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RAMANA GYAN

DIRECT PATH



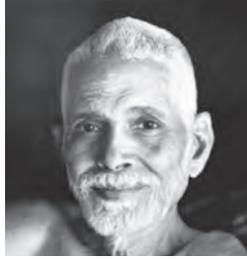
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Mere Concepts and Ideas Are Not Reality

Dr. Vijay Vancheswar
[Editor-Direct Path]

A 'concept' is an idea or thought, which we are free to agree with or not. Is a concept synonymous with reality? It is not; it is not synonymous with reality. That which is not always present, cannot be the reality. All scriptures say that reality subsumes concepts of time and space. Ramana Maharshi says, "The only reality is our very presence- the sense of "I AM". None can deny this presence.

Reality is termed variously as 'Consciousness' or 'Source': the innate experience of the sense of 'I-I'. The 'I AM' current exists while we are in the waking, dreaming, sleeping or deep sleep state. This '*turiya*' or fourth state continuously resonates within us. This gets validated because on waking up from deep slumber we confirm our experience of a peaceful rest! The prescribed route to connect with this ever present state is attentiveness to our inner current. Everything else appears and disappears in this state as fleeting

experiences. They are concepts created by the mind, not reality.

What about the concept of God? Sri Ramana says that while our presence experienced as the 'I-I' state is undeniable; the term God is a concept which needs to be transcended. Indeed God as a concept can become a point of debate. Theists vouch for it. Atheists deny it. The debate can be endless as with all other concepts such as creation, moral norms, values, individual preferences and practices. This chicken and egg debate can go on indefinitely; a pointless and futile exercise. Anything that is created by the mind is debatable. It does not belong to what exists perpetually. Thus concepts of God, the world- which is absent in our deep sleep state -, heaven or hell are all wonderful creations of the mind which thrive on the fertile soil of discursive debates, enriching the ego's survival urge.

Raging discussions on a wide variety of concepts such as rebirth, thaumaturgy,

creation, celibacy and yoga can drain us ; they do little to enrich us within. When we realise the true purpose of an issue we start going beyond concepts. For instance, yoga means to join or merge. The merging is meant as part of our inner journey with our sense of 'I Am- ness'. The inner quest leads to peace and tranquility of the mind. It goes beyond religion, dogmas and concepts. Similarly, bramacharya is an exercise that enquires into the nature of 'Brahmn' or Consciousness not celibacy. Of what use would celibacy be, says Sri Ramana, "if the mind is preoccupied with thoughts of the phenomenal world, even as one is amidst the silent environment of a forest"!

Opinions on diverse issues depend on cultural and societal background, among other things. They differ according to the nature of the individual and as per prevailing norms. They are ideas (concepts), nothing more. Concepts never result in peaceful resolutions. For every concept, there will be an equal or more number of

proponents or opponents. There will be never be a time when opinions are uniform on diverse issues driven by cultural differences, values and priorities.

Steadfastly, proposing or opposing any concept, will only lead to deviations from the true purpose of life's journey. It is wiser to work on our own inadequacies and inherent contradictions. Understanding and accepting how difficult it is to work on changing oneself makes one more

tolerant and forgiving of others and their views. Concepts thrive on differences; reality flourishes where good intent combines with sincere

effort. All scriptures focus on intent and effort, not outcomes. They emphasise the three S's of Simplicity, Silence and positive Surrender. ■

{An article based on the above subject under the same title by the author, was carried in the speaking Tree column of The Times of India, Wednesday, July 08, 015} vijay.vancheswar@gmail.com

“What about the concept of God? Sri Ramana says that while our presence experienced as the 'I-I' state is undeniable; the term God is a concept which needs to be transcended. Indeed God as a concept can become a point of debate. Theists vouch for it. Atheists deny it

”

While Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni was a colossus, Sadhu Natanananda can be compared to the tortoise in the hare and tortoise story. An unlikely spiritual giant, he rose from being an ordinary, elementary school teacher, to a man of deep wisdom and realization. Sadhu Natanananda is the author of *Spiritual Instruction*, one of the most important books for spiritual seekers.

Natanananda once told me that even Bhagavan's glance did not completely fulfill him and that there were some residual tendencies despite him being austere. Once, when he was in Bhagavan's presence, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni and other scholarly devotees were sitting with Bhagavan and speaking in Sanskrit about Hindu scriptures. Utterly dejected that he could not follow a single word about the lofty subjects that were being discussed, he sat silently with tears streaming down his cheeks. When he opened his eyes, everyone had left and only Bhagavan

was there. Bhagavan looked at him compassionately and asked, "Why are you so dejected? If you were really unfit to realize the Self in this life, you could not have come to this place at all." (This applies to all of us.)

Bhagavan continued, "The power that drew you here

will make you realize the Self. If not today, then at some other time it is bound to fulfill its commitment. There is no reason why you should be dejected." This dissolved all imperfections in Sadhu Natanananda and drove out all his ignorance. With this, he too became a Self realized sage. ■

[Source: Extract from Ramana Periya Puranam]

by Sri V. Ganesan

“ Bhagavan looked at him compassionately and asked, “Why are you so dejected? If you were really unfit to realize the Self in this life, you could not have come to this place at all.” (This applies to all of us.)

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The Experience The Journey and The Advent

P.N.Vijay

September 1 is an important day in the calendar of every Ramana devotee. That is the day on which in the year 1896 as a 16-year-old boy, Bhagvan went to Tiruvannamalai, never to step out again. As it happens this was the date on which this Kendra came into existence and also the day on which our magazine Direct Path first started publishing. In this article I will take the readers through the early years of Bhagavan's life, the 'death experience' that changed boy Venkatraman to Bhagvan Ramana Maharishi and his journey from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai which culminated into his advent to the Holy City.

Venkatraman was born into a traditional Brahmin family on December 30th 1879, at Tiruchuli a village 30 miles south of the town of Madurai in Tamil Nadu. His father Sundaram Iyer started his life as a village Accountant and worked

his way up to that of a Vakil. He was known for his generosity and hospitality and no poor person went away from his home without a good meal. His mother Alagammal was married to Sundaram Iyer at an early age and they both were an idle couple. Interestingly, Sundaram means 'beauty' in Sanskrit and 'Azhagu' also means beauty in Tamil. Ramana in fact begins '*Aksharamanalai*' "May Thou and I be one and inseparable like Azhagu and Sundaram o Arunachala". Ramana was born one hour after midnight to this wonderful couple on December 30, 1879, on the holy day of "Arudra Darshan" festival for Lord Nataraja.

Ramana was a normal child; he was strong and friendly and was loved by one and all around the village. Though intelligent, he was more interested in sports and games than studies. In Feb 1892, Sundaram Iyer unexpectedly died leaving behind his wife, three sons- Nagaswamy aged 14, Ramana

aged 12, Nagasundaram aged 6 and a daughter Almelu aged 4. This sudden event split the family and Ramana along with his elder brother went to Madurai to live with an Uncle. He was sent to Scotts Middle School and later on to the American Mission High School where he was taught the Bible rather than the Hindu scriptures. As days rolled by, an important event took place in November 1895, when a close family friend came home and mentioned the name of the holy mountain Arunachala. Ramana had only heard about this place and never realized that this was a real place. From childhood, he had been aware of a pulsating repetition of 'Arunchala, Arunachala' which he had not fully comprehended. When Ramana eagerly asked the relative Where Arunachala was- the relative told him it in Tiruvannamalai-a large temple town about which Ramana knew very little.

The event that changed his life happened in the middle of July 1896. One day he was sitting on the first floor of the house in perfect health. Suddenly an unmistakable fear of death seized him and he felt he was going to die. He started thinking about what he should do. He dramatized the scene of death saying to himself mentally "Now death has come, what does it mean?

What is that is dying? This body dies." He laid down extended his limbs and held them rigid as though rigor-mortis had set in imitating a corpse. He said to himself, "This body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground, burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body am 'I' dead!! Is this body 'I'?" This body is silent and inert but 'I' feel the full force of my personality and even the sound 'I' within myself – apart from the body. So 'I' am a spirit a thing transcending it that cannot be touched by death. 'I' am therefore, the deathless spirit". *All this was not a mere intellectual process but flashed before him as living truth and fear of death had vanished for once and ever.* As Bhagavan himself remarked later "Absorption in the Self has continued right from that moment up to this time; other thoughts may come and go like the various nodes of musician but 'I' continues like the basic or fundamental truth that blends with all other nodes whether this body is engaged in talking, reading or doing anything else. I am still centered on 'I'". This experience of Ramana lasted about half-an-hour and after this Ramana never harboured any doubts concerning his self-realization.

This Death Experience changed his life instantly and completely. He became indifferent to the food that

was served to him, to the boys teasing him and to his studies. He no longer joined his friends in sporting activities but preferred to sit alone and meditate with his eyes closed and in yogic postures. Some months before his death experience, Ramana had read his first spiritual book 'Sekkizhar's Periapuranam' the life story of the 63 Saivite Saints. He started relating more and more to it and visited the nearby Meenakshi Temple in Madurai spending hours there, lost in meditation.

