

DIRECT PATH

RAMANA KENDRA
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"If the mind falls asleep, awaken it. Then if it starts wandering, make it quiet. If you reach the state where there is neither sleep nor movement of mind, stay still in that, the natural state."

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi



23. ओं उदासीनाय नमः

Om udasinaya namah

One who is seated high above

24. ओं महायोगिने नमः

Om mahayogine namah

The great yogi, one whose whole being is in the Self

25. ओं महोत्साहाय नमः

Om mahotsahaya namah

The one supremely zealous

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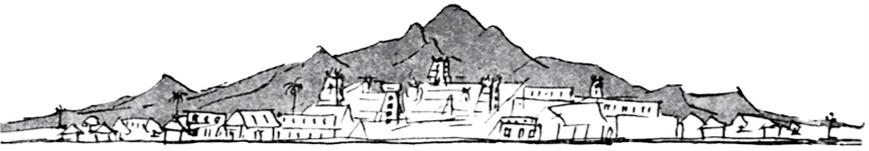
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Original ink sketch of Arunachala by Sri Ramana Maharshi from Kunju Swami's notebook

RAMANA GYAN DIRECT PATH

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Editor's Note

As the journal depends on articles from volunteer writers, I would 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 a longer format (around 2300 words). Please send in your contributions through email by July 10th, 2019 to editor.dp@rkdeldhi.org

We look forward to hearing from you!

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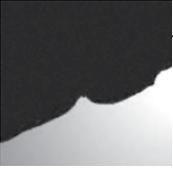
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The Might of Grace

Swagat Patnaik

Grace in the spiritual context is the Lord's unmerited favour. It is considered as

His goodness towards those who have no claim on, or reason to expect it. It is an expression of divine favour. In simple terms it is mentioned as the 'gift of God'. The equivalent word in Hindi is '*kripa*', in Tamil '*arul*'.

Bhagavan Ramana used to reiterate the need for an individual's self-effort to benefit from grace. Why so? Perhaps, to encourage spiritual aspirants not to diminish their intent and to reinforce their faith and fortitude in letting the mysterious manner of grace to unwind and flow. Given the huge propensity of people and even mature aspirants, to fall victims to the vicissitudes of the play of maya and phenomenal life, the dedication and single-minded devotion to understanding oneself in its truest sense, becomes very crucial and important. Sri Ramana has said 'Grace is ever present like

the shining sun. It is for us to let it flow and engulf us by opening the windows that conceal it'. And yet, the Katha Upanishad mentions that 'only he whom it chooses can understand it. To him does it reveal its identity' (Verse 1.2.23)!

What can one infer from this seemingly contradictory statement? Devaraja Mudaliar, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan who often ventured to pose many a tricky question to Bhagavan has this to say. 'While Bhagavan was unequivocal in emphasizing the need for self-effort, I personally feel that this was due to His knowing my inherent indolent nature and not let me stop pursuing my spiritual journey with full dedication! Mudaliar cites the metaphor of the young monkey holding on to its mother as compared to the pulling of the kitten, carried by the neck in its mother's jaws. The former in Tamil is called '*Markata Nýāyam*' and the latter '*Mārjala Nýāyam*'. Mudaliar

always pleaded with Bhagavan that he was like the helpless kitten and not like the young monkey which made the effort to cling on to its mother's chest. Bhagavan stressed on the need for an individual to take some steps with sincerity of intent, which in His words would translate as a multiplier effect of multiple steps through the working of the divine, manifesting as grace.

While the easier part is the intellectual acceptance of the truth through scholarship, reading and listening, the ultimate test of real understanding is transforming this intellectual understanding to a state of 'complete abidance'. It can be inferred that this transformation from 'enlightenment' (complete understanding) to 'awakening' (absolute abidance in the self) can only happen through grace. The when, how, where and the workings of the mysterious grace cannot be comprehended intellectually.

The key pre-requisite apart from sincerity of intent and devotion is the subjugation of one's personal volition or sense of ego... not an easy task! This annihilation of one's sense of importance becomes more difficult as one gains status, wealth, name and fame. It can only happen when one is absolutely and fully ready to unconditionally surrender to the 'Will of the Supreme', every moment of one's life.

In the words of Bhagavan answering Devaraja Mudaliar's query, would He help him get over the travails and trappings of the phenomenal life? *"Whether I do or don't do anything, you have to simply surrender and keep quiet."*

In other words, the why, how and when of the workings of grace should not be our concern. It is His Will to work His grace on us in a manner that He deems fit that best suits our spiritual journey and progress. ■

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If the mind, which is the instrument of knowledge and, is the, basis of all activity, subsides, the perception of the world as an objective reality ceases.

-Sri Ramana Maharshi-

I am Swagat Patnaik, the new editor of Ramana Kendra, Delhi's journal, Direct Path. I have taken over from Smt. Shiromani Vijay who served as editor from 2014 to 2019, handling the editorial and production aspects of the magazine with both competence and commitment, helping the journal evolve through refreshing changes. From 2016, she worked to bring each issue online onto the Kendra's website simultaneously with the print edition. The Kendra wishes to acknowledge her services with deep appreciation.

Additional Notes:

- Till recently, a bi-monthly and bi-lingual journal in English and Hindi, Direct Path, henceforth, will be a quarterly and in English.
- Aksharamanamalai series from the earlier issues of direct path will be concluded in the next issue of the magazine.
- For the current issue (May to July), some of the noteworthy events from Bhagavan's time are as follows:
 - o Bhagavan's 69th Aradhana: May 2, 2019
 - o Cow Lakshmi Day: July 13, 2019
 - o Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni Day: June 25, 2019

You have to ask yourself the question, "Who am I"? This investigation will lead in the end to the discovery of something within you which is behind the mind. Solve that great problem and you will solve all other problems thereby.

-Sri Ramana Maharshi-

Put Full Faith in the Guru

Once a visitor said:

“I have been coming to you, Swami, many times, hoping that something will happen and I shall be changed. So far I do not see any change in me. I am as I was: a weakling of a man, an inveterate sinner.”

And he started weeping piteously.

“On this road there are no milestones,” replied Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

“How can you know which direction you are going?”

Why don't you do what the first-class railway passenger does?

If you could trust your Guru (by surrendering completely to Him) as much as you trust the railway guard, it would be quite enough to make you reach your destination.

Your business is to shut the door and windows (of doubts, fear, worries) and sleep (with full faith). The guard will wake you up at your destination.”

[Source: Krishna Bikshu – Sri Ramana Leela]

Just the spider draws out the thread of the cobweb from within itself and withdraws – it again into itself, in the same way the projects the world out of itself and absorbs it back into itself.

-Sri Ramana Maharshi-



Pradakshina

Micheal Highburger



Part IV

Pradakshina is the natural way of things and delineates a primordial order in the universe. The earth and the other planets in their orbit do pradakshina around the Sun, while all created beings, faintly cognisant of their formless origins, seek the source of light hidden at their centre.

The first form of worship, pradakshina is circumambulation of the Self, which, though immaterial, is our true, original form. It expresses in bodily action a deep longing to return to the unmoving Source of Being. Pradakshina is ‘right-facing’ because it is the right side of the body that represents the inward Formless Self while the left expresses outward bodily manifestation. In India, whether walking or traveling by conveyance, people instinctively pass one another on the left side in a ‘right-facing’ manner, thereby intuitively venerating the divinity that

dwells as the Self within the heart of the other.

