

DIRECT PATH

RAMANA KENDRA
DELHI

Aug - Oct 2019

Vol. XXI, No. 6

*"Your hands may do the work but your mind can remain still.
You are That which never moves."*

Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi



26. *Om kusagradiye namah*

One with sharpest intellect

27. *Om santa sankalpa samrambhaya namah*

One whose actions are well begun and well done

28. *Om susandrse namah*

One with clear, auspicious vision

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

Direct Path

VOLUME XXI ISSUE 6

AUGUST- OCTOBER, 2019

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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 October 15th, 2019 to editor.dp@rkdeldhi.org

We look forward to hearing from you!

SUBSCRIPTION/DONATION

Ramana Kendra, 8 Institutional Area, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110 003

Bank Details

“Ramana Kendra”

A/c No 149801000026733

Indian Overseas Bank, Lok Kala Manch Branch, New Delhi

IFS Code: IOBA0001498

Schedule of Rates

Direct Path: One Year: Rs 100/- Life: Rs 2500/-

Satsang Sponsorship: Rs 3000/- per Satsang

Kendra Membership: Rs 2000/-

Special Events Sponsorship: Jayanthi/Aradhana/Advent/Karthigai
Deepam/Poor feeding Rs 5000/- per Event

Self-Enquiry: Introduction

Swagat Patnaik

Bhagavan's spiritual genius allowed him to impart his grace and teachings to a temperamentally diverse range of devotees. Simple farmer, District Collector, Vedantic scholars, old village women, kings and ever so fortunate animals of the ashram. They all drank the nectar of associating with a *jivanmukta*. To him, everybody existed only as a manifestation of the 'Self, thus his infinite grace emanated equally to all. Many times he would in fact give special attention to his poorer devotees who had taken care of him when he was just an obscure young swami.

Interestingly in contrast to his grace, Bhagavan's teachings would invariably be unique to different seekers in both subtle and not so subtle ways. Some would receive an exposition on *Vedas*, some might get an affectionate smile, approving nod or a profound silence as an answer to their query. For example, he may help the *patasala* boys in memorizing the *Vedic* hymns, or he may ask a devotee to read a certain section from the scripture. Given the situation, he may even relish telling

a story from the *Puranas* or an old anecdote. To some of his devotees, he was an exemplar of *bhakti* and to others he was the strictest of non-dual *jyani*. Moreover, his intellectual understanding of the scriptures would dwarf many intellectual giants of his time, yet his unpretentious appearance would allow him to interact freely with the commonest of the villagers.

His seemingly diverse set of teachings raises the question, what was it that he was teaching, what was the essence of his teaching? Did he even have a theme binding all his varied teachings together? What were his teachings which brought together such diverse array of devotees such as retired defense personnel, businessmen, professors, weavers, administrative officers, foreign journalists, monks, priests, poets, etc. What exactly did they obtain in his presence that they would even be willing to undertake the most difficult of voyages to be in his presence? Did their pain and struggle for having his *darshan* help them find the everlasting happiness which every man is searching for?

The answer to the last question would most certainly be an emphatic yes. His teaching did help evolve an entire generation. It helped them find meaning in their suffering, it taught them about their indestructible true nature. And his clear ever-merciful teachings helped them find their own unchanging blissful nature.

He admitted that his highest teachings were only given through silence. His mere presence was enough to answer the most complex of spiritual queries. But if we look at his verbal teachings, we would find that he was very fond of ‘Self-Enquiry’ or asking yourself ‘who am I?’. This ever so simple teaching would gently guide the seeker to the next step on their path. Step by step the seed of bliss would grow and destroy all the latent *vasanas* and free the devotee from rebirth. On the surface the question ‘Who am I?’ seems anxiously dry and abstract, but it is grounded on Bhagavan’s own first-person experience of his awakening. ‘Who am I?’ or better put ‘What am I?’ forces the *sadhaka*’s attention on the present experience and deeply investigate reality. As seen in some of his talks (excerpts from Day by Day), Bhagavan insists on undeviating attention on the present experience to deeply investigate

reality:

Talk #56

A youth of twenty asked how to realize the Self. He sat down in silence and waited more than an hour and then was about to leave. While doing so he asked:

D: How to realise Self?

M: Whose self? Find out.

D: Who am I?

M: Find it yourself

...

On the surface, one may feel that Bhagavan is avoiding answering the youth or he is using a quick format reply for dealing with the question. But the fact remains Bhagavan is first inviting the youth to deeply clarify the essence of his question to himself. Bhagavan being an unshakeable *jyani* has a microscopic understanding. This can only be grasped when the chatter of the mind has been quietened enough to observe reality as it is. Bhagavan is gently nudging the youth to understand reality so that he may himself experience the bliss of the present moment or Self. In essence, Bhagavan is asking the youth to investigate both the questioner and the question deep enough to gain the answer himself.

Talk #31

A visitor asked what to do to get liberation (moksha)

M: Learn what liberation is.

Bhagavan's response in this query is to first gently push the seeker to understand the meaning of the word *moksha*. As it is the case with most of the seekers, the individual is mainly asking the query as an outlet to his half-matured sense of dissatisfaction within himself. Thus, the first task before seeking any answers for him would be to clarify deep within oneself what finality is he wishing for. As one clarifies and deepens his understanding of his present predicament, his own 'Self' will pull him towards the final resolution.

This kind of deep solemn investigations was the *crème* of Bhagavan's teachings. This astonishingly simple investigation according to him would guide them to their destination (*moksha*). Now the question arises why Bhagavan have such faith in this approach? After all, an investigation may not necessarily lead to any particular fixed destination. If such was the case it is not an investigation but a striving and expectation of a certain goal, which will only keep the seeker in the same muck of misery which he had started from. For rightfully doing an investigation one must also be open to investigate the investigation itself and accept whatever churns

out from the tussle. So, one should also consider, what if the deep investigation leads to more and more suffering, eventually leading to a dark opposite of eternal bliss i.e. eternal unfathomable suffering.

Thus, there comes the next part of his philosophy which he discovered after his own awakening. Our very own nature is eternal bliss and all investigating roads will lead to the same. So independent of our current starting point, all sincere investigation will eventually lead to our real blissful true-self. This means both a housewife or an adept yogi can start with the same approach and eventually the process will pull them both towards the same realization. On each step of their journey, the process simply pushes them towards the next step on their path. Self-enquiry automatically orients the *sadhaka* in the correct attitude for safely continuing the journey, thereby saving the *sadhaka* from many dangerous distractions which are known to push seekers on many superfluous tangential undertakings. Though this orientation correction may seem oddly unimportant to some of the impatient seekers, it is an extremely valuable characteristic of the approach which saves the seekers from major pitfalls. Further,

this orientation correction helps guide the seekers towards the Self just like water automatically flows towards the ocean. *Sadhakas* need not worry about looking at the stars for navigation nor worry about his

progress. The flow can be gentle and other times it can be like the raging *Brahmaputra*, but eventually, the river is unfailingly destined to meet the self. ■
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As one can imagine, creating 'Direct Path' magazine is only possible due to the effort of a number of people. Oftentimes the effort made in non-editorial activities is not highlighted. So I would like to thank all the people who were directly or indirectly involved in making this humble magazine possible. Thus, I would like to acknowledge our cover page designer Rituparna Das (rituparnadas0305@gmail.com), who meticulously worked for our cover page design. Further, I would also like to thank Marie Elangovan and Bharati Mirchandani for creating some of the beautiful illustrations. Finally, I would also like to thank Narayananji and Rajeshji for taking care of the administrative part of magazine production.

