath through ‘pranayama’ will quieten the mind. *“praana bandhanaath leena maanasam” Upadesa Saram - 14.*

Bhagavan adds...*maanasam tu kim*—That mind which is troubling you, find out what is that mind? We then come to know, that the mind does not exist!. Therefore Bhagvan says, *maanasam tu kim maargane krithe.* Find out what is that mind? –Its just a bundle of thoughts

The mind is an exchange of two types of thoughts: ‘I-thought’ and ‘not-I thoughts’. ‘I-thought’ is singular, ‘not-I thoughts’ plural. All the ‘not-I thoughts’ are dependent on the ‘I-thought’. Therefore ‘I-thought’ is the root or source from which other thoughts emerge. Bhagavan’s recipe is to focus on the source of this I-thought and redirect it from where it emerges and subsume it there itself

It is true that whatever we have give importance to in our life, ultimately leads to pain and suffering . So,what should be our spiritual practice? Devalue everything. By giving an undue importance to our sense of ‘I and mine’ we get dragged into a veritable cess- pool of entanglements. If we stop giving importance to anything

in this world, the mind will dissolve. Once we withdraw our attention from its agitated movements, the mind is left with no choice but to merge with its source- Consciousness.

Chittam chicch vijaniyat takar rahitam yada—Shankaracharya in Sadachar—Consciousness is mind and mind is consciousness. Man is man and the husband is also a man.

Another fallacy is with respect to management of time. We suffer in life, not because of shortage of time; we suffer because of excess of time. Why do old people go into depression? Children never go into depression, because they have no time. What they do is not the criteria, they have no time. And the elderly have to live their 24 hours a day- a case of excess of time. How do we transcend this time? Simple :by being occupied in an activity that is meaningful and enjoyable throughout the day. One technique, to be occupied is to keep learning something new. Let the child in you not die. The best solution is to let go our feeling of importance and not have any image about ourselves! Not having image about ourselves is going beyond time, space and object.

The day we recognise that we are all the victims of our mind we start

understanding ourselves-Aham!

aham ayam kuto bhavathi chinvatha

ayi patathyaham nija vicharanam (Upadesa Saaram - 19)

This I, I, I? ***Kuto bhavati?*** Where is it? Where from it has come? ***Iti chinmatah-*** He who thus enquires, who is miserable, where I am? Where from I have come? ***Iti chinmatah, ayi patathyaham!*** See what happens?

Be attentive! When we look at the bulb, what is our understanding? Light is coming out of bulb; is it not? This light covers the electricity. In the same manner the mind covers the Chaitanya, the Consciousness. To know the electricity behind the light, do we have to switch off? No! We need to simply reflect and acknowledge that this is all the play of mind. Mind your mind; you have learned everything in life.

If the thoughts come, it is a natural condition. Let it come. why worry about the thoughts? When we thus start working on the mind, time, space and objects have no influence on us; we start experiencing the peace akin to that in deep sleep- the peace that we unconsciously always crave for!

Our peace of mind is more valuable than the whole world put together.

Kaama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, maatsarya—jealousy, anger, frustration, greed—we take care of the mind and everything is taken care of. This is what Amritbindu Upanishad says:

mana eva manushyaanaam kaarnam bandha-mokshayoh

banndaaya vishayaasaktam muktam nirvishayam smritam.
(Amrita Bindu Upanishad - 2)

Mind creates the illusion of time,

space and object leading to bondage. The moment, it is transcended, by reflecting and working on it rather than by it, we can overcome its limitations. We then no longer are slaves to any objects of the world. Living in that freedom results in lasting peace and tranquility. ■

{ Swami Anubhavananada is the founder of the SAT BHAVANA TRUST, whose popular "Mauj Mein Raho" series reflects his approach to Life - BE HAPPY. This article is an extract of his talk at Ramana Kendra, Delhi on 18 Oct, 2015.}*



Thought Provoking Passages*

UNDERSTANDING THE REAL: Can a top spinning with speed do so without a firm base, a non-moving ground on which it spins so fast? Could picture be seen in the absence of the white screen? We ignorantly admire the spinning top forgetting the non-moving base; we are lost in the maze of names and shapes that come and go on the screen (the base), blissfully forgetting the adhara, the screen, without which the objects seen cannot have any existence. In short, we miss the gold (the Truth, the Self) for the nama rupa, non-self. We miss the forest for the trees.