But what is done habitually is often unconscious, and though a fervent yearning to transcend the impermanence of the world undergirds many human actions, the veil of ignorance often causes people to lose sight of their deeper aspirations and the singular purpose of their lives.

Lord Arunachala’s Plan

Such a veil had settled over the generations of the modern world including those inhabiting the regions of Holy Arunachala in the late 1800s. Intimate devotion to the Lord of Sona Hill had dissipated and Arunachala’s former glory had receded from collective memory. Even though traditional rites during Kartigai Deepam, Mahasivaratri and other feasts were faithfully maintained, many failed to grasp their deeper

significance. The former fervor for *girivalam* had disappeared as a paucity of understanding caused people to search outwardly for what lay overlooked within them.

The Unmoving One set about to remedy this state of affairs and devised a simple plan. It hinged on a young Tamil boy who lived a few hundred kilometres south of Arunachala in the town of Madurai. The son of a court pleader, the boy was ordinary in every respect. He played like other children of the time, attended the mission school and was being prepared for the householder's life to be a breadwinner for the family. Though born into an upright orthodox family, economic necessity had come to supersede adherence to traditional ways and young Venkataraman failed to receive the training of his forefathers. Vedic recitation, Sanskrit grammar, memorising the hallowed verses of the Puranas, performing yagna and puja, singing hymns and stotras dedicated to Iswara and going on pilgrimage to the great temples and shrines of the region were not part of the secular curriculum at the local school. Yet this proved no setback for Lord Arunachala. He planted his seed of fatherly affection within the boy's heart. In it lay the

promise of restoration, not only for the child's kith and kin, but for all in the Tamil land and beyond.

Unknown to young Venkataraman a great power was quietly at work within him. One day he chanced upon a copy of *Periapuranam* and when he opened the book and discovered the stories of the 63 nayanmars—the devotee-saints of Lord Siva—he found he was unable to put it down and went on reading its tales over and again with great enthusiasm. Gradually he lost interest in the boyhood games he and his companions were wont to play on the grounds of the nearby Meenakshi temple but instead found himself at the temple's inner sanctum prostrate before the nayanmar *murthis*, weeping tears of devotion. This was Lord Arunachala's plan beginning to unfold.

An uncle came to visit the family in Chokkappa Nayakar Street, Madurai. When Venkataraman learned that his relative was coming from *Arunachala*, he was struck with wonder: "How could anyone", he thought, "visit Arunachala—that fabled, otherworldly realm, host to gods, devas, vidyadharas and celestial beings—and return to this world?" The relative explained that Arunachala was a physical

place and lay in his native Tamil Nadu at Tiruvannamalai. Filled with excitement, Venkataraman pondered this revelation and quietly repeated the name that had pulsed deep within him from his early boyhood and now awakened in him such a ferment of introspection.

Arunachala's Summoning

The following year Lord Arunachala delivered his *coup de grace*, the definitive visitation that would alter the lad's life forever and indeed shape the course of human history. As the sixteen-year old sat alone in the upstairs room one Sunday, he had intimations of death. As the feeling grew more intense, he realised that he was passing away from this world and would soon be no more. He lay prostrate and felt his form stiffen as the life force drained out of his body. He then heard himself softly uttering the following words: "Now, death has come. What does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies." He extended his limbs rigid like a corpse and held his breath: "This body is dead. It will be carried to the burning ground and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body, am 'I' dead? Am 'I' this body? The material body dies,

but the spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. I am therefore deathless spirit."

Such was the sequence of reflections that attended a great discovery. But instead of meeting with physical death, he found he had transcended death in a profound realisation that left him with the clear understanding that he was not his body but rather the Imperishable Self, the Eternal Witness dwelling within. From that time on, he found himself in a continual state of absorption, indifferent to the events of ordinary life.

Arunachala's plan now fully in place, it was only some six weeks before the boy made up his mind to leave home forever. And so, at the end of August 1896, he set off in secret for Arunachala, the great Mountain of whose location he had only just learned.

Catching Hold of Young Ramana

Upon arriving in Tiruvannamalai, the Lord of Arunachala drew young Ramana yet nearer and he entered Arunachala temple and embraced the holy linga there. He took his place in the Patala Linga where, by becoming himself unmoving, he melded with

the One Unmoving Akshara that is Arunachala. For others at the temple, the mere sight of the boy engendered hope, rekindling a dormant flame within them. Citizens of the town saw in his radiant young face and clear penetrating eyes the flame of wisdom whose light had been for them up till then only a faint memory. In him they rediscovered the mystery of Arunachala's true form: the pillar of stone is in reality the very Light of Consciousness Itself.

Dispossessed, living as a sadhu,

young Bhagavan began to explore the Mountain who had 'stolen into his heart' I and drawn him like a magnet to Tiruvannamalai. He ranged Its slopes, meditated on its sublime form, hymned Its ageless past and savoured its infinitely varying aspects. In time, followers gathered round him and the burgeoning young sage led them in the ancient, forgotten rite-circumambulating holy Annamalai, singing the timeless glory of Siva's own form. ■

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I From my home Thou didst entice me, then stealing into my heart didst draw me gently into Thine, (such is) Thy Grace, O Arunachala! (Aksharamanamalai, v. 97).

When the goal is reached, when you know the knower, there is no difference between living in a house in London and living in the solitude of a jungle.

-Sri Ramana Maharshi-



Ramana Maharshi and the Socratic Method

Kushal Shah



Ramana Maharshi was an enlightened Master who hardly did any preaching, but attracted a large number of devotees simply by the power of his presence. His primary means of providing spiritual guidance was through conversations with the seeker and most interestingly, many of these conversations took place in silence. Devotees would come to have his darshan with lots of questions, but after being in his presence for a while would often have all their questions answered, without the Maharshi uttering a single word. And when the Maharshi did answer questions in the spoken form, the answers were not merely lines picked up from the scriptures meant to be memorized by the devotees, but something that would make them dive deeper into themselves. Ramana Maharshi was not an ordinary Guru with a desire to gather a large following. He was truly liberated with no desires. Neither did he have a desire to impress, nor to express, but only to silently

inspire his devotees to seek a simple and pure inner experience of the highest kind. His primary method was that of self-enquiry, which means asking ever deeper questions about yourself, till you reach the source.

A spiritual practice leads to enormous spiritual growth, only if the rest of our daily lives is in tune with our practice. This is why Vedanta puts special emphasis on integrating our spiritual goal into every single aspect of our lives. If these mundane aspects of our life are not in accordance with our spiritual goals, progress is stymied, which can either lead to frustration or loss of interest in practice of spirituality itself. This is one of the reasons why idol worship was introduced in Hindu society. Being aware of the formless reality is indeed very difficult for most people. But having a form or picture or idol can be a great help to remember the spiritual ideal and shape their daily lives around it. Similarly, the path of self-enquiry may appear quite exciting on

the surface since it gives lot of freedom to the seeker to ask questions, but it can also be quite challenging because it becomes very difficult if we have not cleared up our minds.

Our education system and family and work lives largely revolve around obedience to various authorities (teachers, parents, seniors, etc.). Children in general are not expected to ask too many questions in classrooms or in their homes. Our regular lives are designed to follow what we are asked to do.