For the current issue (August to October), I would like to point out to some of the noteworthy events from Bhagavan's time:

- *August 7th is Kunju Swami's Samadhi day.*
- *August 30th is Muruganar's Samadhi day.*
- *October 22th is Viswanatha Swami's Samadhi day.*

Understanding the Import of ‘Advent Day’

Vijay Vancheswar



September 1, 1896, was the sacred day on which Sri Ramana arrived at Tiruvannamalai. It is called ‘Advent Day’. Advent in the western context connotes the period preceding the arrival of Christ. However, in the context of Bhagavan Ramana, it is symbolic of his coming Home. To the Home from where there was no going back. A home is more than a house. Houses in a literal sense, comprise buildings and structures. Individuals stay in houses. A home is something beyond a house. Houses are contained in homes. All houses are not homes. The Self is akin to a home. It is a place where we belong. A house is only a temporary abode, our individual entity. The advent of the Home is synonymous with the disappearance from his native house in Madurai.

Sri Ramana Maharshi’s advent to Tiruvannamalai signifies his homecoming his merging with the source and the disappearance of his

individual identity. It reminds us of the purpose of our mortal existence. The purpose is the answer to our core question: why are we here in this phenomenal world? Beyond the why are the answers to the queries what and how? Thus, all our questioning why, what and how of our existence are only pointers to our true nature. These pointers are illuminated through Sri Ramana’s life in the phenomenal frame at Tiruvannamalai.

Why are we here? Simply put: We are here to get rid of our false identity. Our false identity is our association and indulgence with our individual body and mind. Lesson no 1: Most of our learning doesn’t come from lectures and discussions. If so, the world will be much better for it! We start learning when we accept and acknowledge our inadequacies and weaknesses. As long as we have a sense of self-importance and pride; honest self-assessment, critical self-examination and investigation is well-

nigh impossible. Sri Ramana says that intelligence and worldly knowledge can be significant impediments in our path. Thus, humility and submission to a higher power is the stepping stone for spiritual pursuit. Knowing that what happens in the phenomenal world is transient and accepting this unconditionally is a pre-requisite in sublimating our sense of volition and importance. Setbacks and non-accomplishment of desires remind us of the truth of the saying of the German physicist, Arthur Schopenhauer “A man can do as he wills, but not will as he wills”, meaning you can want what you will, but never will what you eventually do...! Sri Ramana explicitly confirms this, “Whatever happens is because of destiny or the will of God, a superior power, or other factors”. Absolute understanding and acceptance of this instill in us the empathy, tolerance, patience, and negation of pride-essential attributes for negating our sense of self-importance. Only then can our indulgence in our self-identity decrease and over time become harmless like as Sri Ramana puts it ‘a burnt rope incapable of binding anything by itself’-alluding to the skeletal and harmless ego of a sage.

Lesson no. 2: The second part of the journey which we can decipher

through a conscious and attentive examination of Sri Ramana's life on the earth is the ‘what’ part of it. When asked as to what the mark of a true realized sage was, Bhagavan Ramana said, “The peace that you get in his presence’-nothing more, nothing less. This peace does not come through erudition and exposition of spiritual knowledge. Sri Ramana was not for lectures and talks. He maintained that nothing equals the power of silence. Silence according to him was primordial and superseded every other form of learning. As Osho said, ‘Truth is the First Principle. It can only be experienced, not spoken or conveyed. Once spoken, it becomes the Second Principle’. Thus, Sri Ramana refrained from giving talks, sermons or lectures. His very presence untangled the cobwebs of multiple queries in many a seeker’s minds. Also, given the diverse temperaments of the individuals, Sri Ramana said that ‘no one instruction can meet the needs of everyone’. The ‘what’ part of the journey is purely a personal and individual exercise-an inner quest of solitude and reflection-experiential but inexplicable.

Lesson no.3: The ‘how’ part-Sri Ramana’s demonstration of managing and living through life as we observe, demonstrates the qualities and

hallmark of a realized sage. He said, 'Your whole attitude to life changes post the realization that what you are entangled with is a figment of the imagination. Life becomes less intense, less critical, less serious! Sincere yes; but never serious. An honest reflection will make it evident that most of our energies are spent in judging, evaluating, criticizing and demonstrating. Ramana says that once you know (not through lectures and speeches, but through the internal path of investigation of who we are) that what you think you are and what you deem as important are far from what IS...what is perennial, most of what we are engaged with becomes superfluous and at times ridiculous. We might even start laughing at how stupid we have been! Even though may many of our deeds appear to be most honorable acts...helping others, or even in activities of goodness related to personal, professional and spiritual engagements; while these are most commendable, they are not what the ultimate purpose ought to be. Sri Ramana points out that all these virtuous deeds have a subtle intent-'make us feel good'. While our feeling good through noble actions is indeed commendable, the subtle web of our sense of personal achievement nourishes our dormant ego's volitional

urge. We realize this when we do some critical examination of human behavior-rare is it to find individuals who seek to be in the background, not get agitated when things go against what 'they' believe is the right way, keep their cool and smile. Is this at all possible? All we need to do is review Sri Ramana's responses to situations and circumstances-one of a quiet non-involvement with very little of outburst of opinions and points of view: except when probed sincerely on the really relevant matter of "why we are here, what is it that should happen to us (not what should we do...as doing involves personal choice which is an apparent phantom !), and how freedom results for us to be at 'Home' rather than transit through various evolutionary changes while staying at our 'house'. The process is as the Katha Upanishad states like walking on 'The Razor's Edge' (the title of the famous book translated to a film, authored by Somerset Maugham, post his meeting with Major Chadwick and brief interaction with Sri Ramana).

In a nutshell, the authentication of how we know that we are in the right direction, gets reflected in our behavior in this phenomenal world-sublime, soft, gentle and importantly, less prone to speech; reticent and caring in attitude, sincere in what we

need to undertake; but never serious to be emotionally turbulent and involved. Till we progress on this path, all else will serve as entertainment providing whiffs of happiness and glimpses of sadness-not peace that sustains.

Advent Day should reinforce our quest to be peaceful by anchoring our thoughts perpetually on our Source, Being or Consciousness. The anchoring can be facilitated not through words or discussions, but quietness. A quietness which is nourished in solitude with the richness of the soul while keeping at bay loneliness. In contrast, the

poverty of our being is characterized by turbulent minds which seeks the forum of discussions, debates, and talks accentuated through addictions to modern-day gadgets.