Compiled by Prof. Laxmi Narain (See pg. 32 & 39).



Thought Provoking Passages*

REALITY IS BEYOND UNDERSTANDING: Seeking to understand and comprehend the nature of the Divine through the mind is like trying to understand the intricacies of theory of relativity through Newtonian physics. Einstein explained that the universe is a four-dimensional space-time construct which is finite but unbounded. Trying to visualize a four-dimensional space-time universe that is finite, but yet unbounded is impossible for those of us who have been brought up on Newtonian physics. We are used to thinking in spatial terms. Therefore, the two attributes of being finite, and being unbounded or boundary less, seem to be mutually irreconcilable. How can something be finite, and yet have nothing around it or surrounding it? If the universe is not infinite, then there must be something else outside the universe. But according to Relativity theory the universe is finite and yet it is boundary less. Like the sensing of this dimension, spirituality is the mystical and direct experiencing of a higher dimensional reality.



Significance of the Mantra: “Poornamadah Poornamidam...”?

Shiromani Vijay

Every Hindu religious discourse invariably ends with the mantra

Poornamadah Poornamidam

Poornat Poornamudachyate

Poornasya Poornamadaya

Poornamevavishishyte

This mantra is from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (5.1.1) and is the shanti mantra for all the Upanishads from Shuklayajurveda like Brihadaranyaka and Isavaaya.

Poornam adah: that origin of all things is full; poornam idam: this entire creation (that has come from that origin of all things) is also full; poornat poornam udachyate: from that Full this Full has emanated; poornasya poornam adaya: having taken away this Full from that Full; poornam evavasisyate: the Full still remains unaffected.

Here ‘Full’ denotes completeness or infinity. According to our common sense, how can two different things be full? Poornam is taken in the sense of infinity and when infinity is taken out of infinity, it remains infinite. Just as the Atman is the soul of an individual, Brahman is the soul of this universe. To us this universe appears to be full as we cannot visualise anything beyond. This can be called relative fullness. We do experience the fullness or happiness several times a day – when we have a good meal and feel contented, when we are in deep sleep or whenever we get what we long for. But this state is temporary and hence termed as relative. Taking the infinite universe from the infinite Brahman means that if we separate the name and form comprising the universe and look at the substratum, the infinite Brahman shines through.

The four parts of this mantra can

be interpreted thus :

Poornamadah Poornamidam –
“Declaration statement - Udghoshana
vakya”

That, the Supreme Brahman,
is complete and all-pervading. So
also this, the universe manifested
through names and forms is also all-
pervading in its real form.

Poornat Poornamudachyate –
“Teaching -Bodh vakya”

From the infinite Supreme
Brahman as the cause, the universe
which is the effect emanates.
Although it is an effect, it does
not lose the fullness nature of the
Supreme Brahman.

Poornasya Poornamadaya
– “Spiritual Practice -Sadhana
vakya”

When it is realised through
contemplation that the universe is
only an appearance-a superimposition
with names and forms on the Supreme
Brahman, the Supreme Brahman is
realised

Poonamevavishishyte –

“Fruit – Phal”

This mantra seems to cover the
whole upanishadic teaching and
practice. Perhaps this is why any
vedic ritual or discourse ends with
this.