This strange life that Ramana was leading could not last forever and on August 29, 1896, he decided to leave home for good. He told his brother Nagaswamy that he had to go for a special class in the school and the latter- having had no idea what Ramana was up to- told him to collect Rs.5/- from the box at home to pay his school fees. He took the money from his Uncle's wife and started his journey to

Tiruvannamalai (Ramana was to remark jokingly to people later that this was the only lie which he had ever told and he had to do it as it was the only way to go to Tiruvannamalai). He found out from an old almanac that the nearest railway station to Tiruvannamalai was Tindivanam and the fare was Rs.3/-. He left the balance

Rs.2/- and a short note which read "*I have, in search of my Father and in obedience to His command, started from here. THIS is only embarking on a virtuous enterprise. Therefore none need grieve over THIS affair. To trace THIS out, no money need be spent. Your College fee has not yet been paid. Rupees two are enclosed herewith. Thus, _____*"

The letter changes from the personal "I" to the impersonal "THIS" and ends with a long line instead of a signature. From this day on he never signed with his name again. So on the noon of a fateful Saturday, Ramana set off to take a train to Tiruvannamalai never to return again. In the train a Maulavi asked Ramana where he was travelling and informed him that there was a station at Tiruvannamalai but he had to change train in Villipuram, which he could at 3:00 am the next morning.

He discovered that he had only enough money to go up to "Mambala Pattu" which was still about 30 miles short of the holy place. Having reached that town, he started on this walk and by night fall he had walked 10 miles and reached Arayaninullar. Totally exhausted. Ramana reached the temple there, sat in the open pillared hall and sank again into Samadhi. As he sat like this a dazzling light suddenly appeared

to him, flooding the whole temple and disappeared after a while. Ramana at that time had no idea that he was sitting next to the statue of 'Gnana Sambandar' one of the famous Tamil saints who saw an identical light in the same place in the 7th century AD. Ramana's request to the temple for some food and to spend the night there were both refused. So he agreed to the suggestion by some visitors to accompany them to Killur a nearby place, where he might have more luck. There too Ramana reached the temple and went into Samadhi for a long while. His request for some food was again refused though luckily the temple drummer, who had been watching the young Brahmin boy, felt pity and gave Ramana his entire share. By this time he was so exhausted that he slept off on the road itself.

The next day was Monday August 31, 1896 and happened to be Gokulasthmi, the birthday of Lord Sri Krishna. Tiruvannamalai was still 20 miles away and he needed some money to eat and take a train. All that he had were his gold earrings set with rubies. He decided he would pawn them and get the money. At noon, he went to the house of one Muthukrishna Bhagavata and begged for some food. The lady of the

house was taken up by the glowing appearance of the young boy and as it happened to be the Birthday of Shri. Krishna, served him a copious meal and took care of him as a welcome guest. He then pawned his earrings and got four rupees from the family. After having lunch there, the housewife also gave him a packet of sweets for his journey. As there was no train to Tiruvannamalai that day,

Ramana slept off at the Railway station itself. On September 1, 1896, Ramana bought a ticket to Tiruvannamalai and having reached the railway station, he walked straight to the holy mountain Arunachala. He was to remain there for the rest of his life.

Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi was an untutored young boy who through the Grace of Arunachala achieved self-realization. We are fortunate that we have fallen under his spell and his Grace and guidance are helping us progress in our spiritual life. The best way to show reverence to Bhagavan is to follow his path and reach a state of perennial 'self-awareness' either through self-enquiry or self-surrender. ■

(Shri P.N.Vijay is the Secretary of Ramana Kendra Delhi. pnvijay@askpnvijay.com)



Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni

V. Ganesan

It is late nineteenth century, Navadveep, Bengal. A fourteen year old boy sits amidst a group of scholars: mathematicians, poets, a music maestro and an astrologer, among others. The mathematicians give him a six digit number to be multiplied by another six digit number. One poet recites the last two lines of a Sanskrit verse and challenges the boy to compose the first two lines in the same metre and complete it. The other poet, meanwhile, gives him a subject to immediately compose a four line Sanskrit verse on. The astrologer places before him a complex pattern of planetary positions and asks him what the consequence will be. The musician hums a few notes of a particularly obscure *raga* and asks the boy to identify it. Another man rattles off a random date, like February 18, 1756, and asks what day that was. As if all this weren't enough, another man stands behind the boy and throws tiny pebbles on his back while the others throw their challenges. The

boy is expected to simultaneously keep count of how many pebbles were thrown. The boy answers all of them, instantaneously, correctly, brilliantly, to the tumultuous applause of a wonder struck audience.

This boy wonder, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, ("*muni*" means one who is steeped in *manana* - contemplation) soon won acclaim all over India. He was to later become one of the foremost devotees of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Before he was born, his pious parents had no children. His father went to Benares and prayed at the Ganesa temple there. He had a vision of the idol of Lord Ganesa coming to life and merging with him. At the very same time, back in his village, his wife saw the idol of the goddess in the local temple turn into light and enter her. Soon after, a son was born to the couple. They named him Ganapathi in gratitude to Lord Ganesa.

However, to their utter

disappointment, the boy could not talk at all. Until the age of five he remained mute and expressionless. Moreover, he was plagued with many diseases including epilepsy. In a desperate attempt to cure him, they resorted to the age old practice of branding him with a red hot iron rod. This treatment had far reaching effects. The shock unleashed the boy's latent talents and he became exceptionally brilliant. His retentive power, his concentration, his capacity to imbibe whatever he read,

and quote it verbatim increased manifold. By the age of nine, he had mastered Sanskrit literature and by the age of eleven he had memorized all the four

Vedas and the *Upanishads*. When he was fourteen years old, Ganapati composed a drama in Sanskrit which is acclaimed even today as one of the best in that language.

The ancient scriptures mention that the *rishis* of yore did penance and God appeared before them and granted boons. Strongly influenced by these texts, Kavyakantha sought

to achieve the same. He got married when he was eighteen years old but his fervour to have God's *darshan* became more intense. He embarked on a long pilgrimage, visited temples as well as all the sacred rivers like the Ganges and did penance. His penance was rigorous: he remained silent and motionless for long periods and went without food. Though he meticulously observed all the rules of traditional penance, God did not appear before him. When he failed to find God

through one method of penance, he tried another method with equal sincerity. With every method failing, Kavyakantha finally took the last resort:

“By the age of nine, he had mastered Sanskrit literature and by the age of eleven he had memorized all the four Vedas and the Upanishads. When he was fourteen years old, Ganapati composed a drama in Sanskrit which is acclaimed even today as one of the best in that language.”

doing penance in the five holy places dedicated to Lord Siva, representing the five elements - earth, water, fire, air and ether. One must visit each place in a particular order and arrive finally in the place dedicated to fire, Arunachala, where the devotee's penance (*tapas*) is said to be rewarded. Kavyakantha followed the *Ramana Periya Puranam* necessary rituals

in each place and finally reached Arunachala in 1904. During the course of his penance in Arunachaleshwara temple, Kavyakantha once went up the hill and saw Bhagavan sitting with eyes closed, absorbed in *samadhi*. Disappointed by Bhagavan's continued silence, he came away.

He took up a job as a teacher in a neighbouring town called Vellore and continued his *sadhana*. In 1907, he became dejected and felt that his life was futile. Though he had mastered the scriptures and experienced *kundalini*, he still hadn't found a method that gave him permanent anchorage in the source of *shakti* that he called God. He decided, "I am going again to Arunachala, the final destination for one's search for God according to the scriptures. If I do not attain God this time, I am going to proclaim that the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and all the Hindu scriptures are just exaggerations of poetic minds." With this resolve, he returned to Arunachala.

A Siva shrine is located at each of the eight cardinal directions on the circumambulation route around Arunachala. Determined to perform his penance to the best of his capacity, he went southwest to the Nirudhilingam shrine. It was surrounded by forests at that time. He took shelter in the hollow of a large, dead tree and resumed his

severe penance of being silent and going without food. After the fifth or sixth day, the divine Mother spoke to him: "Until you have a guru, you cannot achieve your goal. Your guru is up there on the hill. Surrender at his holy feet and you will get his grace. Go now!"

Kavyakantha leapt out of the hollow. It was one o'clock in the afternoon, and the sun was beating down hard. The Karthikai festival was on and hundreds of people thronged around the hill. Undeterred, he ran up the hill to Virupaksha cave and found Bhagavan sitting alone outside. Bhagavan directed his glance of grace at Kavyakantha. Like many devotees before him, he was transfixed and could not take his eyes off Bhagavan. Kavyakantha, an erudite scholar, had never prostrated himself before any human being. Suddenly, he found himself flat on the ground in front of the young ascetic. He held Bhagavan's feet tightly and cried, "I have read all that has to be read. I have fully read *Vedanta*, I have performed *japa* to my heart's content, yet I have not understood what *tapas* is! Therefore, I have sought refuge at your feet. Pray, enlighten me as to the nature of *tapas*." The word "*tapas*" in Sanskrit literally means "striving for the realization of truth through penance and austerity".