In Maharshi's words, "*Silent meditation, in the mind, is higher than the best devotional praise, or the uttering of sacred names, loudly or softly*". The quieter we are within ourselves, the better it is for us. It helps us take tiny but significant steps towards the path of Reality. ■

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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]

Pradakshina

Michael 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’¹ 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. ■
[e-mail: mhighburger@gmail.com]

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).

Kavyakantha [Sri Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni] approached the Virupaksha cave where the young Swami [Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi] was staying, and prostrating himself before him, said in a trembling voice.

“All that has to be read I have read. Even Vedanta Sastra I have fully understood. I have performed japa to my heart’s content. Yet I have not up to this time understood what tapas is. Hence have I sought refuge at thy feet. Pray, enlighten me about the nature of tapas”.

For fifteen minutes Sri Raman silently gazed at Kavyakantha. He then spoke:

“If one watches whence this notion of ‘I’ springs, the mind will be absorbed into that. That is tapas. If a mantra is repeated and attention is directed to the source whence the mantra sound is produced, the mind will be absorbed in that. That is tapas”.

The scholar was filled with joy and announced that the upadesa was original, and that Brahmin Swami was a Maharshi and should be so called thereafter. He thus gave the name of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi to the young Swami, whose original name had been Venkataraman (named after the Lord of Tirupati). Kavyakantha was now the foremost disciple of Sri Ramana. His disciples also came to the Maharshi. They sought and obtained clarification on many doubtful points. His Sri Ramana Gita recording these questions and answers (between the years 1913 and 1917) is divided into eighteen chapters like the Bhagavad Gita and is a great source of inspiration.

[From “*Ramana Smriti*”, *Kavyakantha : A colossus of Learning and Tapas* by Sri K. Natesan]

Brahma Gyan: The Supreme Knowledge

Kanta Ramchandani



The Mundaka Upanishad expounds the very essence of *Brahma Gyan*. The teaching of this Upanishad is referred to as *Brahmavidya* or *Paravidya*, the knowledge “knowing which everything else is known”.

What is the nature of this unchangeable Brahman? It cannot be seen, cannot be sensed, and yet is the Absolute principle from which everything evolves. Like the spokes of a wheel that radiate from the hub, all Creation radiates from It. To reach the central hub and to know that all spokes radiate from It, the mind is the instrument. One has only to turn the consciousness away from the objective world, contact with which contaminates the mind.

The infinite is the breath of one’s breath. Since It has no specific form, It cannot be indicated by words, nor can Its mystery be penetrated by the other senses. It can be known only by an intellect that has been cleansed

of all attachment, hatred, egoism and the sense of possession. The Atman is imminent in the senses, as butter is in milk. The worldly consciousness is soaked in sensory desires, but by turning away from it the heart becomes clear, the Atman shines in its pristine splendor. The sages see It, become one with It and That is the Supreme Knowledge.

Just as a spider evolves out of itself a web, so too the universe originates from Brahman. Again, it is said that every soul is a spark of the Infinite fire, the Atman. Since the Infinite fire is indivisible, each soul is indivisibly the Atman and one with the Infinite Brahman. What is material is the name, the form, the body. If you take these away, the whole universe is one.

To take another example, we can observe how each wave in the ocean appears to be different from the ocean. The waves and the ocean are made of the same substance—water—the

difference being only in appearance. The truth of the wave is that it is the ocean itself.

The Mundaka Upanishad goes on to tell us the state of a person who has realized God: “All doubts vanish forever, and all the crookedness of the heart is made straight, all bondages vanish, and the results of actions fly when He is seen who is the nearest of the near, and the farthest of the far”. Realization alone is the soul of religion. Everyone can perform sacrifices, rituals or good works, but very few have this yearning for realization. This intense longing for realizing God or Self is, in essence, real spirituality.

The entire Vedantic philosophy is contained in the following story in the Mundaka Upanishad: two birds are perched on the same tree, one on the top branch and the second below. The bird on the top is calm and majestic, while the one below eats sweet and bitter fruits in turn, hopping from branch to branch. After a time when it has ingested a very bitter fruit, it looks up at the first bird who eats neither sweet nor bitter fruit but is calm and collected.

Yearning to be like it, the second bird hops up a little way towards the first. But soon, forgetting its yearning,

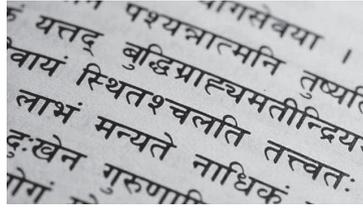
it once again begins to ingest the fruit. This goes on till it comes close to the bird on top. It sees the reflection of light from the first bird’s beautiful plumage playing around its own body which slowly begins to melt away. It now understands that it was only a reflection of the bird on the higher branch. In essence, it was that bird itself all the time, that bird being God. It exclaims, “It is my own glory that I called God and this ‘little I’ was all hallucination, it never existed”. So we are in reality one with God, but the reflection makes us seem many. The reflection must vanish if we are to identify ourselves with our true Divine nature.

Like the bird on the lower branch that found it was actually the bird on the higher branch all the time, we too will find that we are the Self—the rest being a dream. For this, we must remember the Truth of Om Tat Sat all the time—the Truth that “Brahman alone is true, and I am Brahman”. ■

—Kanta Ramchandani is a senior devotee living in Mumbai. She is 87 and has been confined to a wheelchair for the last 24 years. Her e-mail communication is being handled by her niece, Sonalini Mirchandani who can be contacted at [e-mail: sonalinim@hotmail.com]

Manuscripts Lost and Found

David Godman



A few months ago I was going through the text of *The Power of the Presence*, getting it ready and improved for a new edition that I hope will come out later this year. At one point I found myself adding photos to the chapter written by N. R. Krishnamurti Aiyer, a retired physics professor from Madurai who had many extraordinary experiences in Bhagavan's presence. It brought back many pleasant memories of the times I spent with him.

I first met him in the mid-1980s in his house in Tiruvannamalai. In Ramanasramam I had seen a small booklet that contained a few of his translated verses from *The Ribhu Gita*. I went there hoping to persuade him to translate a larger portion of the book since I knew that it was one of Bhagavan's favourites. At that time there were no English translations available. Since he didn't seem very interested in the project, I didn't press the matter.

Instead, we chatted about his time with Bhagavan. One of the pleasures of living in Tiruvannamalai in that era was unexpectedly coming across people who had had contact with Bhagavan and who had extraordinary tales to tell. Once, for example, I was in a side street of Tiruvannamalai, close to Krishnamurti Aiyer's house, when I saw a man I had noticed in Ramanasramam a few times. We had never spoken before, but we both recognised each other. I stopped to greet him and then, since he looked old enough, I asked him if he had ever met Bhagavan in person.

Much to my amazement he replied, 'Oh yes, I am a native of Tiruvannamalai. When I was a little boy, I used to go up to Virupaksha Cave and play marbles with Bhagavan.'