Interestingly, this concept is
validated indirectly by the first
law of thermodynamics in Science:
*“Energy can neither be created nor
destroyed!”* At a deeper level, it
reminds us on the need to be always
aware of and pay attention to that
which is ‘Real and Imperishable’ –
the ‘Fullness or Consciousness’. Sri
Ramana often reminded devotees
on this: focus on -the Source which
everything emanates; do not get
distracted by what appears and
disappears, attend to that which
always is. ■

[e-mail: shiromani.vijay@yahoo.
co.in]

*Shiromani Vijay, editor-
designate of Direct Path is a
member of the managing committee
of Ramana Kendra, Delhi. She is
a keen student of the Upanishads
and Vedanta.*



The Eternal Effulgence

Geetha Ravichandran

I recently watched the movie the “The man who knew infinity” based on the life of the mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujam. The intellectual elite of Cambridge including Ramanujam’s mentor Hardy are the dramatis personae in the film. I found a statement made by Bertrand Russell very interesting. He tells another Cambridge mathematician Littlewood that the rumour is that he (Littlewood) does not actually exist but is a mere figment of Hardy’s imagination. It was of course an example of wry humour. However this statement can be extrapolated (maybe out of context), to clarify many dimensions regarding interpersonal relationships!

The society we live in has taught us to define ourselves through relationships, be it that of family or larger social groups. We enact roles and seek recognition. We mould our values and hopes, to stay in tune with others and set great premium

on consistency in behaviour. This world of relationships (Samsara) keeps us engaged in a roller coaster ride with frequent highs and lows and ensures that we stay bewildered. The symbolism of a mirage even though it may seem trite, is most apt to describe human relationships. Breakdown of communication, the onset disillusionment in relationships after investment of substantial time and energy, are common experiences. In such situations there is often a dawning of a realisation (maybe mutual) that the other person was not what he or she seemed to be. The other person was- in a manner of speaking- a mere construct of one’s imagination kept alive by expectations. There is thus no harvest of happiness although the foraging mind did indeed try hard . On hindsight we appreciate that ignorance veiled certain truths and prevented the real picture from being seen. Ignorance appears to be an essential ingredient of the

mind and is ultimately the source of its limitation. In the labyrinthine passages of the mind we are both busy and lost. We oscillate between extremes – hope and despair, joy and sorrow, perceptions of pain and pleasure. The mind thus does not experience the peace that comes with poise and equanimity.

Bhagavan Ramana gave a direct answer when asked how the rebellious mind is to be brought under control. *“Either seek its source so that it may disappear or surrender that it maybe struck down”.*(Talk 398) . Thus Bhagavan Ramana has made it clear in no uncertain terms that it is destruction of the mind or *mano-nasha* that would enable one to realise one’s nature and know reality. Bhagavan has also clarified that *mano nasa, jnana and chittaikagrata (annihilation of the mind, knowledge and one pointedness) mean the same.* (Talk 275)

Although it is possible to appreciate and logically perceive that the mind is the source of all mischief, there is an equally strong argument that it is a formidable ally in negotiating one’s way through the world. However due to its intrinsic restlessness- it is actually an impediment, when the truth behind the appearance is to be

seen. The input of the senses which are located in a constantly changing body is one of the main reasons that the mind is wavering and fickle.

The identification of the mind with the body is a conditioning and it impacts all aspects of life. A measure of possessiveness and pride creeps in along with this sense of identity. Moreover projection of this identity on a larger platform strengthens it and makes the ego feel important. However there is an underlying subtle lesson that interactions made possible by technological advances holds forth. In this age of intrusive social media, identity- theft and impersonation are not uncommon. A niece was complaining -the other day, about a fake profile created by someone which attracted her real friends. The uniqueness which every individual believes he or she is endowed with, is debunked and replicas take over. Nonexistent attributes and actions are fastened to this phantom persona which others who consider this is a valid entity tend to believe. This is a classic- if extreme example, when others would have opinions and beliefs about a person which have no factual basis. The virtual and augmented reality games which have youngsters enthralled,

also have interactive platforms where new modes of experiential reality emerges. Does this not demonstrate that identity which is greatly cherished is ultimately a creation of the mind?