However, Bhagavan imparted its deeper meaning to Kavyakantha. Helping him rise to his feet, Bhagavan looked into his eyes and after some time slowly replied, "If one watches from where the notion "I" arises, the mind is absorbed into that. That is *tapas*." And since Kavyakantha had himself revealed that he practiced mantra *japa* - repeating mantras thousands of times every day, the master added, "When repeating a mantra, if one watches the source from which the sound is produced, the mind is absorbed in that. That is *tapas*."

These revelations thrilled Kavyakantha. He finally understood how to be in touch with the truth through a practical method. Wave after wave of ecstasy flooded through him for hours in the presence of the ascetic. At last, when he opened his eyes, he asked the attendant, Palani Swami, for the ascetic's name. Though he was then called Brahmana Swami, Kavyakantha learnt that his real name was Venkataraman. Kavyakantha took "Ramana" from his name and since he had seen God in this ascetic, he named him "Bhagavan". Bhagavan in Sanskrit means God. As he had also given a revelation about *tapas* which no scripture had ever explained so clearly before, to Kavyakantha, Bhagavan was also a Vedic *rishi*. (*Rishi* means sage and is derived from

drashta, which means seer - one who has seen with the inner eye and not with just the physical eyes. A *rishi* is he who is ever connected to the original, inexhaustible source of wisdom.) But, to Kavyakantha, Bhagavan was not only a *rishi* but a *maharshi* - a great *rishi*. Therefore, he named the ascetic Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. This name, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, the chanting of which has lured countless people to the silent, still truth, was given by this gifted genius, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni.

At that time, he had over two hundred disciples of his own, including noble scholars like Daivarata and Kapali Shastri. He wrote a letter to them saying, "I have found my guru. Henceforth, it is not I but Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi who is our guru." The next day, he went to Bhagavan and said "Bhagavan, please accept me." Bhagavan graciously conceded to his request and said, "Stay in the cave that is adjacent to Virupaksha cave." Called Mango Tree cave, its proximity to Virupaksha cave allowed the guru and disciple to visit each other every day. Bhagavan continued to pour his grace and help Kavyakantha mature spiritually.

Bhagavan held Kavyakantha in high esteem and addressed him with much respect. One day, Kavyakantha

held Bhagavan's feet and begged, "Please Bhagavan, do not address me respectfully! I am your disciple and your child. Do not address me in such reverential terms!" But, Bhagavan continued to do so. He then learnt from his other disciples and Kavyakantha's admirers that they referred to him as "Nayana" which means "father" in Sanskrit. Bhagavan told Kavyakantha,

"Hereafter, I will call you Nayana." Nayana accepted this because in Telugu the word also meant disciple or child. ■

(Sri V. Ganesan, great grand nephew of Bhagavan and erstwhile editor of Mountain Path is a sought after spiritual scholar on Bhagavan's teachings)

When I returned to the Ashram after spending some days at Kovilur Mutt, Sri Bhagavan asked me in detail about what I did, where I went and so on. I said: "Mahadeva Swami made kind enquiries about Sri Bhagavan and the Ashramites. The day I went there, Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar and his relatives came to visit Mahadeva Swami." Sri Bhagavan asked me what Chettiar did there. I said that he prostrated with great reverence before Mahadeva Swami and accepted *vibhuti* Prasad from him. Sri Bhagavan asked: "Did you prostrate before Mahadeva Swami?" When I said no, he asked me why. I said: "I don't want to do *namaskar* to anyone except Sri Bhagavan." Sri Bhagavan said: "What an intelligent, wise fellow! Is your Bhagavan only within this body on the sofa? Is he not elsewhere? If a person is devoted wholly to one person, he should not go anywhere. If you go to another place, you must do what the people in that place do. Wherever and whenever you prostrate, you should think of your guru or your favourite god. If you do like this, your *namaskar* will reach the person you have in mind. That is the proper thing to do." I realised my mistake. From then on I think of Sri Bhagavan whenever I do *namaskar* to anyone. ■

[from Reminiscences by Kunju Swami]



Glimpses of Self from Adhyatma Ramayana – Part 62

G Kameshwar

RAMA GITA - Part 1

INTRODUCTION

All glory to the name and lore of Rama! The holy Adhyatma Ramayana is being narrated by Lord Siva to Parvati!

Siva continues the narration of Ravana's story, as told by Agastya to Rama.

Sita has been exiled once again, and is in the Asrama of Valmiki.

Rama is living an ascetic life. One day, finding him alone, Lakshmana comes to him and humbly requests him to instruct him about the means for quickly crossing over the ocean of spiritual ignorance.

In response to this most humble supplication of his devotee-brother

Lakshmana, Rama replies, giving a comprehensive teaching covering all aspects of spirituality.

This teaching is the acme of Adhyatma Ramayana, and is known as "Rama Gita".

Elders say that this Rama Gita is sruti-sara-sangraha, a compendium of teachings from the whole of Veda.

Rama to Lakshmana:

To begin with,

One should perform

One's duties

Appropriate to one's fraternity and stage of life;

(As a result)

Having attained purity of mind

Completing all one's duties

One should then take up

¹ Sadhana chatushtaya – Quartet of Means – 1) Viveka (Discrimination) 2) Vairagya (Non attachment) 3) Shat sampat (Six treasures) 4) Mumukshatva (desire for liberation).

Of these, the Shat sampat, six treasures are: shama (Control of mind), dama (Control of senses), uparati (Cessation of worldly engagements), titikshA (Endurance, Forbearance), shraddhA (faith in scriptures, and teachings of one's Guru), samAdhAna (Concentration, Focus, Attentiveness)

Appropriate disciplines (spiritual means)¹
 And then seek the refuge
 Of a Sadguru
 For gaining Self-Knowledge.

Actions

Are the cause of one's body;

(And having got a body form)
 Creatures, with attachment to their
 bodies,
 Engaging with actions and
 experiences

Pleasant and unpleasant,

Contrary to Dharma

Once again sow body seeds;

And thus goes on and on
 Like a wheel rotating,
 The transmigrations of births!

ajnAna² alone

Is the root cause of all this!

And it's destruction alone

Is deliverance

As decreed.

vidyA³ alone

Is capable of destroying that
 (ajNana)

Quickly;

Not Actions

Which,

Being born of ajNana,

Cannot go against (ajNana);

So it has been said⁴.

(By Actions)

Neither Self-Knowledge arises;

Nor is there cessation

Or lessening

Of (worldly) attachment;

(On the other hand)

Actions

Give rise

To further detrimental actions

Whereupon

Transmigrations

Go on

Unimpeded!

Therefore

The wise one

Engages in enquiry

About Self-Knowledge.

(However, some may argue that...)

Indeed, Actions,

Are ordered

By the edicts of the Veda!

Likewise is vidyA (Self-Knowledge)

As also the means

Of attaining purushArtha⁵-s

(All these are as per edicts of Veda)!

All life bearing beings

Have to act –

² ajnAna: Nescience, erroneous-knowledge that considers world as real and mistakes the Self for one's body

³ vidyA: Knowledge; in this case, Self-Knowledge

⁴ By the scriptures, and by the enlightened ones

⁵ purushArtha-s are four. dharma, artha, kAma, mOksha (Righteousness, Riches, Relishes, Release)

*Such is the edict (of Veda).
And again
It is said
That Action
Is an aid to gaining vidyA (Self-
Knowledge).*

*Indeed, Veda has declared
That Inaction is an offence
And therefore
The seeker of liberation
Should (for sure) perform Actions!*

*(Or, then again, if it is argued that)
Indeed, vidyA (Self-Knowledge)
Is independent;*

*For certain
It works by itself
And has no need of
Or dependence on
Any other
Even in thought –
(Then consider this...)*

*No!
Just as
Even though a yajnA (vedic
sacrifice)
Has its effect for sure
(The effect being inherent in the
cause)
It still needs
Other instruments
(Such as altar, oblations, mantra
etc);
Likewise*

*The Actions enjoined in the Veda
Are instrumental in attaining vidyA;
And therefore
By Actions alone
Is excellence
In attaining Liberation;*

*So say some
Arguers of conjectures;
But that is not the truth
As Self-Knowledge
Is opposed to *adrishtta*
- (The unseen force
governing cause and effect.)*

*Actions flourish
Because of the identification
Of one's body as the self;
Whereas Self-Knowledge
Is possible
Only on cessation
Of "I"-notion!*

*The worshipful resplendence,
Purenness,
That remains
After deep Self-enquiry
Is vidyA
Which is proclaimed
As the final residue
Of all mind movement.*

*Action dawns
Only with advent of 'doer'
Instruments of action
And the like;*

Whereas Self-Knowledge
 Destroys
 All notions
 Of 'Doer'
 Instruments of action,
 And such!