He looked about sixty, not old enough to have that kind of story in his CV. However, when I politely enquired about his age, he told me

he was well over eighty, which meant he could have been about nine years old in 1912. His closely-cropped hair was all white, but he had a smooth complexion that had very few wrinkles. I had noticed at Ramanasramam that he had a permanent happy smile on his face. Perhaps that was why he looked so young.

I had been introduced to Krishnamurti Aiyer by V. Ganesan, who at that time was editing *The Mountain Path* and managing most of the business in the Ramanasramam office. Their association went back a long way. Krishnamurti Aiyer mentioned that Chinnaswami, Bhagavan's brother, had personally invited him to attend Ganesan's *Akshara-Abhyasam* in 1941 when Ganesan was only five years old. This is the ceremony when young boys are ceremonially taught to write the Tamil alphabet for the first time. Ganesan was fortunate enough to have Bhagavan himself preside over this ceremony.

One summer, probably around 1984 or 1985, Ganesan invited Krishnamurti Aiyer to stay in a Ramanasramam room in the Morvi Compound and write down the story of his life with Bhagavan. He readily

agreed. I used to visit him from time to time to listen to his anecdotes and to see how the book was progressing. One afternoon, when the book was almost completed, Krishnamurti Aiyer ended our session by saying he needed a nap. At that time he was already well into his eighties. I asked him if I could borrow the manuscript for a few hours to type out some of the stories that were in it. I had no idea what I would do with them; I just wanted to have a record that wasn't solely dependent on my memory.

The handwritten manuscript was probably about 150 pages long at this point. Much of it contained information about his personal life and his scientific career. I wasn't interested so much in those episodes. I just wanted to record all the details of his experiences with Bhagavan. This was the pre-computer era. I don't think we even had copying machines in those days. I went back to my own ashram room and typed out about forty pages of material on a manual typewriter. It was a long session because I had promised to have the manuscript back in his hands in time for his next writing session.

The manuscript was eventually completed and handed over to Jayaram, the Ramanasramam

librarian, who had agreed to edit it for publication. I waited for the book to come out, but it never appeared. In the succeeding years I forgot all about it. My own abridged version lay neglected in one of my folders. About fifteen years later, when I was deciding what to include in the first volume of *The Power of the Presence*, I remembered these notes I had taken and decided they would make an excellent chapter. I was assuming at this point that Ramanasramam had decided, for some reason, not to publish the original book.

I went to see Sundaram, the Ramanasramam president, and asked him if he was still planning to bring out Krishnamurti's Aiyer's memoirs.

He frowned and replied, 'The whole manuscript got lost. We sent it to the press but it never arrived. It turned out to be the only existing copy. The whole book has disappeared.'

I told him that I had typed out the portions of the book that dealt with Krishnamurti Aiyer's experiences with Bhagavan and asked him if he would mind if I published them as a chapter in my own new book. He had no objection, so I went ahead. Since Krishnamurti Aiyer had passed away

at this point, there was no possibility of getting a new version from him.

It seems extraordinary that the ashram would put its only copy of a valuable memoir in an envelope and post it, hoping that it would arrive at its destination, but this was not the only Bhagavan text to disappear in transit. Many years before, a portion of the *Guru Vachaka Kovai* manuscript was left on a bus by a devotee who was taking it to a press in Chennai. It was later discovered to be the only copy of that portion of the text.

I had a minor role in the discovery and publication of one ashram manuscript that had been presumed lost. In the early 1980s I was going through a cupboard in the Ramanasramam office that contained all sorts of manuscripts and books. Ganesan had given me the key since I had just started work on cataloguing the ashram's archives.

When he gave it to me, he said, 'We are playing dog-in-the-manger with this cupboard. We bark if anyone goes near it, but we have no idea what's in it, or if any of it is valuable. Have a look and see what you can find.'

It turned out to be a veritable treasure trove of materials on and

by Bhagavan, including many manuscripts in his own handwriting that are now stored and properly preserved in the Ramanasramam archives building. Stuffed behind one of the shelves in this office cupboard was a typed manuscript that had been written by T. K. Sundaresa Iyer. It had clearly been destined for publication since there were instructions for the printer in the margins. It was a lovely little book that eventually came out under the title *At the Feet of the Master*. It seemed to have been written in the 1960s. I guessed it had spent about fifteen years gathering dust at the back of this cupboard.

Long after its publication I asked Ganesan why the manuscript had not been published in the 1960s.

He laughed and told me, 'We were very poor in those days. I wanted to publish the book but the ashram's accountant said we didn't have any spare funds. In the end he took it off me. He must have hidden it at the back of this cupboard to stop me sending it to the press. It has been there ever since. We had no idea what had happened to it until you showed it to me.'

Nowadays, it seems hard to imagine a time when the ashram didn't have enough money to bring

out a book that is only about 100 pages long.

Krishnamurti Aiyer lived well into his nineties, retaining all his mental faculties, and seemed more than averagely healthy for his age. But he had not always been like this. In his younger days he had been chronically ill, and no amount of medical intervention had made any difference to his state. He claimed that Bhagavan had eventually cured him, but only after a long period of intense pain and suffering. I was sitting with him in his house in Tiruvannamalai when he told me the following story that dated from this era:

I had been sick for a long time. I was confined to bed and my pain and suffering were so great, I was seriously contemplating suicide, simply because I couldn't stand the pain any more.

One day I decided that I couldn't take any more pain. I went up to the roof of my house in Madurai with the intention of throwing myself off the parapet wall. As I stood on the roof, summoning up the courage to execute the act, Arunachala-Siva appeared before me, glowing resplendently.

'What are you doing here?' he asked.

I was ashamed to admit what I was doing, but I couldn't tell a lie.

'I have been sick for a long time. The pain is excruciating. I can't take it any longer. I came up here to throw myself off the roof because living is too painful for me.'

Siva reprimanded me: 'You think your problems are great, but are you the only one who experiences pain? In Tiruvannamalai people dig holes in me and light fires on me, but I don't react. I don't decide to commit suicide. I lie there unaffected by all these events. Now you go downstairs and behave the same way.'

Chastened by this reprimand, I went back to my bed and never contemplated suicide again.