Ramana Bhagavan has in fact said that the world itself is a creation of the mind. *“The existence of the world in your waking and dream states is admitted because they are products of the mind. The mind is withdrawn in sleep and the world is in condition of a seed. It become manifest over again when you wake up. The ego springs forth, identifies itself with the body and sees the world. The world is a mental creation”*(Talk 487). Ramana Bhagavan had a simple prescription to free oneself from the throes of this problem. *“Take no notice of the ego and its activities, but only see the light behind”*(Talk 146). This thought of Bhagavan echoes across cultures and centuries. In the words of the poet Rumi-

*The body itself is a screen
to shield and partially reveal
the light that’s blazing
inside your presence. (Story
water)*

The light is undeniably within.

The mind that is extroverted fails to see this. Arunachala being a manifestation of grace, is the blazing light that enables one to see one’s real nature.

In the Aksharamanamalai, Bhagavan Ramana has sung about the grace of Arunachala that makes the mind realise its true nature.

*S a k a l a m u m V i z h a n g u m
Kadirolienamena*

Jalaja malartiyidum Arunachala
(Aksharamanamalai 41)

Meaning-It is the rays of the sun which pervade the whole universe, that makes the lotus bud open. Similarly a closed mind cannot be receptive to Self knowledge without the grace of Arunachala . The grace of Arunachala swallows everything.

In the translation by Sadhu Om and Michael James there is a beautiful explanation of this verse.

“ If a cinema show is going on in a tent in daytime, the pictures can be seen on the screen only because of the limited light of the projector and because of the background of artificial darkness caused by the tent. If a powerful wind were to blow away the tent, the bright sunlight would flood in, the darkness would

vanish and thus all the pictures on the screen would be swallowed up. Similarly, the entire picture of the world, soul and God can be seen only because of the limited light of the mind (which is a reflection of the original light of Arunachala, the real Self), and because of the background of the darkness of ignorance caused by forgetfulness of Self. When Self-Knowledge (the bright light of Arunachala) dawns, the background darkness of ignorance or Maya will vanish and thus the whole picture of the World, Soul and God will be swallowed up and disappear.”

In the presence of the Supreme consciousness, the individual mind loses its particular identity and the original effulgence alone prevails. In the same song Ramana Bhagavan has ,by another beautiful analogy described the merging of the finite in the infinite.

*Ambuvil alipol anburu vunil-enai
Anbai karait-tarul Arunachala.
(Aksharamanamalai 101)*

Meaning-O Arunachala! like ice in water, let me graciously melt as love in you, the form of love.

Ice which is solid is a temporary phenomenon due to the external temperature. It is thus an adjunct or

upadhi, and its underlying essence is nothing but water. Similarly the mind or individuality of the devotee is merely a limited state, for its reality is nothing but the Supreme self, which is the unlimited form of love. When ice melts in water, it loses all individual distinction and becomes one with the water.

When the mind merges in the Self it loses its individuality and becomes one with the Self which is the expanded state of awareness. This expansion of the mind takes place in everyday acts of learning where we approach situations with a sense of humility, forgiveness, kindness and compassion. Reaching out to people, to the larger body of wisdom, empathising with others in their times of distress, dissolves the self-centric ego and allows the influx of light. These are instances of the workings of grace. As Ramana Bhagavan used to say grace is always there. When the ego surrenders to Arunachala which is the embodiment of grace, it becomes one with the eternal effulgence. In the Brahmajnanavalli of Adi Shankara it is said

*“Antar jyotir, Bahir jyotir,Pratayak
jyotir paratparah,*

Jyotir jyotir swayam jyotir , Atma

jyoti sivosmyaham”

I am the auspicious one, the inner light and the outer light, the indwelling light, higher than the highest, the light of all lights, self luminous, the light that is the Self.

Arunachala is this all pervading light.