To illustrate, the entrance examinations to our leading universities are largely based on repeated practice of a large number of problem sets, which leads to a dulling down of the mind. Add on to that the never-ending flow of information from social media and it becomes almost impossible to take up any practice which requires immense dedication, concentrated effort and fortitude. In such a scenario, it is not practical to expect many people to be able to undertake the path of self-enquiry. This indeed is an unsatisfactory condition that we find ourselves entangled in. Hence, it is important to work towards bringing about a radical change in ourselves and our education system, if we wish our future generations to be spiritually aspirational.

One of the ways, we can initiate a change for the better is by encouraging

adoption of the Socratic method in our schools, colleges, families and other organizations. The Socratic method is a very powerful method to arrive at solutions to various problems and also to teach various concepts in a classroom. It essentially proceeds through an open-ended discussion on a particular topic, consisting of question and answers posed by all the members involved. This method also fosters a deep sense of connectivity between various theoretical concepts we are familiar with and our own perception of reality. It helps in clearing much of our biases which prevent the free flow of our thought process. In other words, the Socratic method can be a perfect precursor to the spiritual path of self-enquiry and the two can be made to beautifully merge into each other. This can be of high importance, since our current societal setup and education system are quite in contrast to the ancient spiritually grounded one.

The Socratic method of teaching and Ramana Maharshi's path of self-enquiry can together provide a fascinating opportunity to encourage our young generation to introspect about the world around as well as the inner world of their own experiences, and in the process realize that these two are essentially one and the same.■

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The Significance of 'AUM'

Vijay Vancheswar



'AUM' is a sacred sound. It is primordial in nature; beginningless and endless. There is no equivalent of this in the English language. Seers and Masters have always acknowledged the sanctity and importance of this sound. Sri Ramana emphasized the importance of paying undivided attention to the base sound, likened to the '*Tambura Sruthi*', which seamlessly integrates the undulating tones in music. He also gave the example of the Screen on which play, or drama of life is enacted. The focus of attention should be the Screen not on what unfolds on it. This is also termed as 'Consciousness' or Reality likened to 'I' the Subject. 'AUM' is verily the base on which the rest appear and disappear.

Zen Masters tell their disciples to find the sound of one hand clapping! Obviously one hand cannot clap and produce music. As Osho says, always two are needed to tango; to dance or to create sound. He says, two are needed

for a child to be born- man and woman. Indeed, two are needed for all aspects of phenomenal existence. By its very nature, life is a mixture of pluses and minuses, the positives and negatives, Life needs death as its opposite. Indeed, duality is a pre-requisite for life as we see to happen. The third state beyond the two states is transcendental, the two states are not needed for it. It is called '*anahat nad*'², the unstruck sound, one hand clapping. This sound is the very nature of existence, which is a subtle music. This state is reached only when we are conscious of the '*turiya*' or fourth state. It is characterized by the absence of thinking or an indifference to the flow of thoughts. Ramana Maharshi calls this the state of 'Wakeful Sleep'; where one is as one always is, just being or one with Consciousness. The resultant joy which is mellifluous, and perennial is what 'AUM' represents. Osho clarifies³ that 'AUM' is not a mantra; it must be comprehended and understood. 'AUM' is not a word, it is a pure sound. Just as Bhagavan Ramana

used the oxymoron, 'wakeful sleep', 'AUM' is the 'sound of soundlessness', the 'sound of stillness'. It represents the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep and the fourth or '*turiya*' state of being. This is perhaps why the philosopher writer, Jiddu Krishnamurthi, stressed on 'attentive awareness' or the state of 'Conscious Awareness'.

Our job is to be fully aware, every moment of our life; whether walking, working, resting or observing. Actions done with full awareness connect us to the primordial sense of beingness. Indeed '*Yoga*' which means co-joined with consciousness is simply described as 'perfection in action'. When our actions are done with full awareness, perfection happens. Sri Ramana demonstrated this in the simplest of acts such as the cutting of vegetables, writing, sewing of a cloth-piece, making of a walking staff or the simple act of sharpening a pencil. The other noticeable trait of a state of complete awareness, (which was amply seen in Bhagavan), is the 2 Osho: 'Truth Simply Is...Talks on Sufism', Full Circle Publishing, 1980, p.113 3 Ibid prevalence of total peace and calmness and a preference for solitude. Solitude unlike loneliness is to be cherished and can only result when we are fully absorbed in 'what is'.

Most often, we are victims of loneliness seeking the crutches of external support through gadgets, people, conversations and activities.

When we are vigilant, watchful and aware of the underlying thread of existence which permeates through us, we blend with the sound of '*AUM*'. We can then put to practice what Sri Ramana advocated- 'perpetual witnessing'. Witnessing of what thoughts seize our mind, the desires that sprout and seek our attention, and the mischievous games that our mind play on us, to trap us in the whirlpool of events that comprise phenomenal life. At an advanced state such as that of Bhagavan Ramana, one is not smitten by any of these trappings. In general, we find ourselves grappling, failing and falling as victims to the play of *maya*, the storehouse of illusions and delusions. The sound of '*AUM*' is a constant reminder to us. To seek the state of vigilant repose, nonchalant about the external, absorbed in the internal, attentive to the real, uninvolved with the transient. Bhagavan Ramana perpetually exuded this state, blending with the perpetual sound of '*AUM*', soaked in divinity and the ceaseless presence of the Lord. ■

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2 Osho: 'Truth Simply Is...Talks on Sufism', Full Circle Publishing, 1980, p.113
3 Ibid



Light on Self-Inquiry

The Intruder in the Wedding

Swami Chidananda



It was the good old days. The train with its steam engine arrived early morning at the village station to the great excitement of hundreds who had gathered on the platform. There was a large group with bouquets and garlands in their hands. They were eagerly waiting for an hour to receive the man of the day, the bridegroom for the wedding to take place by noon. And lo, here he was, alighting with a gentle smile. The elders received him with a lot of love and affection. At this time they noticed another young man, as good-looking as the groom himself and equally well-dressed, radiant, beaming a bright smile. Who was this?

He must be a close friend of the groom, a VIP indeed for the day. They garlanded him too and he got a seat in the same car as the groom did, as they sped towards the big village house of the bride, which was the venue for the wedding. The young man spoke with style and made inquiries about the

village. Everybody was impressed with his impressive appearance and charm. All were hesitant to ask him directly who he was. Even the bridegroom wondered who this fellow was.

He was there now, receiving great attention and making demands from people on both sides, that of the bride and that of the bridegroom. Each side thought he was a very important person of the other side. As people settled down and the elaborate wedding ritual got going, this man was enjoying maximum hospitality and soon proved to be a hard-to-please guest. At the least discomfort caused to him, he would fret and fume. A little delay in serving a cold drink, a little lapse in the matter of providing cooling fans where he sat, a little neglect because of kind inquiries that the hosts made to other guests, anything and everything now seemed to get on the nerve of this VIP whose identity was not clear to anybody. The hosts thought, "Let the people from the groom's side talk to

him. He is an important member of their party.” Relatives of the groom thought, “We do not know him. We saw him after we arrived at the station this morning. He must be very special to the bride or her family.” They too hesitated.

Who is this VIP? Where did he come from? Did he belong to the bride’s side? Was he from the groom’s party?

At last, much annoyed by his behavior, a few people from both the sides got together and approached him. “Who are you? What is your relation to the bride or to the groom? Wherefrom have you come?” He first succeeded in avoiding these questions and diverted their attention to other topics. When they persisted though, he felt quite cornered. He made some pretext and quietly disappeared from the place, never to return again.