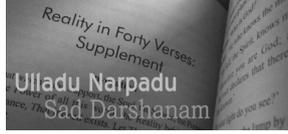
Krishnamurti Aiyer experienced so many wonderful visionary experiences during his years with Bhagavan,

when it came time for him to write his life story at Ramanasramam, this one wasn't even included. I ended up adding it as a footnote to a passage where he was narrating at some length the story of his various ailments, and how Bhagavan eventually cured him of them. ■

—David Godman is a senior devotee of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Though originally from UK, he has been in Tiruvannamalai since the late 1970s. He has written excellent books on Ramana's teaching and on the life of various devotees. Do visit his fascinating youtube page (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBcqQGNwcSEwlv6gJXP-U9A>) and blog (<https://davidgodman.org>) where he gives vivid account of Maharshi's life and his times. We are very grateful for his graceful article on the trials of Krishnamurti Aiyer. He can be reached at [e-mail: david_godman@yahoo.co.uk]

Pointers from Bhagavan's Ulladu Narpadu supplement

Neera Kashyap



The supplement to Ulladu Narpadu (Sad Darshanam in Sanskrit) is a collection of 41 Tamil verses that Bhagavan translated from Sanskrit or composed in Tamil to convey his teachings. The 41 verses of the main work, Ulladu Narpadu were written in response to the request of saint-poet-devotee, Sri Murugunar that Bhagavan compose verses that 'reveal to us the nature of reality and the means by which we can attain it so that we may be saved.' Since by July 1928, Sri Murugunar had already collected 21 verses prepared by Bhagavan, he suggested these could form the base for such a text. Over the next few weeks, Bhagavan's discussions with Sri Murugunar led to the decision that these 21 verses were not fully suited to the theme of the new text, Ulladu Narpadu - the nature of reality, so Bhagavan wrote 40 new verses for it. As Sri Murugunar did not want the 21 verses gathered earlier to be

forgotten, he suggested they arrange them in a suitable order and append them as an anubandham - an appendix or supplement to Ulladu Narpadu. By 1940, the supplement itself comprised 41 verses, one of which is the invocation. Only 11 of these have been composed originally in Tamil by Bhagavan, the rest being translations or explanatory adaptations from verses of other texts.

This article tries to see what pointers we can gather for *sadhana* from verses mostly selected by Bhagavan that became the supplement to Ulladu Narpadu.

One of the significant and oft-repeated pointers in the Supplement placed in the first segment of the text is the benefit derived from keeping the company of sages. For "in the company of sages, attachments vanish and with attachment, illusion. Freed from illusion, one attains stability and thence liberation while yet alive. Seek therefore the company of

sages." While the process of dropping attachments and illusions and gaining inner stability for liberation will happen naturally in the company of a sage, this is also possible by feeling his presence in our lives; by studying, reflecting on and practicing his teachings; and having faith in the premise that the one who abides in Reality will also lead others to it.

The Supplement suggests the power of the sage's grace. "When one has learned to love the company of sages, wherefore all these rules of discipline? When a pleasant cool southern breeze is blowing, what need is there for a fan?" Once our love for the sage and his purity empowers us towards concentration and purification in ourselves, one need not strain with different forms of self-restraint as the means to the wisdom that liberates. Our love and his inspiration will work wonders. For while holy rivers and idols made of stone and clay purify us over countless days, "the sage's eyes by a mere glance purify at once." There are other positive outfalls: "fever, want and sin—all flee at the august sight of the peerless sage."

More even than the presence or the teachings of the sage, Bhagavan often said that Sat-sang really meant being

in constant company (sang) of the Truth (Sat) for which *Atma-Vichara* was the ideal form of practice. The Supplement's invocation verse from Yoga Vasishtha is a *dhyana sloka* which sets the tone for meditation on our own essential Self—the one true abiding Reality: "Let That, the Truth, abide in our Heart." Bhagavan's verse in Ulladu Narpadu says categorically, "When the *Vedas* have declared, 'Thou art That'—not to seek and find the nature of the Self and abide in It, but to think 'I am That, not This' is the want of strength. Because That abides forever as the Self."

The central and most significant theme of the Supplement is Heart as the Self. Bhagavan uses a verse from Devikalottaram to set the ground for the practice of resolving thoughts in the heart: "In the lotus of the Heart is pure and changeless consciousness in the form of the Self. When the ego is removed, this Consciousness of Self bestows liberation of soul". By using terms such as the lotus of the heart or the heart-cave, Bhagavan is enabling us to concentrate on a seat or point within ourselves that is the motionless space where all thoughts cease, the one limitless space in which everything is contained.

In Verse 8 which is Bhagavan's

own verse originally written in Sanskrit which he translated into Tamil, he suggests the use of breath as an aid to stilling thoughts: “In the center of the Heart cave there shines alone the one Brahman as the I-I, the Atman. Reach the Heart by diving deep in quest of the Self, or by controlling the mind with the breath, and stay established in the Atman.” In Ulladu Narpadu, too, breath control is recommended along with speech control and a keen mind: “Controlling speech and breath, and diving deep within oneself— like one who, to find a thing that has fallen into the water, dives deep down— one must seek out the source whence the aspiring ego springs.”

While speech and breath control would serve as aids, it is through use of the razor-sharp mind that one must dive deep, making the enquiry—questioning, questing, questioning, questing— till the mind itself dissolves, coming to rest in the cave of the heart. In Verse 10, another of Bhagavan's own verses translated from Sanskrit into Tamil, he writes: “The body is like an earthen pot, inert—*jada*. Because it has no consciousness of I, and because daily in bodiless sleep we touch our real nature, the body is not I. Then who is this I? Where is this

I? In the Heart-cave of those that question thus there shines forth as I, Himself the Lord Siva of Arunachala, the *sphurana* or clarity of pure Self-consciousness.” In his blogspot, Happiness of Being, Michael James sees this verse as a process of enquiry which moves from self-analysis to self-investigation to the experience of true self-knowledge.

Writes James: “The first sentence, ‘*deham naham*’ or ‘the body is not I’, denotes the initial process of self-analysis by which we gain the intellectual conviction that the body, mind and other adjuncts that we have superimposed upon ourselves are not our essential self or ‘I’; the second sentence, ‘*koham?*’ or ‘who am I?’, denotes the practice of *atma vichara* or self-investigation, whereby we will actually experience what ‘I’ really is; and the third sentence, ‘*soham*’ or ‘he is I’, denotes the experience of true self-knowledge that we will gain by practicing *atma vichara*.”

Verse 20 is an adaptation of verses from a Tamil work called Prabhulinga Lilai, wherein Bhagavan indicates that the only means by which we can experience our ‘heart’ as it really is to meditate upon ‘I’ with the firm conviction that God is nothing other than that, and that we should persevere in practicing such self-

meditation until our present illusion 'I am this body' is utterly destroyed. This links us back to meditation on the lotus seat of the heart where the notion 'I am the body' is countered by meditation on 'I am the Self'. Yet we must remember Bhagavan's cautionary words in Ulladu Narpadu, "If we think we are the body, then to tell ourselves, 'No, I am That', is helpful to abide as That. Yet – since ever we abide as That, why should we always think, 'I am That?' Does one ever think, 'I am a Man?'" Hence the need for the mind to be completely quiescent for it to sink in its source.

Atma vichara is a method that investigates even the four yogas we practice towards Self-realization—Karma (desireless action), bhakti (devotion), yoga (union) and jnana (knowledge that ignorance is the cause of bondage). By investigating these practices and the opposite states that they aim to overcome, we ask 'Whose is this action, or indifference, or separateness or ignorance?' When we investigate this, the ego vanishes and we abide as the Self wherein neither the yogas nor the states they aim to overcome exist. Writes T.M.P. Mahadevan in his commentary on this verse: "On enquiry, one discovers there is neither fruit nor deed, neither separation nor union, no ignorance

in reality. When I disappears, there is no duality, no relation of ends and means, no bondage, no striving, no release."