Therefore
 Withdrawing the senses
 From all objects,
 distractions;
 Engrossed in
 Constant contemplation
 Of the Self
 The wise ones renounce actions
 totally
 As, being opposed to
 vidyA;
 Actions cannot co-exist
 (With vidyA).

Until such time, due to mAyA
 There is the "I" notion
 With respect to body etc;
 So long should one perform ones
 duties
 In proper manner⁶;

Rejecting everything
 As "Not this" "Not this"
 Upon realizing that Supreme-Self
 Renounce all actions!

When the Consciousness
 That removes the
 separateness

Of Individual-Self and All
 pervading, Supreme-Self
 Shines resplendently in the heart;
 Then, Maya, the agency
 Which is the cause of oneself being
 caught
 In the whirl of birth-death
 transmigrations
 Vanishes instantly!

How can She (Maya)
 Who has been destroyed
 By the power and authority of Veda
 Then become capable of producing
 any effect?

When the stainless, Non-dual
 Consciousness (Self) is known
 Then
 avidyA⁷
 Does not manifest again.

When it is
 That once avidyA is destroyed
 It is not born again,
 Then
 How will one, ever again,
 Delude oneself
 That one is a "Doer" of this and
 that?

Therefore vidyA ,
 Which is independent
 And depends not on any other
 Grants liberation
 All by itself.

⁶ In accordance with Vedic precept; in a detached manner

⁷ avidyA: false knowledge, spiritual ignorance, that makes one believe duality to be real

She, the Taittiriya (Upanishad), Veda
Has said respectfully clarified
That (even) all auspicious activities
Have to be renounced.
Similarly
It has been said
By the Veda
Of vAjin-s⁸

That jnAna (alone)
For (realizing) liberation
(And that) needs no aid of any
karma (rituals)⁹.

Therefore
In case your belief is
That Vedic ritual and vidyA
Are equivalent,
Then that declaration is not right.

Because
For one thing
The fruits of the two are different;
And then again
For Vedic rituals
Many accessories are needed
Whereas for vidyA (Self-
Knowledge)
It is au-contre.

“I am indeed a fallen one”
Is an apprehension
Of one whose “I” notion is based on
body (Non-Self)

And is the hallmark of
ignorance!

Such an apprehension does not
occur
To those who have attained Self-
Knowledge.

Therefore, the wise ones
Should renounce
In the prescribed manner
All karma (duties, obligatory
actions)
Even though prescribed by the
scriptures
Unalterable as they may be!

Endowed with faith
And a heart that is pure
By the Grace of the Guru
(By the) Veda proclamation
Tattvamasi (That-thou-art);
After realizing
Oneness
The non-difference
Of Individual Self and All-
pervading, Supreme Self,
Unshakeable like the Meru
Mountain
One remains happy! ■

**To be continued -----
and concluded with
Nov-Dec, 2015 Issue.**

⁸ vAjin – Disciples of Yajnavalkya (who was known as vAjasanEya). These are followers of Shukla Yajur Veda. The reference here is to the authority of Brihadaraynyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda

⁹ etAvadare khalvamR^itatvamiti (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.5.15)



Introduction To “The Essence of Instruction”

Arthur Osborne

There is an old legend that a group of Rishis once lived in the Daruka forest together, practising rites by which they acquired supernatural powers. By the same means they hoped to attain final Liberation. In this, however, they were mistaken, for action can only result in action; not in the cessation of action; rites can produce powers but not the Peace of Liberation which is beyond rites and powers and all forms of action. Siva, determined to convince them of their error, therefore appeared before them as a wandering *sadhu*. Together with him came Vishnu in the form of a beautiful lady. All the Rishis were smitten with love for this lady and thereby their equilibrium was disturbed and their rites and powers were adversely affected. Moreover, their wives, who were also living with them in the forest, all fell in love with the strange *sadhu*. Incensed at this, they conjured up an elephant and a tiger by magic rites and sent them against him. Siva, however, slew them easily and took the elephant's skin for

a rope and the tiger's for a wrap. The Rishis then realized that they were up against one more powerful than themselves and they bowed down to him and asked him for instruction. He then explained to them that it is not by action but by renunciation of action that one attains to Liberation.

The poet, Muruganar wanted to write 100 verses on this theme but he could not readily proceed beyond 70 verses. It then occurred to him that Bhagavan was the proper person to write the verses relating to Siva's instructions. He therefore begged Bhagavan to compose them and Bhagavan accordingly composed thirty Tamil verses. He himself later translated these thirty verses into Sanskrit. These thirty verses were subsequently translated by Bhagavan into Telugu under the name *Anubhiti Saram* first and *Upadesa Saram* afterwards. Bhagavan likewise rendered them into Malayalam verses. The Sanskrit version, known as *Upadesa Saram*, was daily chanted before him

together with the Vedas and continues to be chanted before his shrine; that is to say that it is treated as a scripture. He refers to the various paths to Liberation, grading them in order of efficiency and

excellence and showing that the best is Self-enquiry. ■

[Extracts from "The Mountain Path" July, 1987]

Once took a family which was popularizing Bhagavan's name to meet Natanananda. He was told about the work they were doing for spreading Bhagavan's name. Natanananda became furious, "You talk such nonsense, thinking you are going to spread our master's fame! The only way you can do it is by becoming the truth yourself. Put the teachings into practice right here right now, that is the best way you can serve the guru. Our master is the teaching. The best way to express your devotion to Bhagavan is by putting his teaching into practice." This family got frightened and never went back to meet Natanananda. In Natanananda's last moments, Sadhu Om, Kunju Swami, a few others and I prayed before him. In every devotee's death that I witnessed, the one common factor was that none was bothered about his or her body. Just before he dropped the body, I asked, "Swami, how do you feel?" "I am happy," he replied. Physically, he was suffering deeply. Every doctor that I took to him, diagnosed him to be severely ill. Yet, he said he was happy. I asked, a little surprised, "What do you mean by happy?" Natanananda replied, "Look at Bhagavan's picture and you will understand." Those were his last words. He directed my attention to Bhagavan and then happily closed his eyes and passed away. It was a privilege for me to help build the *samadhi* for this *jnani's* body inside the compound of Dorab Framji's residence. ■

[Source: Ramana Periya Puranam by Sri V. Ganesan]

Experience such as 'I went; I came; I was; I did' come naturally to everyone. From these experiences, does it not appear that the consciousness 'I' is the subject of those various acts? Enquiring into the true nature of that consciousness, and remaining as oneself is the way to understand, through enquiry, one's true nature. ■

Sri Maharshi in Self-Enquiry



The Illusory Mind

Kushal Shah

Does the mind really exist? Is it not just an illusion? An Advaitin will emphatically answer "yes", but that's not the point of view from which this question is being asked. According to Advaita Vedanta, everything except Brahman is an illusion. However, as long as one is aware of the existence of the body, it is hard to say that the material world is an illusion. After all, are we not perceiving the beautiful colours of the rainbow, the soft murmur of the winds and the music of the water as it flows down the valley? The body exists and so does everything else in the material world. It is also not hard to accept that there is something called consciousness that exists and differentiates the living and the non-living. And this consciousness

is also most certainly not the same as matter. It is something beyond this material world. But what about the mind? Where does it reside? Does it have any definitive existence or is it just a figment of our imagination?

Whenever the great sage, Ramana Maharshi, was asked about the means to attain enlightenment, he used to always ask his disciples to look for the

“He said that if we search hard enough and deep enough, we will realize that there is no such thing as a separate mind and all the thoughts truly emerge from the depths of consciousness.”

source of all thoughts, for the source of the "I". He said that if we search hard enough and deep enough, we will realize

that there is no such thing as a separate mind and all the thoughts truly emerge from the depths of consciousness. Many other saints of India have also proclaimed that the pure mind and pure consciousness are one and the same.

The mind has also been defined as a reflection of the pure consciousness in the individual.

One thing that can certainly be inferred from the above is that the mind does not share the same "level of reality" as the material body and consciousness. It is more of a function of the consciousness on the individual body. In other words, it is the limited perception of consciousness that the brain of the individual is able to grasp. As this perception increases, the mind also grows and eventually merges into the same infinite consciousness. This is what is known as enlightenment or samadhi.