Erase the Ego

The ego is like this intruder at the wedding. The body may be likened to the bridegroom and the spirit (*chaitanya*) to the bride. The ego belongs neither to the body nor to the spirit. However, it draws from both a form from the body and liveliness from the spirit. And every one of us, whose true nature is the spirit and who is endowed with a body, suffers

when this ego rises. We neither revel in the freedom of the spirit nor are we able to use the body as a good instrument. All our energies go in the psychological disturbances created by the ego. Therefore, we need to inquire, Who am I?

The right answer, as *Upanishads* would supply to us, is: “I am the spirit.” A second answer, which is down-to-earth and is not too bad, could be: “I am this body.” Then comes a third answer, which is the hotbed of all trouble, and that is: “I am this person with such accomplishments and such shortcomings.” This self-description, made of judgment and evaluation, is clearly the work of thought, of memories. It is a departure from the living present moment but draws from the past and projects into the future too. The ego entertains hopes like, “I may become very famous soon” or fears like, “Oh, the economic scenario will spell my doom.” While regrets and pride are the strands of the past, hopes and fears relate to the future.

Inquiry makes the ego flee. The intruder leaves the marriage hall. The marriage function proceeds in peace and joy. Our life proceeds in calm and harmony when the ego ends. The inquiry needed is marked by vigil. Countless objects of the

world constantly distract us. We then do not see how our own mind works. In perfect vigil, intense awareness of thoughts leads to discovering a new dimension to our existence, which is indescribable. Some literature calls it a void (*shoonya*) while the Vedānta considers it the door to the Pure Self (*ātmā*). When a monk asked Maharshi Ramana how he could prevent the mind from being distracted, the sage said 1 , “You see the objects when you forget your own Self. If you keep hold of your Self, you will not see the objective world.” The Vedānta thus speaks of abidance in the Self *ātma-nisthā* but Buddhist schools prefer to avoid any proposition of the Self, a permanent substrate. They only

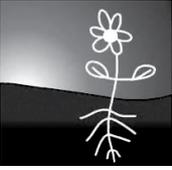
negate the self (ego). Since the Self proposed by the Vedānta is nothing material– gross or subtle– and it is not describable in words, some scholars wonder if the difficulty is of language. Some have drawn an analogy in this context of how, in modern physics, an electron is both a particle (having mass) and a wave (energy). Could it be that the Reality is both *shoonya* (no thing) and the Self (every thing)? Would Shankara and Buddha smile at each other without an issue between them? ■

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The life of action need not be renounced. If you meditate for an hour or two every day, you can then carry on with your duties.

-Sri Ramana Maharshi-



An old devotee, Somasundara Swami, once begged Bhagavan to write in his notebook at least an akshara (a single syllable). An akshara also means undecaying and denotes Brahman. Bhagavan wrote a short epigram on the difficulty of writing down the akshara. This is the first verse below. The remaining verses were written at odd times by Bhagavan.

- One syllable shines forever in the Heart as Self. Who is there anywhere
who can write it down?

-Incessant search for Self, the love supreme of God we call.
For He alone as Self abides within the Heart of all.

-What introverted mind calls peace, outside as power is shown;
Those who have reached and found this truth, their unity have known.

-By him alone who's saved himself can other folk be freed;
The help of others is as if the blind the blind, would lead.

-The dove escaping from the hunter's hand
escapes too from the forest, it is said. When
the hunter for the "I" gains freedom,
the forest shrinks into a home.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi



Na tatra suryo bhati

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति

Shiromani Vijay



At the end of every Satsang, when the Arati is performed, the following mantra is recited:

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं
नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं
तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति

Let us try to understand the real purport of this mantra. This mantra which states the vedantic vision that Brahman is self-effulgent, occurs in Mundakopanishad, Katopanishad and Svetasvatara Upanishad. The concept is dwelt in detail in Brihadaranyakopanishad and explained also in the Bhagavad Gita (Ch 15.12).

The meaning of the mantra is:

The Sun does not shine here, nor does the moon, nor the stars, the lightning does not shine here, much less this fire. When He shines, everything shines after Him. By His

light alone, everything shines.

This is a description of the brahman as *swayam jyothi*– self-effulgent. Chaitanya is referred to as *jyotishaam jyothihi*– light of all lights. We generally translate the word Chaitanya as consciousness for want of a better word. However, in the English language we hear of phrases like higher consciousness and lower consciousness. But this cannot be the meaning of Chaitanya which is light of all lights. What exactly is meant by ‘light’? It is the principle by which an object becomes evident or illumined. For example, when sunlight (or any source of light) falls on an object, we come to know the presence of that object. Without our eyes, light is of no use. We can say eyes illumine light Similarly it is the mind which illumines the eyes. What illumines the mind is the Chaitanya or consciousness or the “I” principle which is *swayam prakasha* or self-effulgent. No other means is necessary

to illumine the consciousness.

There are 4 points which describe the *svayam prakasha* principle of Chaitanya or “I” principle or Atma or the Brahman:

- “*Svetara aprakashatvam*” – Not illumined by anything else

- “*Prakashantara nirapekshatvam*”

– No light is needed for illumination

- “*Prakashantara prakashakatvam*”

- All other lights are illumined by Atma

- “*Svetara sarvaprakashakatvam*”

– Everything is illumined by Atma

In the above mantra, the pronouns (*tam. Tasya*) refers to Brahman, Atman or Chaitanya.

During the ritualistic Arati, when we recite this mantra we acknowledge the Brahman as the light of all lights and our inability to illumine Brahman with the little lamp. Brahman cannot be illumined by even the sun, moon, stars or the lightning. Usually the sanctum sanctorum is dark and the deity is revealed during the Arati. It signifies our ignorance about our Atma which is meant to be removed with the light of knowledge. When we put our hands on the light that illumined the deity, we pray that it illumines the divine knowledge within us.

In the Talk 420 with Bhagavan, a devotee asked him to explain the meaning of this mantra. Bhagavan

answered, “there is only He. He and His Light are the same. There is no individual to perceive other things, because the perceiver and the perceived are only He. The sun, the moon, etc., shine forth. How? Do they come and tell you that they shine forth or does another apart from them say that they shine forth?”

Devotee: Of course, I say that they shine forth.

Bhagavan says, “therefore they shine on account of you and again consciousness is necessary to know that they shine forth. That consciousness is your Self or you. So, then you or your consciousness is the same as He and His Light by which all else shine forth.”

Devotee: Is that Light like sunlight?

Bhagavan replies “No. The sunlight is jada (insentient). You are aware of it. It makes objects perceptible and chases away darkness, whereas consciousness is that Light which makes not only light but also darkness perceptible. Darkness cannot exist before sunlight, but it can remain in the Light of Consciousness. Similarly, this consciousness is pure knowledge in which both knowledge and ignorance shine.” ■

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Ramana and the Many Millions

Bharati Mirchandani



Two books gifted to Ma to help tide over tough times were *Autobiography of a Yogi* and *Ramana Maharshi, Path to Self Knowledge*. I raced through the first one, but the second was left unopened. Perhaps, the matt yellow paper of the cover reminded me of Charminar cigarette packaging which was taboo for a nine year old.

Two decades passed. Then someone insisted on borrowing this book from my shelf. ‘Hey, that is the one I have not read!’. ‘I will return it to you soon!’ but she didn’t. After months of nagging she did bring it back, tattered, with innards of binding showing.