In the Supplement, the destruction of the ego has its place in the world. Bhagavan chooses a verse from Yoga Vasishtha in which Vasishtha tells Rama: "Having investigated the various states of being (waking, dreaming and deep sleep), seizing firmly by the mind that State of Supreme Reality, play your part, O hero, ever in the world. You have known the truth at the Heart of all appearances. Without ever turning away from that Reality, play in the world, O hero, as if in love with it." Everything seems to converge here: the three states of being, the world, the truth at the heart of all appearances—the one Reality. One is reminded of a verse in Bhagavad Gita which describes how action can become consecration: "But great is the man who, free from attachments, and with a mind ruling its powers in harmony, works on the path of Karma Yoga, the path of consecrated action." (Chap. 3, verse 7).

In the Supplement, Bhagavan gives significance to two other subjects: the pride of the learned and slavery to applause. Too much learning can

become an obstacle to yoga, for the ultimate truth lies within ourselves and not in books. By comparing the relatively unlettered to the learned, he points to the former being more easily saved for they are free from pride, from the malady of whirling thoughts and words, from the pursuit of wealth and many other ills. The learned are compared to gramophone machines who reproduce mechanically what they have recorded through books, repeating words without ingesting their meaning. Once again, Bhagavan uses the Brahmastra of *Atma-Vichara* to bring pride, incessant thought, and even destiny to rest through the challenge, "What is the use of letters to those lettered folk who do not seek to wipe out the letters of fate by inquiring, 'Whence are we born?'"

Related to pride in learning is the futile and dangerous desire for siddhis to reform or rectify the world. This desire only reinforces the spurious ego's notion of doership, the ego assuming it carries the burdens of the world. In one of Bhagavan's own verses in the Supplement, he writes: "Since the stilling of the mind is true liberation and miraculous powers are unattainable without an act of the mind, how can they whose mind is set on these powers enter the bliss of

liberation which is the ending of all activity of the mind?"

Related to the desire for supernormal powers is the desire for fame, appreciation, praise, applause. Even Vedantins who have understood the world to be illusory can be trapped by flattery; the subtle pride in learning and the feeling of superiority it brings is very hard to remove. In the true philosophy of Advaitic oneness, Bhagavan asks, "Without thinking of oneself as apart from others, without swerving from one's true state, if one abides always in one's Self, who is there that is alien to one? What does it matter what people say of one? What matters if one praises or blames oneself?" T.M.P Mahadevan's commentary on this verse sums it up: "There is no other to him. How can another praise or blame him? It is like praising or blaming oneself. Where there is no other, extolling and denouncing becomes impossible."

Bhagavan's last verse in the Supplement is the quintessence of Vedanta and returns us full circle to the invocation, 'Let that the Truth abide in our Heart.' How does this Truth abide in our Heart? In the 40th verse, Bhagavan states: "I shall declare truly the essence of the final doctrine of the Vedanta: when the

ego dies and becomes That– the abides.” ■
Self of pure Awareness – That alone [e-mail: Neerak7@gmail.com]

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A devotee at Virupaksha cave wanted to know who Bhagavan really was. He wrote a verse on a piece of paper, “Oh Ramana, who are you? Are you the highest God, Hari, or a rishi, or a celestial being? Who are you?” He then left the note on Bhagavan's stone couch when Bhagavan had gone out. When Bhagavan returned and saw the note, he wrote behind it, “I am Arunachala Ramanan, dwelling in the Heart of every being, beginning with Lord Hari to the so called lowest being. If with devotion, you plunge into the cave of your Heart, your inner eye will be opened and you will see this truth as the fullness of non-dual Awareness.”

[Source: *Ramana Periya Puranam*]

The Story from Kenopanishad

Shiromani Vijay

ओशीराशोषायनमः केनेषितेयतनिशेषितेयनः केनशासः
प्रथमःशेषितेयनः केनेषितेयतनिशेषितेयनः केनशासः
कउदेवोप्रनक्ति । ओशेषितेयतनिशेषितेयनः केनशासः
वंसउप्राणस्ययाणश्चक्षुषश्चक्षुः शेषितेयतनिशेषितेयनः
स्यात्कोकारस्यताथवेति १ ननउचस्येत्तानिनायनोन
विद्योनेविनामोयेथेनरुशियात् १ यमदेवतदि
दिसारथोयविदितारथितिरुषुमहवेयोयेनसयावच

Kenopanishad is in the form of a conversation between a Guru and Shisya. The student here is well-equipped to learn Vedanta. He starts with a question about the nature of the spiritual principle which makes our body sentient. In the very next verse itself, the Guru gives the central teaching of the Upanishad giving the nature of Brahman very succinctly.

श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो
यद्वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य
प्राणश्चक्षुषश्चक्षुः ।

अतिमुच्य धीराः

प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति ॥ २

śrotrasya śrotram manaso mano
yadvāco ha vācam sa u prānasya
prānaścaksusaścaksuh |

a t i m u c y a d h ī r ā h
pretyāsmāllokādāmrtā bhavanti ॥
2 ॥

That which is hearing of our

hearing, mind of our mind, speech of our speech, that too is life of our life-breath and sight of our sight. (Knowing this) the wise are released beyond and they pass from this world and become immortal.

This mantra defines the Atman, Self-knowledge and the benefit of that Knowledge. In the Mantras of the next two chapters, more detailed explanations are given. However, these concepts can be grasped only by a person with a very subtle intellect. For those whose intellect is not sharp, the Upanishad tries to explain based on a story in the 3rd and 4th chapters. According to Adi Sankara, the story conveys 6 Vedantic messages.

Let us go through the story. It is *Devanam garva bhangaha* pricking holes in the pride of the Devas. From time to time Devas and Asuras went to war against each other to establish their supremacy. Generally, Devas were victorious. On one such occasion, Devas were celebrating

their victory. Each of the Devas boasted about his achievement in the war. Devas were Satvik in nature and this pride was quite likely an aberration. Ishvara decided to teach them a lesson. He appeared in the form of a *Yaksha*. This Yaksha was an avatar of Ishvara and not one of the celestial bodies as it is normally interpreted. It had a brilliant form. Though the Devas were attracted, they could not decipher what it was. The all-knowing Devas could not stomach their ignorance and wanted to find out what exactly this brilliance was. Indra, the leader of the Devas sent Agni Devata who was the messenger to find out. The omniscient Agni came all-prepared to question, but the Yaksha asked Agni, “who are You?”. Swallowing his pride, Agni gave out his capabilities of burning anything and everything. Then Yaksha asked him to burn a blade of dry grass placed in front of him. Agni was not able to and in humiliation went back to Indra. Next Indra sent Vayu Devata who was full of pride thinking what Agni could not do, he could achieve. His fate was similar to Agni’s and when Vayu said I can lift and move anything, Yaksha asked him to move the blade of grass which Vayu could not. When both Agni and Vayu failed, Indra decided to find out himself.