If the mind is illusory and is just a function of the consciousness, then it must also die when the body dies. What then is the basis of re-birth? Is it the memories and experiences that a person had in his/her life, which survives the death of the body? Even if this is true, it still remains to be deciphered how these memories get transferred from one body to the next. May be in some subtle form in higher dimensions! ■

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Anecdotal Insights

Kunju Swami said that Bhagavan was very natural and spontaneous with him. Many a time, Bhagavan would go into *samadhi* from which it was very difficult to bring him out. When this happened, three or four people would blow conches in Bhagavan's ears, until after a long time, Bhagavan emerged from his *samadhi*. This practice continued until sometime after Bhagavan moved to Ramanasramam. The scriptures state that there are two means of influencing the mind: by blowing a conch and by ringing a bell. The conch brings out the subdued mind. This can even be tried on people with insanity - to bring their minds back to a state of normalcy. The ringing of a bell turns the mind inwards. This is why temples and churches have bells; it is not merely a ritual but a method to calm and turn the mind inwards. ■

[Source: Extract from Ramana Periya Puranam]

One day, when Bhagavan was seated in the midst of his devotees, he suddenly got up and strode quickly towards the hill. Kunju Swami said, "I was very curious. Bhagavan usually never did anything unpredictable. On the rare occasions that he did, there was always some significance behind it." Kunju Swami was waiting for Bhagavan to instruct him to come, but the guru went alone. From a distance, he could see Bhagavan surrounded by monkeys. After half an hour or so Bhagavan came back with his eyes swollen from shedding tears. "We were alarmed and asked what happened." Bhagavan replied, "These monkeys have been searching for me at Skandashram. When I left, they searched all over the hill putting their lives in peril. Monkeys live in kingdoms and if they wander into another territory they could be killed by rival monkeys. These monkeys have come with their children risking their lives and are begging me to come back to Skandashram because they miss me there. It took me a long time to persuade them. I explained my situation and asked them to go back. I gave them my assurance that they will get back safely." Whenever Kunju Swami narrated this anecdote he would weep copiously because it would bring before him and us, Bhagavan's poignant unity with the animal kingdom. Bhagavan would often point out, "What is the difference between animals, birds and us? Birds wear the bird body, animals wear the animal body and we wear the human body. We all wear different bodies like different shirts, but in reality we are all the same being." Kunju Swami loved animals and noticed Bhagavan's relationship with them. He was therefore the source of all stories of the master's relationship with animals and birds. ■

[Extract from Ramana Periya Puranam]

Dr. Syed, Philosophy Professor of Allahabad University, put a question: "Bhagavan," he asked, "what is the purpose of creation?" Usually Sri Bhagavan gave His replies in Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam and got them interpreted. This time Sri Bhagavan spoke directly in English. He put a counter-question: "Can the eye see itself?" Dr.Syed replied: "Of course not. It Can see everything else, but not itself." Then Sri Bhagavan asked, "But if it wants to see itself?" Dr.Syed paused and said, "It can see itself only reflected in a mirror." Sri Bhagavan seized the answer and commented, "That is it. Creation is the mirror for the eye to see itself." Now I asked whether Sri Bhagavan meant 'e-y-e' or 'I'. Sri Bhagavan said that we could take it figuratively as 'e-y-e' and literally as 'I'. – Prof. G.V. Subbaramayya in Ramana Reminiscences,p.22. ■

Bhagavan's Grace Manifests and Protects!

“I remember one instance which seem to me to show that Bhagavan himself used his Grace to ward off evil pre-ordained by *Prarabdha*. A certain Rangayyar, who had been a playmate of Bhagavan in his boyhood days at Tiruchuzhi, kept in touch with him later and became his devotee. Bhagavan, for his part, never forgot the old relationship and was always gracious and considerate to his old playmate. At one time Rangayyaar was passing through a very trying time, facing all sorts of difficulties, financial and other. He had been warned by capable astrologers that for a year or so about that time, terrible things would happen to him. After experiencing a few of these troubles at the outset of the bad time indicated in his horoscope he took counsel of Bhagavan, and Bhagavan advised him to come and stay with him for the rest of the period said to be fraught with danger.

“By taking Bhagavan's advice, Rangayyaar told me, he came safely through many of his troubles, which seemed insurmountable. Bhagavan impressed on him the desirability of his not leaving his presence even for a few hours during those ten months or so. It would seem as if evil forces were poised ready to pounce on him and seeking some opportunity to do so when Bhagavan's presence would not be there to protect him. During that period Rangayyar had one evening to go so far as the railway station to see off some relative who had paid him and Bhagavan a visit, and even then Bhagavan warned him to come straight back, without loitering anywhere or spending the night in the town. All this I have heard from Rangayyar's own lips. I personally know that Bhagavan's Grace was amply bestowed upon him and that, to the extent to which such a thing can be predicated of Bhagavan, Bhagavan had a soft corner in his heart for him”. ■

[Source: A.Devaraja Mudaliar in “My Recollections”,p.103-104]



How I came to Maharshi

Dr. Lt.Col. P.V. Karamchandani

Normally, as soon as I place my head on the pillow, I fall asleep. One night, in February 1949, at Vellore, for no conscious reason, I could not sleep and kept tossing in bed. That was something very unusual.

At 1 a.m. a telephone call came from Tiruvannamalai, a place 55 miles away, asking me to reach there by 8 a.m. as Bhagavan Ramana was very ill. Having received the call, I fell sound asleep.

I was District Medical Officer of North Arcot then and Tiruvannamalai was within my jurisdiction. I reached Tiruvannamalai without any emotion. My only thought was that I was on a professional mission of attending on a patient. The sainthood of Bhagavan Ramana had no significance for me.

I examined Bhagavan Ramana. He had cancer of the main nerve, high up

in the arm. I gave my prescription and returned to Vellore the same day.

I had conducted my examination of Bhagavan Ramana in a strictly professional manner. I carried no spiritual feelings for him. Nor did he speak a word with me. But he had directed a momentary gaze of grace at me which kept stirring me deeply. Involuntarily I felt a new vista of spiritual consciousness open out before me.

That wondrous gaze of Bhagavan seemed to envelop me with an aura of bliss. The spiritual pull from him felt so irresistible that after a few days I myself arranged a visit to Tiruvannamalai just for the sake of having his 'darshan'. I took my wife with me.

We visited Bhagavan with a sense of curiosity and an indefinable sense of expectation. We made our

obeisance and sat by his feet. We did not speak a word; nor did he speak. No speech seemed necessary. So surcharged with spirituality was he, that his spirituality wafted out to us, completely enveloping us. Serenity seeped into us. Our minds attained a state of blissful, ecstatic meditation.

The tumour that Bhagavan was bearing must have given him the most excruciating, nerve-wracking pain. Such writhing pain would make the toughest man wince and moan. But Bhagavan's face was serene, smiling and radiant.

All of a sudden a disciple accidentally touched only the fringe of the thin bandage that was covering Bhagavan's tumour. Bhagavan gave an involuntary start. The disciple felt bewildered and mumbled, "Bhagavan, did I hurt you? It was only the fringe of the bandage that my hand touched." The Bhagavan smiled his benign smile and softly said, "You do not know the enormous weight as of a mountain that this fringe bears!".

That chance exclamation of Bhagavan indicated severity of his pain. But his godly face did not bear the slightest sign of his agony.

It reflected only joy and peace. He seemed to have switched off his mind from the body to the divine.

The next occasion when I was summoned to Bhagavan's presence was when he had developed anuria. I now went to his Ashram not with the all-important feeling of a District Medical Officer going to visit his patient. I went in the spirit of a humble devotee going to serve a saint of colossal spiritual magnitude. My ministrations as a doctor were to be coupled with the devotion of a disciple.

When I reached the Ashram, I was told that for the past 24 hours Bhagavan had not taken any food, not even a drop of water; that the disciples' implorations in this behalf had failed; and that, in consequence, the entire community was feeling most anxious. I was entreated to persuade Bhagavan to eat something.

On examining Bhagavan I found that that it was imperative that he should take some fluid. But what if he refused my request too? Ordering him in my capacity as a doctor seemed to be out of question. I felt like asking him as a boon to accept my prayer. I

“By Wonderful was the spiritual exhilaration I experienced in Bhagavan's holy presence.

”

prayed inwardly and held a glass of buttermilk before him. He gazed at me for a second, took the buttermilk in shaking hands, and drank it. My joy knew no bounds. There were relief and jubilation all around. I was thanked profusely. But I felt infinitely grateful for Bhagavan's overwhelming grace. He had heard my silent prayer and granted my boon.

Wonderful was the spiritual exhilaration I experienced in Bhagavan's holy presence.

The next time I was called to him was at midnight. When I entered his room, four disciples were there. Bhagavan was saying something to them in Tamil. They told me that he was asking them to leave the room, but that they wanted to stay as, according to them, he was in a delirium. I persuaded them to go.

Three of them went away. The fourth one stayed on. Bhagavan turned to him and whispered, "You are not going away because you feel that you love me more than the others!" The disciple now knew that Bhagavan was not delirious. He bowed and went.

I was left alone with Bhagavan. As usual, he did not speak with me. I

was also silent. But the vibrations that emanated from him were celestial. His body must have been in terrific, mortal pain. But his heavenly spirituality was unaffected by it. A rapturous thrill electrified my entire being.

I administered to his body; but I was hardly conscious that I was a District Medical Officer. I was conscious only of an intense desire to worship this illumined soul. I had learnt that Bhagavan did not allow devotees to touch his feet. But I felt a deep urge within me not only to touch his blessed feet but to press them lovingly. I took courage in both my hands and pressed them. The wonder of wonders! Bhagavan let me do so! His grace was abounding. I considered myself in

the seventh heaven. I glorify those few minutes of my life.