‘You have no respect for books!’

‘So, keeping books unread is respect!’

She kept the book on a side table and wouldn’t leave despite cold coffee, snacks, lunch and infrequent nudging. Finally, when she left, she

sureptitiously took the book back as well.

Now I just had to read Ramana. *Path to Self Knowledge* was not available at the library, but *Day By Day* was. In the book various seekers would ask questions and Ramana would give answers. This was fun. After each question, while my finger marked the page, I formulated answers. Reading Bhagavan’s words this way ruthlessly highlighted my foolishness. It was amazing how convoluted my thinking was contrasted with Ramana’s clarity.

The more I read the more I felt I understood, yet my answers rarely matched his, though I’d reached the end of the thick book.

All this while I was also doing other things, like attending Vedanta classes at the Sri Ramakrishna Sharada Math, meditating, seeing lots of colours and lights that began to feel like a circus. I was freelancing as a graphic designer for AIMA, among others. Since this

office was a 3km walk, I would be a sweat-rag and needed to cool down before the ‘professional’ appointment. Saibaba mandir next-door was always crowded, but just a bit down the lane I discovered a large airy bare room with a beautiful portrait of the gently smiling Ramana. Perfect. ‘I like your face,’ I said as I plonked in front of him. ‘Promise me that whenever I look at you I see your face and not dancing lights.’

Ramana kept his promise, whether I meditated with eyes closed or open. The lights did not appear. However, any other place they would dance as before. So, I got hooked to going to the Kendra to meditate. One day I discovered that the Prayer Hall was empty each morning because the other visitors were making a beeline for a venue upstairs. So, I went up too and sat behind neat rows of people silently writing, all facing a man in gerua who chanted at dictation speed.

I stared at the familiar Ramana portrait on the wall behind him. It was nice to have that steady rhythmic voice bringing my mind back when it wandered. Imagine my surprise when I discovered months later that I’d been sitting in on scripture classes in English. The chanting cadence, accent and style, had prevented me from being distracted

by understanding the words!

Ma’s friends complained to her that I had left Sri Ramakrishna. ‘Not so! She’s even more regular now,’ Ma replied. She never cared for differing names of divinity. ‘Oh, she goes to Ramana! Our neighbor is also a great devotee!’ Ma learnt. So, it was that I rang his doorbell and met Mr Kapoor. ‘Namaste. I am Bharati and I live near...’

‘I know, D14. Mirchandani’s family! I knew your dad from office, so I’ve looked out for how his children were doing!’ I never felt as welcomed and loved as by this man giving me satsang so close to my home. 6am on a dark winter morning or 2pm on a searing June afternoon, whenever the need for satsang arose, I would be at his door, sure of a warm ‘Vaango!’ and cup of delicious chai.

From him I learnt Ramanasramam in Tamil Nadu was a place one could visit. He arranged permission for me to stay the very first time I went. But I did not go till Ramana sent me a sign. I didn’t know in which form the sign would come, but it did, many moons after my desire to go there had arisen. UNICEF sent me to Hyderabad on work. I was allowed to stay on after the project. Cash for the fixed return airfare

paid for my train journeys onward. I took a train direct to Tirupati. On that sacred hilltop, I spotted a railway booking office. ‘Can I get a ticket to Tiruvannamalai?’ Surprise, surprise! I could.

The TT on the train was perturbed by a ‘modern’ north-Indian female sitting near ‘innocent’ young men who knew neither Hindi nor English, laughing and communicating in sign language. He wanted to move me elsewhere but I was on my allotted seat and refused to budge. However, as evening approached his words, ‘looks very bad, sitting alone with men at night!’ made me follow him. He led me to his coach. There I’d be alone with him! Having been awake for hours, I was by now drowsy. To stay upright, I hugged my backpack on my lap as armor. I had to guard myself from the guard!

He asked why I was going to Tiruvannamalai. ‘To visit Sri Ramanasramam’ I said. ‘You!’ he blurted. I guess I did not fit his idea of a pilgrim. After some questioning to gauge my antecedents he told me that he belonged to Pondicherry. ‘Oh, I hope to visit Aurobindo ashram next.’ After that his attitude did a U-turn. No longer was I the vamp leading chaste young men to evil. Now I was the one to be protected.

‘Where will you stay in Tiruvannamalai?’

‘I have booked my stay at the Ashram. They agreed to keep the dates flexible as I didn’t know when I would reach.’

‘But they lock up by 8pm. You must stay at the station till morning. I will arrange the guest room.’

Oh dear! He was trying to delay my reaching the Ashram by a whole night!

At the station, a wedding party had booked both classes of waiting rooms and the station master had no safe place to keep me through the night. So, a railway employee was deputed to escort me to the Ashram, and ensure I got in.

Oh, the adventures went on. The night in a temporary space, morning without access to a toilet. Eventually I was sent a key to a room. As I climbed the stairs, framed by two cream colored walls, against a brilliant blue sky I saw a grand mountain peak. ‘I don’t care which mountain you are,’ I said to it, ‘for me you are Arunachala!’

My experience of mountains had been limited to Himalayas, where hills huddle together in groups. Arunachala stands alone and this was the holy

mountain that had greeted me!

This mountain and Ashram were strange. No one spoke to anyone, at least that was my impression. Instructions and schedules were on a printed sheet. Three days passed in silence. I packed my bags thereafter for an early departure which would ensure daytime travel to a new place. Then I just happened to discover the meditation room! 'I've just found this amazing power centre; can't possibly leave today,' I told myself.

So, I went to the office. 'I'd like to stay three more days, please.'

'Normally it's not allowed, but since it is lean season, you may.'

They were three days of bliss. Never before I had experienced such deep or long meditations. I could not leave. If further extension was refused, I'd be heartbroken. so why not quietly stay on as though I'd lost count! As I sat for lunch waiting for buttermilk, however, I suddenly panicked. 'If I don't leave this minute I'll be stuck here forever!'

I barely finished what was already

on the banana leaf, went to my room, assembled my things and rushed to the Ashram office. It was empty. I guessed all were still at lunch. I kept the key on the reception table and left.

'What is this place? What is happening to me, I wondered?'

I travelled on, visited a few more places before I returned to Delhi, still restless with those questions. Interestingly enough I was back at the Ashram within two months. Though it was a short visit, it made me realize that this was my true home. It was the first time in my life I felt I belonged anywhere. I also now knew I did not have to return physically to be here.

I laughed at my new understanding of why Indians portray gods with multiple arms and heads. Ramana not only had many arms, but long flexible ones, that plucked me from New Delhi and million others from different parts of the world and brought them to himself, to Arunachala and made us all one with the Self. Or at least certain, and happy, to be chosen... ■

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On the occasion of Guru Purnima which falls on July 16th, we are happy to carry this piece on the Guru and his personal significance to a devotee



Dahara Upasana

A talk by Swami Chidrupananda



At a function held at Delhi's Ramana Kendra on the occasion of Bhagavan's 69th Aradhana day on April 14th, Swami Chidrupanandji, head of Chinmaya Mission, NOIDA, spoke to the gathered devotees on the subject of Dahara Upasana. He began by saying that Ramana Maharshi never considered anyone ineligible for attaining Knowledge. In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna himself says that all sins are transcended by one act of true knowledge. And the way is to follow the most powerful path of Self-enquiry as propagated by Ramana Maharshi—by turning within and focusing on the source of the "I" thought—the root of every thought, before other identifying thoughts arise. Swamiji said that Ramana Maharshi is ever present on Mount Arunachalam (*Arun* meaning both the red morning sun as well as Lord Shiva) plus (*achalam*, meaning that which stands still like a mountain and blesses the world with *maunam-*

silence).