**Geetha Ravichandran is an ardent devotee of Bhagavan Ramana.*

She considers it a great blessing to have been guided on the path of Bhagavan by the late Swami Shanthananda Puri when he was living at Ramanasramam at the feet of Arunachala. An IRS officer, she resides in Bangalore where she is the Commissioner of Income Tax. ■

[e-mail: ravichandran.geetha@gmail.com]



Thought Provoking Passages*

DO BEST WITH FAITH IN GOD: Most of our dissatisfaction stems from expectation of ‘what should be’. The ‘what is’ is what the life presents us from moment to moment. The ‘what should be’ is the mischievous play of mind. Unwittingly we play into a trap which hampers peace. Expecting others to respond or behave in a manner we are comfortable with is the fundamental problem. The need is to live the life fully, and do the best that one can in a given situation, accepting one’s strengths and limitations while not being overly critical or severe on oneself and others. We need to accept ourselves as we are and others as what they are, positively engaging in activity, giving our best attention and care, but not excessively concerning ourselves with outcomes. *Albert Einstein said: “Everything is determined by forces over which we have no control. It is determined for the insect as well as for the star, human beings, vegetables or cosmic dust – we dance to a mysterious tune intoned in the distance by an invisible piper.”*

**Compiled by Prof. Laxmi Narain- A devotee at Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad. He can be reached at <narainprof@yahoo.com>*



Just a Matter of Heart

Samarender Reddy

O, tell me not to meditate
Tell me not about self-enquiry
I am a simpleton
Whose intellect is akin to a child's
But my heart is full of love
And longing for Truth
Withdrawing my senses
I yearn and yearn for Truth
Consumed is my Being
By nothing other than Truth
O, will Truth not yield its secrets
To my child-like plea of heart
"Why not, it will"
Says my simpleton intellect.
With the body and mind.



Ramana with Children

Even though Ramana remained silent in the first years of stay at Virupaksha Cave, many children would climb up to the cave and sit for long periods just to be in his presence. After 1907, sometimes Ramana would join the children in their play. He played marbles with them and referred to this later as follows: *“The holes dug for the purpose must be there even now. Those children sometimes used to bring packets of sweetmeats and we all used to share them. During Deepavali they used to put aside my share of the crackers and bring them up to me. We used to fire the crackers together.”* Ramana has also narrated how two children were emotionally moved when he was about twenty-two and living in the Virupaksha Cave. It seems he was sitting on a rock near the cave when a boy of about eight or 10 came there, looked at Bhagavan and, not being able to bear the sight of such a young and bright person taking to such a hard life of penance,

was so moved by compassion that he started to sob violently for some time. Bhagavan said, “Who could say what the reason for his sobbing was and why tears flowed out of him merely at his seeing me?” Bhagavan has also spoken of another boy, about eight or 10 years old, who met him at Virupaksha Cave. Conversation between Bhagavan and the boy went along these lines ~~ Boy: ‘Why are you here all alone, like this?’ Bhagavan: ‘I had some trouble at home and so have come away like this.’ Boy: ‘Then how about your food?’ Bhagavan: ‘I eat if anybody gives me anything to eat.’ Boy: ‘I have a good master. I shall take you to him. First, you may have to volunteer your services free. If he approves of your work, he will give three paisa a day and gradually increase it to six paisa, and so on’... a reflection of innocent minds genuinely concerned about Bhagavan’s welfare! ■

{Source : World Wisdom online library; www.worldwisdom.com}



Wei Wu Wei

I cannot know Myself as I,
But I can be Myself as I
Why?
Because I am Myself as I.
Then there is no “self” to know,
Nor any “self” to be,
And I am all and no thing.
I can only be conceived as Awareness
Unaware of being aware,
Which is TAO?