“Bhagavan free me from my craving for this promotion. I don't want anything mundane. Instead, grant me my soul's evolution.”

“ The next time I was summoned to him was about three hours after midnight. Pain must have been torturing his body. Still, he was sound asleep. Holy silence filled the room. It was the ambrosial hour of the dawn. I did not wish to disturb him. I sat quietly by his feet. Suddenly he opened his eyes. His gracious gaze fell on me. He softly muttered,

“D.M.O.!” The peculiar tone in which he mentioned me indicated that I had been in his sacred thoughts and that he was expecting me. I silently worshiped him. My whole being seemed to vibrate with ecstasy.

At that time I had been feeling restless about promotion to the rank of Major General (Surgeon General), which was legitimately due to me as the senior-most I.M.S. Officer in the Province of Madras. Howsoever I tried to banish the idea of that coveted promotion from my mind, it loomed large before my mind’s eye and marred my equanimity.

Then I said to myself, “Why am I fretting unnecessarily? The next time I visit Bhagavan, I shall request him to grant me this promotion!”.

When I visited the Ashram again, I went before Bhagavan with my mind resolutely set on requesting him for that boon. But a marvel happened. As soon as I saw Bhagavan, my mind melted, the resolution evaporated, and I felt filled with strange contentment. A request did formulate itself within me, but it was an entirely different request. I inwardly prayed, “Bhagavan free me from my craving for this promotion. I don’t want anything mundane. Instead, grant me my soul’s evolution.” My prayer seemed to be instantly granted. Effulgent joy

flooded the very depths of my being. I reverently bowed before Bhagavan as he gazed at me benevolently.

My last visit to Bhagavan was on the day he attained Nirvana. I have described it in my *Saintly Galaxy*; how, on visiting him, I found that his body would not last beyond that day; how I silently prayed that he might retain his body till I brought my wife from Vellore as she had always been anxious to witness a great saint’s last moments of life; how she brought orange juice for him; how he would not accept any drink at all; how, once again inwardly, I implored him to drink the orange juice to save my wife from disappointment; how he accepted my unspoken prayer and asked for orange juice, to the transcendental delight of my wife and myself; and how shortly afterwards, in utter tranquillity, he passed away.

That was scene of great sombre beauty.

During my two months’ contact with Bhagavan, I did not speak a single word with him. But what wonderful grace he poured into me through his benign, benevolent gaze!

A peerless spiritual experience indeed! ■

[Extracts from “The Mountain Path” April, 1987]



Inviting Presence

Indrani Guha

To explain or try to explain the unmanifested through the form of language can be a challenge. Is it even possible? Many sages resort to silence, in the face of the multitude of questions thrown at them, some smile, others just sit and bestow

through their eyes, a kind of mute compassion that the questioner can only feel. Seekers are

drawn to sages often not because of the knowledge they possess and convey, but because of their presence. What makes their presence shine forth with such intense clarity? Space consciousness arises only when thoughts subside. There is no one method, or technique, but there are many tools that are there as pointers for us. Meditation, yoga, chanting, satsang, solitude, communion with

nature, all lead gently towards the awakening of consciousness.

This awakening is often presented as space, or presence, who we are essentially, beyond our bodies and our intellect.

“To get back to our essential nature, we have to let go all ideas or concepts about who we are. We are attached to form through our mental-emotional states, based primarily on fear and desire.”

Often we glimpse it in the gap between our thoughts, in the gap between our words. For centuries,

human beings have been relying on their minds, their intellect, and in many ways it has served us well. But it has also caused a huge amount of suffering. With little or no access to the frequency of consciousness, we have identified ourselves with our forms. Our functions, our bodies, what we ‘do’ have taken precedence over who we ‘are’. This has also caused a separation between us and them,

our institutions, our nationalities, our tribes, our religious beliefs have all continually separated us from one another, strengthening the ego and eventually making us all suffer. This suffering has been inflicted not only on human beings but also on all other life forms on our planet.

The mind is a wonderful tool, if used wisely. Then we can play with the forms of the universe without the craving and the clinging. However, when it just generates

endless chatter and thoughts that only serve to separate and create unhappiness, it can take over our very being and the result is a dreadful tale of suffering. To get back to our essential nature, we have to let go all ideas or concepts about who we are. We are attached to form through our mental-emotional states, based primarily on fear and desire. Once the light of consciousness awakens, all life situations become just that – situations, we do not identify ourselves with every event, and a field of aliveness and space opens up. Every challenge

becomes an opportunity, a portal, and a chance to practice awareness. But one doesn't necessarily need a challenge to awaken; often so-called mundane tasks are a perfect opportunity to let the power of the moment come through. No special place is required, no special diet or exercise. Our essential nature, prior to form identity, is already present, always has been, only for

“In our own company, we begin to slowly peel the layers of conditioning, the mental/emotional stories that we think make us who we are and start relaxing into ‘being.’ There are those that like a clear drop of water merge into being without any struggle whatsoever.”

too long, it has been shrouded in form identity. When we cling to our forms, our stories, our mental emotional

states, we can never be at peace. We hope that our stories will turn out well, that joy will be our constant companion. But no story can be constant, it is the nature of life to change, and often the change is painful. Through constant awareness of the very nature of change and acceptance of what arises, we begin to relax and flow with life. Accepting what ‘is’ does not imply that one becomes a passive observer. In fact, any transformation that is initiated from acceptance can become a powerful one. We stop resisting, stop fighting with life,

and life in turn starts flowing with ease. How does one know that one is leading a conscious, aware life? Well, look around you. Are you chasing one desire after another? Are your relationships always based on what you can get from one another, hence creating conflict? Are we constantly talking about the past and regretting what was or glorifying it? We are trapped in a time-based universe, of our own making, looking back or looking ahead and forgetting to rejoice in the only moment there ever is, the present. Very often, even our spiritual seeking becomes another form of ego, my guru is better than yours, my path is deeper, my meditation practice is more enlightening, even my God is the true God!

Although as humans, we are social and need the company of other people, solitude can serve as a good place to begin. In our own company, we

begin to slowly peel the layers of conditioning, the mental/emotional stories that we think make us who we are and start relaxing into 'being.' There are those that like a clear drop of water merge into being without any struggle whatsoever. Others struggle more; many give up and go back to their unconscious ways. Sometimes great suffering, causes us like a bolt of lightning, to drop the old egoic way of living. Whatever the motive, whatever the impulse, being in presence requires no time. It is said that the 'vehicle' needs to be prepared before any creative impulse can emerge and we have often found that a teaching or teacher comes into our lives but we are not ready and the moment is gone.

To practice being conscious, being aware, requires a vigilance and courage like no other. But it is possible, it is always possible. Begin here, being NOW. ■

During the meal I would pour *rasam* (pepper water) into Bhagavan's hands. He would sip it slowly, and when his palms were empty, I would fill them again. One day he asked me to pour the *rasam* over the rice and go. He would not cup his hands as before. I thought I had offended him in some way and requested Santammal to find out reason. "Bhagavan told her: "When she serves me, she makes others wait." He disliked being given preference in any form. ■

[Source Ramana Smrti, by Varanasi Subbalakshmiamma 'My Life, My Light']



Bhagavan's Gift to the Modern Devotee

Sridhar

As ardent devotees, we revel in discussing the infinite facets of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. One such divine aspect of 'Brahmn' in human form is his timeless gift to the modern devotee. By modern devotee, let us generously assume a person who is steeped in urban living, sufficiently busy with his/ her day-to-day life, spiritually literate having desultorily imbibed information from multiple sources. It is common in most such instances that these individuals are driven by a compelling inner urge to apply spiritual principles and make a difference in the lives of the less privileged in society. Bhagavan through his infinite compassion provides the modern man with a guidepost to living our everyday life. His living presence and teachings continue to aid the modern devotee, who is torn between compelling demands imposed by the challenges and complexities of life in today's complex environment.

The modern devotee intuitively understands that the unitary source of the Vedas, the Upanishads and all other revered scriptures across the world reside within 'Brahmn' which manifests in diverse divine forms across ages and geographies, adapting and divinely expressing itself to the fluctuating demands of time.

In my humble opinion, this is where the divine manifestation of Arunachala or 'Brahmn' or Skanda in the form of Sri Ramana Maharshi is significant. Bhagavan did not purposely create a new creed or 'Sambradaya'* but unified various creeds both Indian and Foreign, with a single thread called 'Self Enquiry'. Through this direct and most effective path, He provides a wonderful gift to mankind, especially to the tired, confused, over-educated but sincere modern devotee. Indeed Bhagavan brought the proverbial lamp of the Guru to the dungeons of the modern

mind which could not see the treasure within its own self and was lost in the quagmire external to itself.

This interpretation is based on my personal experience. Before I came to Bhagavan, I too wandered aimlessly but eagerly in the forests of our religious lore to get some meaning out of life. I possessed a mildly agnostic disposition to religion due to the social milieu of my environment. I also had a healthy distrust and a misunderstanding of the various rituals embedded in Hindu customs and festivals. Neither the 'Bhagavad Gita' nor the 'Four Gospels' from the Holy Bible could unwind the many knots that perpetually bothered me and surfaced in my mind.