Being the leader of the Devas, his sense of pride was even greater. Just as he approached the brilliant form, the Yaksha disappeared without even a conversation. Then Indra’s sattva guna came to the fore and realizing that pride was the obstacle, he prayed and surrendered to Bhagavan. Bhagavan came in the form of Uma Devi. When Indra surrendered, by giving up his pride, she gave Brahma Vidya to Indra. Indra became the most famous Devata because of his Brahma Vidya.

Now let us look the messages conveyed by this simple story-

1. *Brahma Astitvam* – Brahman Exists in the form of Yaksha in the story. Without Him and His cooperation, Agni could not burn even a blade of grass nor could Vayu move a blade of grass.

2. Impossibility of knowing Brahman without Ishvara’s blessings. When the Devatas tried to find out by themselves, they failed. When Indra surrendered to Bhagavan, Brahma Vidya was given.

3. *Guru Apeksha* – Guru is necessary for Brahma jnanam. Indra regained his sattva guna and received the jnanam through Uma Devi.

4. *Adhikaritam* – One should have the qualities to receive the

Brahma jnanam, the most important one being – Amanitvam, humility.

5. Brahma vidya gives name and fame. Though one does not need this after Brahma jnanam, it is the jnani who shines most. Indra became the most famous Devata.

6. Upasana vidhi – meditations on lightning and thought. Both thought

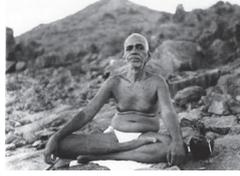
and lightning illumine the world, they appear and disappear, like the Yaksha. This emphasizes the temporary nature of this world.

The article is based on the talks on Kenopanishad by Swami Paramarthananda. ■

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Vairagya

Tuktuk Ghosh



Vairagya may be taken as the belief and practice of non-attachment. It finds elaboration in many culturally significant texts such as the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Bhagavad Gita.

In Chapter 6 of the Bhagavad Gita on Dhyana Yoga, Lord Krishna expounds on what true renunciation means. A person who performs assigned duties without identifying with the expected results is a true renunciant.

“Sri- bhagavan uvaca
Anasrita karma-phalam
Karyam karma karoti yah
Sa sannyasi ca yogi ca
Na niragnir na cakriyah “ { 6.1 }

Both sanyasa and yoga refer to linking oneself to the Supreme through renunciation.

“Yam sannyasam iti prahur
Yogam tam viddhi pandava
Na hy asannyasta-sankalpo
Yogi bhavati kascana” {6.2}

Such a conquered mind is the best friend possible. An unconquered mind is the worst enemy.

“Bandhur atmatmanas tasya
Yenatmaivatmana jitah
Anatmanas tu satrutve
Vartetamamaiva satru-vaat” {6.6}

Continuing to expatiate on this profound principle, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi has left us with manifold enduring lessons. As thoughts arise, destroying them utterly without any residue in the place of their origin is *vairagyam*. Each one of us should be endowed with non-attachment, dive within oneself and obtain the self-pearl or “*atma-muthu*”. Desirelessness is wisdom. It is also refraining from turning the mind towards any object. Not seeking what is other than the Self is detachment. Not forsaking the Self is jnanam. *Atyanta* (total) *vairagyam* is a prime qualification for a disciple.

When asked, “how does a *grihastha* (householder) fare in the scheme of moksha (liberation)”, Bhagavan said, “why do you think you are a *grihastha*? If you go out as a *sanyasi* (ascetic), a similar thought that you are a sanyasi will follow you. Whether you stay in the household or renounce

it and go to the forest, your mind goes with you. The obstacle is in the mind. It must be overcome.

If objects have an independent existence, i.e. if they exist anywhere apart from you, then it may be possible for you to go away from them. However, they do not exist apart from you. They owe their existence to you and your thoughts. So where can you go to escape from them? The world of objects is like the shadow of oneself, from which it is impossible to flee.

Why should one's occupation or duties in life interfere with one's spiritual efforts? It is possible to perform all the activities with detachment and regard only the Self as real. It is like an actor's role. Body consciousness ought not to be a disturbance once you know with certainty that you are not the body but the Self.

Renunciation is always in the mind-not going to the forest or solitary places or giving up responsibilities. The main thing is to ensure that the mind is turned inward, not outward.

It does not really rest with oneself whether he/she goes from this place to that. All that happens according to destiny. The churn of activities that the body has to go through are predetermined when it comes into existence. It is not meant to be either accepted or rejected. The only freedom

available in the divine scheme of things is to turn the mind within and renounce activities there.

Giving up activities means giving up attachment to activities or fruits thereof and giving up the notion of being the doer. The activities which the body is destined to perform will have to be gone through. There is no question of giving up such activities, whether one likes it or not.

The fact is that any amount of action can be performed - and performed quite well- by the jnani, without identification with it or even imagining that one is the doer. Some power acts through one and uses the body to get work done.

Each one seeks happiness but is misled into thinking of pain-associated pleasure as happiness. Such happiness is transient. Pain and pleasure alternate with one another in the world. To discriminate between pain-producing and pleasure producing matters and to confine oneself to the latter only is vairagya. Pleasure is to be understood here in an evolved and elevated sense. What is it that will not be followed by pain? One should seek it out assiduously and engage in it with intensity and deep commitment. If not, progress in one's spiritual quest will remain disappointingly elusive. ■

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Aksharamanamalai Part 14

103

Chin/dit/tarul/pada

Chilan/dipōl/kat/ti

Chirai/yit/tun/danai

Arunā/chalā.

O Arunachala! Thinking of Thee, as I got caught in Thy grace, Thou didst bind me, like a Spider, imprison me and eat me up. The analogy of the spider and its web is employed here. The spider weaves the web out of its own bowels, waits for the insects to get caught in the web, runs towards these victims and swallows them up. Arunachala, the supreme Godhead, spreads His web of grace so that the devotees could be saved. Being swallowed up by God means destruction of the ego through enlightenment and grace. The devotee-soul realizes her identity with, or non-difference from, the Supreme Reality when this happens.

104

An/bodun/nā/mangēl

An/bardam/an/baruk

Kan/banā/yida/varul

Arunā/chalā.

O Arunachala! Do grant me the gift of becoming the lover of Thy lovers who hear Thy name with love.

There is no difference between the Lord Arunachala and His name. There is no difference either between the Lord and His devotee. Service to the devotee is service to the Lord. Hence many a devotee has prayed to the Lord that he or she may be given the privilege of serving the Lord's devotees. Saint Tayumanavar says: "If I am trained to serve the devotees, the state of bliss will come to me of its own accord."

A verse of Saint Appar's gives a moving account of the devotee's God-madness thus: "At first she heard His name. She heard about His form and

complexion. Then she heard about His beloved place of residence. As a result she became mad about Him. That very day she left her mother and father. She gave up the practices of the world at large. She forgot herself. She lost her name. The maid placed her head at the Feet of her Lord.”