Swamiji then gave the method for contemplating within which is explained in detail in Chhandogya Upanishad Chapter 8, termed variously as Dahara Vidya or Dahara Upasana. Giving the order of the chapters that lead to this *upasana*, he said that while the first five chapters of Chhandogya Upanishad deal with *upasana* or meditation, the sixth chapter taught by Uddalak muni to Shvetaketu is on the nature of existence. In chapter 7, Sanat Kumar teaches Bhooma Vidya, the all-pervading reality to Rishi Narad. This leads to Chapter 8 which deals with Dahara Vidya in which both 'Sagun Upasana' (with form) and 'Nirgun Gyan' (without form) are taught.

'Dahara' implies a small space or 'Akaar' within the heart. When a self-realised guru imparts knowledge, the spiritual aspirant should have unshakable conviction in him and his teachings to be able to contemplate (imagine) 'I am That'. Due to lack of

direct experience, total faith in the guru's teachings is essential. Once *gyana*, *anubhav* or direct experience of self-realization takes place, there will be no need for the imagination presupposed earlier. It will have revealed itself as True Knowledge.

Swamiji spoke of two types of *upasana*:

a) *Bheda upasana* wherein I am different from Ishwara who is 'anugrah karak' or the bestower of blessings and grace.

b) *Abheda upasana* which is *dahara upasana*, *dahara* being the small space in the cavity of the heart, the abode of Chaitanya Ishwara, the effulgent Supreme being, the ultimate source and observer of the 'I' thought. There is no second (*Abheda*) for what I am contemplating upon is me alone. When this realisation takes place it leads to *Nirgun gyan* (pure consciousness is me alone).

Concentration is to be done on the heart centre as this is the door to the divine. This abode, the small lotus that is here within this city of Brahman, (our own physical body) and the small space within that lotus (*alpa-aakaash*) – is the space to be searched, meditated and contemplated upon. Verily as extensive as the external *aakaash* is this eternal *aakaash* (*yad*

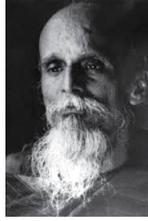
pinde/tad brahmaande) - the space referred to within the heart being as vast as the space outside; within it are contained both the heaven and earth, the fire and wind, the sun and moon, lightning and the stars—everything here is contained within it. Whatever one has and whatever one does not have, all is included in that space as also all beings and all desires.

Going further, when the aspirant asks the Guru: If all things that exist – all beings and all desires— are contained in this city of Brahman, then what is left of it when old age overcomes it or when it perishes upon death? The guru answers thus: with the body's old age, that Brahman described as *Aakash* in the heart, does not age; with the death of the body that does not die; that Brahman and not the physical body is the real city of Brahman. In it, all desires are contained. It's the Self— free from sin, from old age, from death, from grief, from hunger, from thirst— which are the attributes of the body and mind complex, and not that of the Supreme Consciousness. Swamiji concluded his deep and insightful talk by saying that meditation, *sadhana* or *upasana* are not activities we perform just for a short period every day, but an attitude to be maintained all twenty-four hours. ■

Documented by Rashmi Vyas



Kavya Kantha Ganapathi Muni



Ayyala Somayajulu Ganapathy Sastry, also known as Ganapathi Muni, was a disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He was also variously known as “Kavyakantha”, and “Nayana” by his disciples. He was born in Andhra Pradesh on 17.11.1878.- one year before Sri Ramana Maharshi. By the year 1903, when the two of them were just into their mid-20s, Ganapati Muni had heard rumours of a highly Attained young Swami called by a small circle of disciples Brahmanaswami living near the southern Indian temple city of Tiruvannamalai situated along the lower reaches of the holy hill Arunachala. In that year, 1903, Ganapati Muni traveled from Andhra to the foot of Arunachala, and before a group individuals gathered at the Adi Mudi shrine on the outer Giri Valam loop along the base of the mountain, interpreted for the group a famous invocatory sloka. The young Swami was among the group.

Ganapati Muni was a known Sanskrit scholar and poet, reported to have an eidetic memory. So adept was his memory and mental skills, having never heard one word in Telugu he was able, in 15 days, to totally master the language, both verbally and written, fluently. So good was he that in 1904 Ganapati Muni was given the position of teacher of the Telugu language in the city of Vellore. However, his days were spent doing standard teaching techniques rather than participating in or imparting mantra japa. By 1907 he left his teaching position and returned to Arunachala to resume mantra japa. One day he was assailed by pains, troubles, and doubts. Seeking an alternate solution other than his own capabilities he decided to visit the young Swami who was now being said to be living in a cave on the side of the hill. Sometime around noon on November 18, 1907, he climbed up to Virupaksha cave and found Ramana sitting outside, alone. He prostrated

himself and said:

"All the scriptures that have to be read, I have read. All the mantras and

japa that have to be done, I have done. Still I have no peace. Please save me."

The young Swami took a little time. For at least fifteen minutes he silently gazed at him. Then in Tamil, Ramana broke his silence of eleven years and spoke. The English translation of what

he said reads thus:

"If one watches whence the notion 'I' arises, the mind is absorbed in That; that is tapas. When you recite a mantra, watch where the sound is coming from, within you; when you sing a song or prayer, watch where it is emanating from: your Heart. Put your attention on That. That is tyaga, that is TAPASYA, that is all." ■

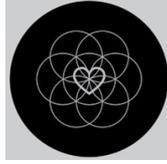
*[Excerpt from Ramana Periya
Puranam by V. Ganesan]*

This article in the current issue marks the birth anniversary (July 25) of devotee Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni.



The Call of Duty

Tuktuk Ghosh



The Bhagavad Gita provides us sublime lessons for almost all conceivable life situations and challenges. It has attained iconic status because of its cross cutting, direct and mesmerizing appeal down the ages. Commentaries and expositions relating to it are countless and will continue to be woven as there is so much that can be derived from its veritable treasure troves.

Among its gems is the call to duty which often is lost sight in the rough and tumble of the everyday.

Verse 31 says as follows:

“Sva-dharmam api caveksya

Na vikampitum arhasi

Dharmyad dhi yuddhac chreyo ‘nyat

Ksattriyasya na vidyate”

It means, considering your own duties as a warrior, you should never hesitate to fight. Other than fighting for righteousness, there is no better engagement for a warrior.

In the grand battle of Kurukshetra, Arjuna was overwhelmed by such intense emotions of doubt, confusion

and despair that he almost gave up before it all started. It was only Krishna’s sage counsel that turned the tide of time.

For many of us, turning a blind eye to wrong and unrighteousness around us has almost become second nature. These may be in the form of social ills, malpractices, discrimination, systematized deprivation, prejudices, hate and intolerance. We tend to find comfort in insulating ourselves and creating a cocoon of make-belief that things are not all that disconcerting.

What is not acknowledged in this myopic thinking is that what is dissonant in the environment around us is bound get to us sooner rather than later and engulf us in its darkness. It is therefore imperative to realize that there is always a larger, higher purpose to be served and there can be no escaping the call to that ultimate duty towards the greater good.