Then came the inexplicable elixir of Bhagavan's teachings through His grace, which quenched my spiritual thirst in ample measure. I reveled in the gems that flowed through His logical, (almost scientific) explanations in works like "Who Am I", and "Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi" and those which over-flowed with bhakti in works including "Akshara Manamalai" and "Arunachala Padigam" besides 24/7, a recorded life of an exalted Karma yogi; among others

I was truly astounded at Bhagavan's

ingenious yet simple explanations of the core messages expounded in the Gita with deep insights on the minute facets of the Vedic truths. Eureka!

It is pertinent to note that Sri Krishna did the same service to the then "modern" devotees of that age (Dwapara Yuga). Lord Krishna synthesised the entire Vedas and Upanidhads in 700 versus which can be read in 1.5 hours. Additionally, He expressed the relevance and application of the exciting context of the Mahabharata epic's climax in the battle of Kurukshetra, to the demands and challenges of everyday life.

In conclusion, I humbly submit that one of the main purposes of Bhagavan's avatar was to give modern devotees an extremely pertinent spiritual practice in tune with the authentic scriptures of yore, to live life with peace and harmony. ■

*[*This concept is very well elucidated by Sri Nochur Venkataraman in his popular discourses.]*

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Poem

Arunachala

Arthur Osborne

I sought to devour Thee;
 Come now and devour me,
 Then there will be peace, Arunachala!
 You bade me give all for you –
 Take now the giver too,
 Survive alone, Arunachala!
 Let now the deception end.
 There was no lover or friend
 Apart from Thyself, Arunachala!
 Now that at last I know
 All this a magic show,
 Let it dissolve in Thee, Arunachala!

*[This poem is based on v.28 of Sri Bhagavan's
 "Marital Garland of Letters to Sri Arunachala"]*

Kunju Swami also gave us many instances of Bhagavan's humour. When letters arrived, they would be taken to Bhagavan in the hall and the devotees would observe Bhagavan's face as he read them. From his expression, they would know if there was something interesting in the letter. Once, Bhagavan held a post card in his hand and then just kept it aside, but his smile gave him away. Kunju Swami ventured to ask, "Bhagavan, I know that you have read something interesting in that post card. Will you please share it with us?" There were six or seven people present. Bhagavan said with a smile, "Worldly people have attachment to the body only as long as they live. But some of these *sanyasins*, these monks, who are supposed to have renounced the world are attached to their bodies even after they die." The listeners did not understand. Bhagavan continued, "This post card is from a *sanyasin* who is eighty years old. He has appealed for funds saying, "I may die any day. Since my body has to be placed in a *samadhi* which has to be built well, please send me donations." ■

[Source: Ramana Periya Puranam]



The following is from the edited Hindi version of the book "Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi". Both the Hindi and English versions of the book are available at the Delhi Kendra book store.

श्री रमण महर्षि के संस्मरण

38

प्रोफेसर के. स्वामीनाथन् (1896-1994), प्रेसिडेंसी कॉलेज, मद्रास, में अंग्रेजी के प्राध्यापक थे। उन्होंने 100 भागों में प्रकाशित **Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi** का संपादन किया। उन्होंने **Ramana Maharshi & The Self Supreme** नाम पुस्तक लिखी। उनकी एक अन्य पुस्तक **Ramana Maharshi** नेशनल बुक ट्रस्ट ने प्रकाशित की है। उन्हें 1972 में पद्म भूषण से सम्मानित किया गया।

सन् 1927 में किसी ने मुझे रमण महर्षि के विषय में बताया। किंतु मुझे किसी ऐसे व्यक्ति में कोई रुचि नहीं हुई जो इस बावली-बिगड़ी दुनिया को सुधारने के बजाय, स्थिर होकर एक स्थान पर बैठा हो। मेरे आदर्श तो कार्यशील महात्मा गांधी थे। सन् 1940 में मुझे संस्कृत के एक महापंडित से 'ब्रह्म सूत्र' पढ़ने का अवसर मिला। तब मुझे समझ आया कि महर्षि की 'अकर्मण्यता' गहन अर्थपूर्ण थी। उस विद्वान ने मुझसे यह भी कहा कि तुम स्वयं तिरुवण्णामलै जाकर देख सकते हो। लेकिन मैं नहीं गया। जब मैंने महर्षि के भक्त और कवि मुरुगनार का काव्य पढ़ा तो सोचा जो मनुष्य ऐसी काव्य रचना की प्रेरणा दे सकता है वह कितना दिव्य होगा। मैं फिर भी महर्षि

से मिलने नहीं गया। एक बार जब ब्रिटिश विद्वान ग्रांट डफ (सं.7) मेरे कॉलेज आए और उन्होंने मुझसे पूछा, “क्या तुम रमण महर्षि से मिले हो?” तब मुझे लज्जा का अनुभव हुआ कि एक विदेशी मेरे से ऐसा प्रश्न पूछ रहा है। इन घटनाओं ने मुझे विश्वास दिला दिया कि मैं एक जिद्दी प्यासा ऊँट, जिस मरुद्यान (Oasis) की तलाश में हूँ, वह पास में ही है, और वहाँ सरलता से पहुँचा जा सकता है।

सितंबर 29, 1940 को मैंने प्रथम बार महर्षि के दर्शन किए और वही मेरे जीवन का सबसे स्मरणीय दिन है। उनके अंतिम दिन—अप्रैल 14, 1950, तक मैंने आश्रम की अनेक यात्राएँ की और प्रत्येक यात्रा के बाद सुखी और तरो-ताजा होकर वापस लौटा। जो निर्मल आनंद मुझे वहाँ मिला, वह ऐसा था जैसा बालक को अपनी माँ को गोद में सुरक्षित बैठने पर मिलता है।

गांधी जी की तुलना हनुमान से करते हुए महर्षि ने एक बार कहा कि हम हनुमान को ‘चिरंजीवी’ कहते हैं; इसका यह अर्थ नहीं कि एक बंदर इतने वर्षों तक जीवित रहेगा। इसका अर्थ है कि पृथ्वी पर सदैव कोई ऐसा रहेगा जो भगवान राम की सेवा करेगा, जैसा आजकल गांधी जी कर रहे हैं।

एक बार तेलुगु के प्राध्यापक रंगाचारी ने महर्षि से निष्काम कर्म की व्याख्या पूछी, किंतु वे मौन रहे। दोपहर बाद जब महर्षि अरुणाचल पहाड़ी पर घूमने गए, कुछ भक्त और रंगाचारी उनके साथ थे। रास्ते में महर्षि ने एक कांटेदार वृक्ष की मजबूत शाखा देखी। उन्होंने उसे उठाया और सारे कांटे हटाकर उसे खुरदरे पत्तों से रगड़कर साफ कर दिया। इस काम में घंटों लग गए, किंतु इतने परिश्रम और समय के परिणाम—स्वरूप एक सुंदर चिकनी छड़ी तैयार हो गई। पहाड़ी पर एक गड़रिया, जिसका डण्डा खो गया था, अत्यंत निराश घूम रहा था। महर्षि ने उसे वह छड़ी दे दी। रंगाचारी ने स्वीकारा की उसे न केवल अपने प्रश्न का उत्तर मिला, अपितु किसी को शिक्षा देने की एक नई प्रणाली का भी ज्ञान हुआ।

प्रसिद्ध स्विस मनोविज्ञानिक कार्ल युंग ने एक लेख में महर्षि और रामकृष्ण परमहंस की तुलना करते हुए परिणाम निकाला कि, रामकृष्ण भक्ति से और महर्षि ज्ञान द्वारा लक्ष्य पर पहुँचे। यह निष्कर्ष सुनकर महर्षि बोले, “जब कोई शिखर पर पहुँच जाता है, फिर वह चाहे किसी भी मार्ग से चढ़ा हो, उसे और मार्गों का ज्ञान भी होता है। ऐसा क्या था जो परमहंस नहीं जानते थे?”