*{*Wei Wu Wei (non-doing in Chinese is a concept of Taoism referring to effortless and natural action) was the pen name of Terrance James Stannus Gray (14 Sept.1895- 5 Jan.1986). He was a 20th century Taoist philosopher and writer and was greatly influenced by the teachings of Ramana Maharshi}*

Neera Kashyap

She wrote her poems for the winds
If you read the winds you can read them
Sometimes the winds also
bring them to you
as a sort of caress
to the eyes, to the blood
to the heart....



श्री रमण महर्षि के संस्मरण

46

विश्वनाथ स्वामी (1904-1979) महर्षि के दूर के रिश्तेदार थे। 1923 में वे पूर्णतः महर्षि की शरण में आ गए और 1950 (महर्षि के महानिर्वाण का वर्ष) तक वहीं रहे। वे अंग्रेजी, तमिल और संस्कृत भाषाओं के विद्वान थे। प्रसिद्ध 'रमण अष्टोत्तर शतनाम स्त्रोतम्' इनकी ही रचना है।

पहली बार जब मैंने महर्षि के दर्शन किए तब उन्हें देखकर मैं रोमांचित हो गया था। मुझे ऐसा लगा कि एक अति सूक्ष्म, असीम आभा, जिसका केंद्र महर्षि का शरीर है, चारों ओर विकीर्ण होकर सबको अपने में निमग्न कर रही है, और उसने मुझे निगल लिया है। उस परम पवित्रता और प्रशांति के वातावरण में मैं महर्षि के साथ एक सप्ताह रहा। मैंने महर्षि में कुछ बहुत ही सम्मोहक तत्व पाया, जो उन्हें अन्य सबसे विशिष्ट बना रहा था।

ऐसा लगता था कि महर्षि शरीर से सर्वथा अलिप्त रह कर जी रहे हैं। उनके मुख पर और उनकी मुस्कान में एक विलक्षण आध्यात्मिक सम्मोहिनी थी। जब वे बोलते तब ऐसा लगता कि शब्द किसी अगाध गहराई में से आ रहे हैं। उनके व्यक्तित्व में और व्यवहार में पवित्रता और अनासक्ति स्पष्ट झलकती थी। मुझे उनमें कुछ अति उदात्त और परम पवित्र होने की अनुभूति होती थी। उनके समीप होने से मन के सारे विकेप एक शक्तिशाली गंभीर प्रशांति से पराजित हो जाते थे। उनकी सन्निधि में परमानंद का सीधा अनुभव होता था।

एक बार मैंने महर्षि से पूछा कि मैं अपनी पाशवकि वृत्तियों से कैसे ऊपर उठ सकता हूँ ? उन्होंने बड़ी सहानुभूति और अनुकंपा पूर्वक कहा, “मन और इंद्रियों से अधिक बलशाली शक्ति को जगाकर ही इन्हें वश किया जा सकता है। यदि तुम अपने भीतर उस शक्ति को जगाकर ही इन्हें वश किया जा सकता है। यदि तुम अपने भीतर उस शक्ति को जगाकर उसका पोषण करो तो इन सब पर विजय पा सकोगे। ध्यान के प्रवाह को निरंतर बनाए रखना चाहिए। सात्विक, मिताहार व अन्य संयमों से आंतरिक स्थिरता बनाने में सहायता मिलती है।” फिर आगे कहा, “जब तक तुम अपने आपको शरीर की सीमा से दूर नहीं ले जाओगे, तब तक यौन विचारों और विघ्नों से नहीं बच सकोगे।”

महर्षि को किसी प्रकार का भी अपव्यय पसंद नहीं था। एक बार उन्होंने मुझे इसलिए डाँटा कि मैं मिटटी के तेल की सहायता से कोयले की अंगीठी जलाने का प्रयास कर रहा था, जब कि वे आस-पास पड़ी सूखी टहनियों और सूखे पत्तों से जलाई जा सकती थी। ■

क्रमशः

“श्री रमण महर्षि 120 व्यक्तियों के प्रबोधनकारी, प्रेरणादायक संस्मरण”
पुस्तक से उद्धरति
(यह पुस्तक रमण केन्द्र, दिल्ली में उपलब्ध है।)

Translated from Hindi version of book

'Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi'

(This book is available at Ramana Kendra, Delhi).