It is for everyone to search for and aspire, with true dedication and commitment, to fulfil assigned duties

to oneself, one's family, community, country and humankind.

This, in fact, qualifies as the most befitting "Archana" to the Almighty.

This brings to mind a verse of the Upadesa Saram, composed by Bhagavan, in Malayalam.

"Bhinnan nanisvaran tannekkalennulla
Bhedabhavattekkal sohamennum
Anyanallennavabhedabhavam tanne
Yatyantamulkrtamaya bhavam"

It may be translated to convey that rather than meditation with a sense of difference {bheda-bhava} which is the attitude that I-am-separate-from-God, meditation with no sense of difference {abheda-bhava} which is the attitude that I- am-not-other-than-God, known as SOHAM {he-is-I} is indeed the most exalted form of meditation.

What is life if not a ceaseless meditation on duty, karma and the supreme source? This is the perfect blend that moves us in the direction of our deepest, most authentic nature.

And while adhering to the call of duty in the sublime mode of submission and offering, it is equally important not to get inextricably identified with one's action or its likely resultant action.

"Isvarapritiyinay phalamelpicco
Ricchayenniccey niskamyakarmam
Asayasuddhi varuttiyamuktiyi
Nayulla margattil cerkkumorkka"

Desireless action done out of love

for God, entrusting the fruit {to Him} without any desire {for it} will purify {our} mind and thereby bring us to that path which is for mukti or liberation. It is easier to cultivate desire less action when we harbor an abiding love for God, than otherwise.

"Marmamayullatan janmasthalattetti
Manasam svasthamayullatallo
Karmavum bhaktiyum yogavum
janavum
Kanukellavattil kandasaram"

When we rise from our innermost core to know anything other than our self, we appear to be this separate object-knowing consciousness that we call mind.

However, when we subside and merge in that core, we remain as the non-dual self- knowing consciousness that we really are. This state of *svasthamay ullatu* being as self-abiding, being established as self or being as we really are-is the essence of all forms of spiritual practice, namely karma, bhakti, yoga and jnana.

Bhagavan instructs us that when we keenly scrutinize our mind or ego, our false 'I', which arises from self-ignorance, we will find that there is no such thing at all. We will experience our real 'I' which shines forth as 'I am only I' when this false 'I' ceases to exist. ■

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Kendra Bulletin

(Mid-March to Mid-May)

Swami Prabhuddanandaji described verses 12-13 of Kathopanishad's Adhyaya 1, valli 3 as 'essential Vedanta'.

The human mind loves to create superstitions. One should use one's intelligence to recognize the absurdity of belief that one person, place or object could be auspicious, or the opposite. All are permeated by the same divinity. Just as a wave cannot conceal water, thoughts cannot camouflage Self-awareness. The infinite pervades everything, including false notions!

But wisdom never comes on a platter. Effort (inquiry, curbing impulsive actions, eliminating false identifications) is needed to build up patience, restraint, fairness, acceptance: precursors for Realization.

The gist of verse 13 is: 'trace everything to the Self'.

Speech can be traced to thought, thought to a thinker; so too trace the source of the thinker, seek that which sustains it and into which it dissolves. Silence is not part of creation, of diversity. We have no organs to perceive Silence. We can only BE Silence; the unmanifest, peaceful Self. Thoughts create variety to be enjoyed, but vichara brings awareness of the eternal unvariegated self.

The illusion of multiplicity appears real as the same all-powerful source creates it. Steady contemplation can convert this into recognition of a living truth. 'Understand the illusion to be rid of it!'

- Documented by Bharati Mirchandani

March 17th

Sri Shankar Narayanji covered Shlokas 15 and 16 of Saddarshanam and introduced Shloka 17. There is one chitta alone. It is *parmarthika satyam* – unconditioned by space, time and causality. Changeless and existing independently, this *chitta* or pure awareness supports *vyavaharika satyam* or changing experiences with its utility, variety and novelty– all dependent on the unchanging. Similarly, while absolute knowledge appears to have different types of knowledge– *ghata gyanam*– it is like gold that can be set in different ornaments but remains gold.

The invitation from Bhagavan here is to dive deep, not get carried away by different forms of knowledge or experience, but to get to the experiencer/knower. Since our relationship with the world is through the first, second and third persons, our task is to investigate the ‘you’ and ‘her’ of the second and third persons in order to get to the ‘I’ of the first person. To further separate this ‘I’ or *aham vritti* from all other *vrittis* we need to fine tune our *chitta*, then dive from this limited ‘I’ with its sense of division to the division-less source of this ‘I’ - where we see our own *svarupa* as the brilliant and shining Atman.

- Documented by Neera Kashyap

March 24th

Swami Durgeshanandaji began his discourse on Vivekachudamani by explaining the plight of the jiva being bound by the ever-changing world of illusion and without the knowledge of *Sat* and *Asat*. Knowledge beyond duality actually amounts to a union of the Self with Brahman. Just as Brahman has no beginning nor end, the Self–our *atmatattva* has neither beginning nor end. It always EXISTS. If this becomes our experience, then the scriptures and mantras have nothing more to teach us.

The main criteria for attaining liberation is to be free from *jagat* the objective universe. For achieving this, the practice of meditation is supremely important in reaching the Self– beyond body, mind and intellect. Also, one

must be a *mumukshu* with a fully devotional heart questing for the Truth. What aids this quest is freedom from attachments, fear and anger and an absolute surrender at the feet of the Sadguru. For only with a purified mind can the jiva possess the total intensity required for diving into the heart's core to mine the jewel of atma tattva. Swamiji further emphasized the need for a Guru who himself is a realised soul, hence qualified to impart the same knowledge to the *shishya*.

- Documented by Indra Sharma

March 31st

In his explanation of Verses 69-73 of Vivekachudamani, Swami Durgeshanandji said that for a wise aspirant to get rid of the bondage of life and death, he/she must put in whole hearted effort under the guidance of a Self-realised guru. The first step to liberation is to be averse to all things impermanent. This should be followed by *Shatsampatti*: mental discipline, self-control, withdrawal from sense gratification, forbearance, faith and mental balance. Thereafter one should listen to instructions on the Truth (shravana), reflect on it (manana), and then constantly meditate on it (dhyana). By doing all the above, the learned one attains Nirvana (bliss of the highest order). From the next verse onwards the guru will explain in detail the distinction between Self and non-self.

- Documented by Rashmi Vyas

April 7th

Taking up Verses 13 & 14, Valli 3 of Kathopanishad, Swami Prabuddhanandaji said that tracing the thought back to the Source is reflection. This does not qualify the Source, just as colours reflected in the crystal don't alter the quality of the crystal. The point then is to wake up and understand the value of Self Knowledge as free from self-ignorance. Said Swami Vivekananda, 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached'.

When the wave understands that it is not just wave but water, it is freed from *avidya*. To gain Self Knowledge, a teacher is essential. For the path to Truth is like the razor's edge, subject to serious and sharp misconceptions, of which we remain quite unaware. Unaware, we try to objectify the unobjectifiable Truth, limit the limitless, give causation to That which is free from causation. To contemplate It, we need *vichara*, *viveka* and *vairagya*. We also need the qualifications of *sama* (mind control), *dama* (control over physical restlessness), *uparati* (adherence to duty), *titiksha* (the capacity to take the highs with the lows), *shraddha* (faith) and *samadhanam* (mental composure) so as to prevent misconceptions on a path that is *durgam* or hard to access.