कुछ भक्तों ने महर्षि को ‘ज्ञानी’ और गांधी जी को ‘कर्मयोगी’ की संज्ञा दी। महर्षि ने कहा, “आँख जो देखती है और हाथ जो करते हैं, दोनों ही एक शाश्वत सत्य के अवयव हैं; एक ही आध्यात्म शक्ति सर्वत्र कार्यशील है। विभिन्न व्यक्तियों द्वारा विभिन्न कार्य संपन्न होते हैं, उन्हें श्रेष्ठता के क्रम में लगाना ग़लत होगा।”

महर्षि तमिल, तेलुगु या मलयालम में बोलना पसंद करते थे। किंतु यदि उनके उत्तर का अंग्रेजी में अनुवाद आवश्यक होता, तो वे उसमें हुई त्रुटि को सुधार देते थे। प्रारब्ध की व्याख्या करते हुए उन्होंने ऑटोमेटिक डिवाइन एक्टिविटी (Automatic Divine Activity) शब्दों का प्रयोग किया।

महर्षि को देवी-देवताओं के प्रति गहरी श्रद्धा थी। वे उनके उदाहरण भी देते थे। परंतु उनका सर्वाधिक झुकाव अव्यक्तिगत ज्ञान के प्रति था। कोरे वैचारिक विषयों पर, जैसे ईश्वर कैसा है? कहाँ रहता है? इत्यादि प्रश्नों का वे, महात्मा बुद्ध के समान, कोई उत्तर नहीं देते थे। उनकी आत्मविचार की तकनीक, जो मनुष्य द्वारा चेतना का अन्वेषण है, एक वैज्ञानिक विधि है। इसमें मनुष्य को निरंतर गहराई से यह सोचना है कि उसका वास्तविक रूप क्या है। ■

क्रमशः



‘TALKS WITH SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI’ was published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, in January 1955. These TALKS cover a period of four years, 1935-1939 and were all recorded by Sri Munagala S. Venkataramiah (later known as Swami Ramananda Saraswati), a very old disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi. The four years that are covered here, were the days when the Ashramam reached the summit of its glory. Maharshi’s health was on the whole good and the Hall where he sat was open day and night to welcome one and all. Visitors flocked there from every nook and corner of the world. There was hardly a country that was not represented at one time or the other. But war naturally interfered with this influx, though the number of Indian visitors steadily increased as time went on. But it was these conversations, mainly with Westerners, that were especially interesting; the modern tendency towards materialism and self aggrandisement, on which the West often prides itself, met its match here. Sri Bhagavan glowed like a sun, and even those who did not know him or agreed with his words, were fascinated and could not help but be elevated by his presence.

This publication has been received so well by the devotees and readers that as many as 14 reprints have been brought out so far. M/s. Shival Agarwal & Co. have recently brought out a Hindi version of this book. With the permission of the publisher and Sri Ramanasramam, we are serialising the same in our bi-monthly magazine DIRECT PATH-RAMANA GYAN. We hope our Hindi readers will benefit from this and find it interesting and helpful in their spiritual quest.” - Editor



श्री रामण महर्षि से बातचीत

महर्षि : वह बाह्य नहीं है, अतएव उसे अन्यत्र खोजने की आवश्यकता नहीं है। यह आन्तरिक तथा शाश्वत भी है। यह सदैव साक्षात् है। पर तुम कहते हो कि तुमको भान नहीं है। इसके लिए उसके प्रति निरन्तर जागरूक रहने की आवश्यकता है। अन्य किसी भी प्रयास की आवश्यकता नहीं है। तुम्हारा प्रयास केवल इसलिए है कि तुम अपने आपको अन्य संकल्पों से व्याकुल न होने दो।

वह व्यक्ति सन्तुष्ट था।

313. श्री ग्रीनलीस : श्री भगवान् ने कल कहा था कि 'अन्तस्थ परमात्मा' की खोज को करते समय बाह्य कार्य स्वतः ही होते रहेंगे। श्री चैतन्य की जीवनी में ऐसा कहा गया है कि जब वे विद्यार्थियों को पढ़ा रहे थे उस समय उनका लक्ष्य कृष्ण पर हुआ, उन्हें अपनी देह का भान नहीं रहा और वे कृष्ण की चर्चा करने लगे। इस प्रसंग से यह सन्देह होता है कि कार्य सहज किस प्रकार बन सकेगा ? क्या लक्ष्य भौतिक कार्य पर भी रखा जाय ?

महर्षि : आत्मा ही सब कुछ है। अब मैं तुमसे पूछता हूँ : 'क्या तुम आत्मा से पृथक् हो ? क्या आत्मा से पृथक् कार्य होना सम्भव है ? अथवा क्या देह आत्मा से पृथक् है ? इनमें से कोई भी आत्मा से पृथक् नहीं हो सकता। आत्मा सर्वव्यापी है। अतः तुम स्वेच्छापूर्वक उनमें संलग्न रहो अथवा नहीं, समस्त कार्य होते रहेंगे। कार्य स्वतः ही होता रहेगा। आत्मा के प्रति जाग्रत रहने में कार्य के प्रति जागरूक रहना भी सम्मिलित है।

भक्त : यदि मैं उस पर ध्यान न दूँ तो कार्य की क्षति हो सकती है।

महर्षि : चूँकि तुम स्वयं को शरीर से मिलाते हो तुम समझते हो कि कार्य

तुम करते हो। किन्तु देह तथा इसकी चेष्टा, कार्य सहित आत्मा से पृथक् नहीं है। तुम काम में ध्यान दो अथवा नहीं, इसका क्या महत्त्व है ? मानलो तुम एक स्थान से दूसरे स्थान तक चलते हो। तुम प्रत्येक उस पग पर ध्यान नहीं देते, जिसे तुम उठाते हो। तथापि कुछ समय बाद तुम स्वयं को गन्तव्य स्थान पर पाते हो। तुमने देखा कि किस प्रकार कार्य अर्थात् चलना तुम्हारे ध्यान कि बिना भी होता रहता है। अन्य कार्यों के सम्बन्ध में भी ऐसा ही है।

भक्त : तब तो यह सुषुप्ति में चलना जैसा हुआ।

महर्षि : ऐसा ही है। जब तक बालक गहन निद्रा में होता है, तब उसकी माँ उसे नींद में भोजन कराती है। बालक अच्छी प्रकार जाग्रत के समान ही भोजन कर लेता है। किन्तु अगले दिन प्रातः वह माँ से कहता है : “माँ ! मैंने पिछली रात भोजन नहीं किया।” माँ तथा अन्य व्यक्तियों को यह ज्ञात है कि उसने भोजन किया है। किन्तु वह कहता है कि उसने भोजन नहीं किया। वह जागरूक नहीं था, तथापि कार्य हुआ था। इस प्रकार के कार्य के लिए नींद में चलने का (एक प्रकार का रोग) वास्तव में एक अच्छी अनुरूपता है।

अन्य उदाहरण लो : बैलगाड़ी में एक यात्री से गया है। यात्रा में बैल चलते हैं; अथवा रुकते हैं, अथवा जुए से मुक्त हो जाते हैं। उसे इन घटनाओं का भान नहीं होता, किन्तु वह जागने पर स्वयं को एक भिन्न स्थान पर पाता है। यात्रा के घटनाक्रम से सानन्द अनभिज्ञ रहकर भी उसकी यात्रा समाप्त हो गयी।

मनुष्य की आत्मा के साथ भी ऐसा ही है। वह देह में सोता है। उसकी जाग्रत अवस्था बैलों का चलना है, उसकी समाधि उनका शान्त होकर ठहर जाना है (चूँकि समाधि जाग्रत सुषुप्ति) अर्थात् उसे कार्यों का भान है, किन्तु वह कार्यों में संलग्न नहीं। इसी प्रकार बैल जुते हुए हैं किन्तु चलते नहीं। उसकी नींद बैलों को जुए से मुक्त कर देने के समान है, क्योंकि उस समय समस्त क्रियाएँ पूर्णतः बन्द हो जाती हैं जो बैलों को जुए से मुक्त करने जैसा है। ■

क्रमशः

Events Calendar-Sept-Oct, 2015

SEPTEMBER 2015

1st SEPTEMBER

Advent day Celebrations commencing 5.30 pm. Short talk on Advent by Shri P.N.Vijay Secretary of Kendra followed by recollections by Senior Devotees.

6th SEPTEMBER

Satsang commences at 5 pm. Talk by Swami Durgesananda of Chinmaya Mission on “Iswara and Jagat in Advaita Philosophy”

13TH SEPTEMBER

Satsang commences at 5 pm. Talk by Swami Prabuddanda of Arsha Vidya Mandir on Bhagavan Ramana Maharishi’s work “Sat Darsanam”

20th SEPTEMBER

Satsang commences at 5 pm. Talk by Shri P.N.Vijay Secretary of Kendra on Bhagavad Gita Ch II.

27th SEPTEMBER

Satsang commences at 5 pm. (Talk to be announced)

OCTOBER 2015

4th OCTOBER

Satsang commences at 5 pm. (Talk To be announced)

11th OCTOBER

Satsang commences at 5 pm. Talk by Swami Prabuddananda of Arsha Vidya Mandir on “Katopanishad”

18th OCTOBER

Satsang commences at 5 pm. Talk by Shri P.N.Vijay Secretary of Kendra on Bhagavad Gita Ch II.

25th OCTOBER

Satsang commences at 5 pm. (Talk to be announced)

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We are pleased to inform our readers that Shri P.N. Vijay who was serving as a Vice President for several years has been appointed as Secretary. He succeeds Shi Krishnan who served meritoriously as Secretary for ...12.. years. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Shi Krishnan and wish Shri Vijay the very best in his endeavours.

Editor

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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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its source, consciousness. This is Self-abidance.”**

Ramana Maharshi (Upadesa Saram-16)

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