श्री रमण महर्षि से बातचीत

7 जनवरी, 1937

322. एक सुसंस्कृत महिला, मद्रास के एक प्रसिद्ध सोलिसिटर की पुत्री ने प्रश्न किया : आपके उपदेशानुसार संकल्पों से मुक्त रहने का क्या उपाय है ? क्या वह 'मैं कौन हूँ' की एकमात्र खोज ही है ?

महर्षि : तुम्हें केवल सहज शान्त रहना है। करो और देखो।

भक्त : यह असम्भव है।

महर्षि : सही है। इसलिए 'मैं कौन हूँ' की शोध का निर्देश दिया जाता है।

भक्त : जिज्ञासा करने पर अन्दर से कोई प्रतिक्रिया नहीं होती।

महर्षि : तुम किस प्रकार की प्रतिक्रिया की आशा करती हो ? क्या तुम वहाँ नहीं हो ? और क्या ?

भक्त : और अधिक संकल्प उठते हैं।

महर्षि : तभी और उसी समय यही प्रश्न करो "मैं कौन हूँ ?"

भक्त : क्या मुझे प्रत्येकसंकल्प के उठने पर यह करना आवश्यक है ? अच्छा। क्या जगत् केवल हमारा संकल्प है ?

महर्षि : यह प्रश्न जगत् पर छोड़ दो। यह उसे ही पूछने दो "मैं अस्तित्व मैं कैसे आया ?"

भक्त : क्या आपका आशय है कि इससे मेरा सम्बन्ध नहीं है ?

महर्षि : गहन निद्रा में कुछ भी अनुभव नहीं होता; ये सब जागृति के बाद ही दीखते हैं; संकल्पों के उदय होने के बाद ही जगत् भासित होता है; यह संकल्प के अतिरिक्त और क्या हो सकता है ?

एक अन्य दर्शक ने पूछा : मन को शान्त करने के लिए हम क्या करें ?

महर्षि : पहले मन को पकड़कर यहाँ लाया जाय : तब हम उसको शान्त करने के उपाय एवं साधन पर विचार करेंगे।

भक्त : मेरा भाव यह था कि यह सदैव चंचल रहता है—जब हम जप करते हैं तब भी।

महर्षि : जप का उद्देश्य केवल मन को शान्त करना है।

भक्त : इस हेतु कौन—सा जप उत्तम है ?

महर्षि : कोई भी उपयुक्त, जैसे गायत्री।

भक्त : क्या गायत्री से हो जायगा ?

महर्षि : क्या इससे श्रेष्ठ कोई है ? जो इसे करने में समर्थ नहीं हैं वे ही अन्य मन्त्र खोजते हैं। सत्य का पूर्ण क्षेत्र इसके अन्तर्गत आ जाता है। जप से ध्यान होगा और यही आत्म—साक्षात्कार का मार्ग है।

भक्त : क्या इसके लिए आधा घण्टा पर्याप्त होगा ?

महर्षि : यह सदा करना आवश्यक है, अथवा जितनी देर तक तुम कर सको। ■

क्रमशः

“श्री रमण महर्षि से बातचीत” पुस्तक से उद्धरति
(यह पुस्तक रमण केन्द्र, दिल्ली में उपलब्ध है।)

Translated from 'Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi'
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*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)}

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

Ramana Maharshi (Upadesa Saram-16)

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E: botil@botilindia.com, botil@vsnl.com

W: www.botilindia.com

Works:

Bhora Kalan, Bilaspur-Pataudi Road, Off NH-8, MS-60

Dist. Gurgaon 122413, Haryana

T: +91 124 2866300 (30 lines) **F:** +91 124 2279382

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