- Documented by Neera Kashyap

April 14th

Following a talk on Dahara Upasana by Swami Chidrupanandaji (documented elsewhere in this issue) on Bhagavan's 69 th Aradhana day, senior devotee, Smt. Jayanthi Aiyarji presented a devotional music concert along with her musical ensemble. She began her musical offering to Bhagavan, invoking his blessings by chanting his name. This was followed by a *sloka* filled with serene devotion, the rendition punctuated with mellifluous touches on the violin, soulfully played by Smt. Radhika Venkatesh. Jayanthiji's subsequent rendering of *Sarvam* brought to the fore the spiritual significance of Bhagavan's divine teaching.

The piece that followed, Shivashatakam was rendered by Harshini Rajesh and Shivani Rajesh, both disciples of Jayanthiji who chanted this stotram with rich timbre voices that resonated through the holy shrine. Presenting a variety of compositions at the lotus feet of Bhagavan Ramana, Jayanthiji's four disciples - Charanya Sri Krishna, Shriya Sri Krishna along with Harshini and Shivani - sang in unison the lilting composition Tumaka Chalatu Ramachandra with joyous abandon. What followed was the centre piece of the concert, a ragam-talam-pallavi. Devotees present were enthralled by this unique piece dedicated to Bhagavan Ramana with phrases such as 'Arunachala Shiva

Ramana, Arulpuri Sri Ramana, Arulvar Sri Ramana' brilliantly delineated with sangatis by Jayanthiji.

Shri Kumbakonam N. Padmanaban and Shri Manohar Balatchandirane provided adroit percussion support on the mridangam and tabla respectively.

Another noteworthy composition was 'Ramana Padam Vaazhgave' extolling, through numerous adjectives of praise, the divinity of Bhagavan Ramana. Swarams sung in choir and interspersed with lyrics made the piece a musical treat.

The function ended with the chanting of all 108 verses of Bhagavan's composition, Aksharamanamalai in which the audience joined the musical ensemble with devotional fervour.

- Documented by Marie Elangovan

April 21st

While covering Verse 17 of Saddarshanam in detail for English speaking seekers at the Delhi Kendra, Shri Shankar Narayanji explained the words and nuances, carefully selecting references only from Bhagavan's texts available in English, the Tamil texts being far more plentiful.

Each stanza was like a facet of a diamond, each approaching the Truth from a slightly differing viewpoint. Verse 17 deals with the *trikuti* of Time. Bhagavan says here that past and present exist only in their own time, meaning that they are never in the NOW. Our minds remember the past and imagine the future. The only reality is the now, which is the same as divine *shakti*; same also as Atman. Emotions and thoughts are *vruttis* that rise and fall, but never touch nor stain the Atman. We have to be vigilant of this and get a foothold when one *vrutti* ends and another not yet begun. This tiny gap is the doorway to the eternal.

Just as no counting can happen without the number 1, so too no others can exist without the first person, the 'I'. So, we need to always focus on the first

person, note the gaps between thoughts till the process becomes effortless witnessing.

- Documented by Bharati Mirchandani

April 28th

In the first of a series of talks on verses chosen by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi from the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Shri Ambarish Daveji explained that the 42 verses selected from the total of 700 were in accordance with Bhagavan's teachings on the source of the 'I thought'. He reordered them in a book titled 'The Song Celestial' in order to satisfy the needs of his devotees, who often asked him questions on the Bhagavad Gita.

While studying these 42 verses, Shri Ambarish Daveji emphasised the need to understand them in the context of Bhagavan's teaching, urging devotees to know their true nature through the question 'Who am I?' The ignorance of one's real nature is at the root of all sorrows. If we know the Self, which is free from attributes, there is no competition and no desire.

The second verse of The Song Celestial is from the 13th verse of the Bhagavad Gita. It states: 'This body, O son of Kunti, is called the *kshetra* (field); him who knows it, the sages call the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field).' Here, the 'field' is the lower nature associated with the body and sensory organs and the 'knower of the field' is the personal atman.

Shri Ambarishji drew parallels with the fifth verse of Upadesa Saram which translates as: 'Ether, fire, air, water, earth, Sun, moon and living beings - worshipping these regarded as all forms of His- is perfect worship of the Lord.' In both verses quoted above, the truth lies in understanding that Ishwara is manifested in all forms.

- Documented by Marie Elangovan

May 5th

While explaining verses 74-80 of Vivekachudamani, Swami Durgeshanandaji said: On being asked by the spiritual aspirant with regard to the distinction between Self and Non Self, the Guru explains thus:

Composed of various ingredients (*dhatus*) such as marrow, bone, fat, flesh, blood, skin etc. and comprising limbs and organs such as legs, thighs, chest, arms, back and head, this physical body considered as 'I' and 'Mine', under the illusion of *Moha*, is addressed by sages as the Gross Body. There is a process involved in grossification. The subtle elements— sky, air, fire, water and earth—have two states— one subtle and the other gross. In uniting with one another, they become gross and thus form the Gross Body. Their subtle essences form sense perceptions such as sound, touch, smell, taste and sight received by their respective sense organs which, in turn, signal the sensations of happiness or misery.

The proportion in which the subtle mixes with the gross depends upon the past karma of each individual soul. It is karma alone that blends the five basic elements (*Panchmahabhootas*) in such a way as to give the blueprint for the Jiva's next physical body. All creatures tied to the senses through attachment become subject to cycles of birth and death: the deer due to sound, the elephant due to touch, the moth due to sight, fish due to taste and the bee due to smell. These creatures die and are reborn due to attachment to just one of the five senses, Man being the one creature who is attached to all five! Sense objects are more virulent in their effect than even the poison of the cobra, said Swamiji. For while poison kills the one who consumes it, objects of the world can kill even as we look at them.

He who is free from hankering for objects of the world— so very difficult to get rid of— is alone fit for liberation and no one else, no matter how well versed s/he may be in the Vedic scriptures.

- Documented by Rashmi Vyas

May 12th

In his second talk on Bhagavan's selection from the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Ambarish Daveji reviewed the opening two verses as they provided the setting for the very important 'mahavakya' that follows. These two verses establish God, Krishna, as one with the *kshetra*, implying that the world is infused with divinity, so that following one's dharma by serving the world, is equal to serving God.

The third verse makes the important premise: 'Know me to be also the knower of the *kshetra*, the *kshetrajna*. Those who know both *kshetra* and *kshetrajna*, know Me.'

Ambarishji passionately wished for us to benefit from these satsangs, giving detailed explanations to indicate what cannot be expressed in words. By not knowing the Self, he explained, we identify with *upadhis* and develop delusions of grandeur. He gave the example of *upadhis* in terms of ranks, titles or other add-ons that mask our essential being.

When we know the Self, we know both the field and the knower of the field. Knowing the Self, we become one with God and desires fall away, as God can have no desire. Then we become free to act according to our dharma, without attachment to the fruits of action, liberated forever from delusions.

- Documented by Bharati Mirchandani



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Karma yields no salvation*

Ramana Maharshi {Upadesa Saram (2)}

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“The greatest error of a man is to think that he is weak by nature, evil by nature. Every man is divine and strong in his real nature. What are weak and evil are his habits, his desires and thoughts, but not himself.”

Ramana Maharshi



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