105

En/bōlum/dī/narai

In/burak/kāt/tunī

En/nālum/vāzhn/darul

Arunā/chalā.

O Arunachala! Protecting helpless persons like me so that they may be happy, mayest Thou live for ever!

Arunachala is the helper of the helpless. He comes to the succour of those who are in distress. Saviourship is His very nature. He cannot but save His devotees, and eventually all souls, The devotee-soul prays that all should be saved. There is no room for selfishness in devotion and knowledge. Seeking release is not a selfish pursuit. When one is truly devoted to God, it redounds to the good of the entire world. There is the following universal prayer:

“Let all be happy here!

Let all be free from disease

Let all see things that are auspicious

Let no one have misery as his lot!”

106

En/buru/han/bardam

In/sorkot/sevi/yumen

Pun/mozhi/kola/varul

Arunā/chalā.

O Arunachala! Be gracious so that Thy ears, which hear sweet songs of those devotees whose very bones melt with love, may accept also my poor strains.

Out of innate humility and modesty, the devotee-soul describes her strains as poor as compared with the fine poetry of the psalmists like Saint Manikkavachakar. In fact, all speech comes from the Lord. No one can utter any sound without His grace, He is the Speech of speech, the primal word. Without His grace, we cannot praise Him even. In the concluding verse of the Saundarya Lahari, Acharya Sankara prays to the Universal Mother thus:

“O Mother of speech! The composing of this hymn of praise addressed to Thee, couched in words that are Thine, is just like worshipping the sun by waving a row of blazing lights, like trying to please the moon with offering waterdrops that drip

from a moon-stone, and satisfying the ocean by pouring its own water into it.”

107

Poru/maiyaṁ/bhū/dara

Pun/solai/nan/solāp

Porut/taru/lish/tambin

Arunā/chalā.

O Arunachala! Hill of Patience! Bear with my poor strains, considering them to be good poetry and be Thou gracious. Thy will be done!

To go wrong is human, to grant pardon is divine. The devotee-soul prays that the defects in her hymn of praise should be overlooked, and the devotion that inspired it should be accepted. Any attempt to praise the Lord is bound to fail; for He is beyond the reach of words and thoughts. The devotee-soul cannot but praise Him; but she does not ever hope to find words that are adequate. The devotee-soul has no will of her own. It is the Lord's will that moves the world. And the devotee knows this. Saint Manikkavachakar sings thus:

“What is to be desired for, Thou knowest best; it is Thou that dost grant what is desired for. To Brahma and Vishnu who desire Thee, Thou art rare to obtain, but of Thy own volition

Thou didst assume lordship over me; therefore, whatever be Thy pleasure, do that Thou graciously. I seek the same. But if there should remain in me any trace of a trait desiring something of my own volition, is not that too Thy sweet will?”

108

Mā/laiya/lit/taru

Nā/chala/rama/nayen

Mā/laiya/nin/darul

Arunā/chalā.

O Arunachala! The ravishing Lord! Granting me the love profuse, graciously adorn Thyself with this garland of mine.

The love-litany is concluded in this verse. The devotee-soul prays for the intensification of divine love in her heart, and asks the Lord to accept her bridal garland of letters. ■

BENEDICTION

Aru/nā/chalam/vāzhi

Anbar/kalum/vāzhi

Aksha/ramana/mālai/vāzhi

LONG LIVE ARUNACHALA!

LONG LIVE THE DEVOTEES

**LONG LIVE THIS BRIDAL
GARLAND OF LETTERS**

*Source TMP Mahadevan's Book
Arunachala Siva Aksharamanamalai*

Kunju Swami



Saint Kunju Swami led a remarkable life under the guidance Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. He was utterly devoted to Bhagavan right from when he came to him at the age of nineteen until his last days in Ramanasramam where he passed away at the ripe 'young' age of ninety-six.

Excerpt:

In 1932, after serving Bhagavan personally day and night for twelve years, Kunju Swami wanted to intensify his practice of Self Enquiry by keeping himself aloof from the ashram. He trained a young man called Madhava Swami on how to attend to Bhagavan. Kunju Swami waited for the day to tell Bhagavan that he was retiring from service and that he would be staying in Palaakothu in the next compound. He was hesitant as he did not know how to break the news to his master. While still in this dilemma, one day as he entered the hall he heard Bhagavan explaining to others that real service to him did not mean attending

to his physical needs but practicing his teachings. Once before he had said, 'It is no use in saying, 'I have been doing personal service to the guru.' One should abide by the teaching of the guru every day.' A few days later on another occasion, he heard Bhagavan say, 'The best service to the guru is engaging in Self Enquiry, meditation and other spiritual practices with a purity of body, speech and mind.' He kept chancing upon Bhagavan saying this morning and evening for several days. He had been hesitating to tell Bhagavan of his plans, but Bhagavan himself had taken the cue and given him an answer. Another day when he entered Bhagavan's hall, Bhagavan was quoting from the *Kaivalya Navaneetam* wherein the guru says, 'The highest return the disciple can render to the guru is to remain fixed in the Self without being disturbed by obstacles and outward distractions.'

This finally emboldened Kunju Swami. He prostrated before Bhagavan

and said, ‘Bhagavan, I want to go and live in Palaakothu and pursue Self Enquiry.’ Bhagavan was delighted and exclaimed, ‘Oh good! It is enough if the mind is kept one pointed in *vichara, dhyana, japa* and *parayana*.’ Kunju Swami again prostrated before Bhagavan and pleaded, ‘Bhagavan, please bless me. I am going to be alone, away from you. Guide me.’ Bhagavan looked at him graciously and then said the most beautiful thing: ‘Make Self Enquiry your final aim, but also practice meditation, *japa* and *parayana*. Practice them relentlessly. If you tire of meditation, take to *japa*, if you tire of *japa*, take to Self Enquiry, if you tire of that, do the chanting of verses. Do not have a gap between them. Do not allow the mind to sway from your task. Practice this faithfully, and in the end you will be established in Self Enquiry and find culmination in Self realization.’ This is an assurance, not just to Kunju Swami but to every listener of this profound statement. Be assured, Self Enquiry will establish you in the truth that you already are.

Kunju Swami went to live in a small hut in Palaakothu. Once, he confessed to Bhagavan, ‘Bhagavan, I am not able to continuously meditate or pursue Self-enquiry and stay in the Self. The flow gets interrupted.’ Bhagavan said, ‘Why? It is very easy. Before you go

to sleep, meditate and go into the Self. Then when you fall asleep, your whole sleep will be a meditation of staying in the Self. The moment you wake up in the morning, again go into meditation for a few minutes and remain as the Self. Throughout the waking state, the undercurrent of remaining in the Self will be there even though you are working, arguing or quarreling. This substratum will always keep you in the Self.’ Kunju Swami said, ‘This is the most beautiful and practical teaching I have received from Bhagavan.’

During Bhagavan’s last days, the management of the ashram had to face many problems. The devotees did not know how to continue with their activities. So along with Kunju Swami they approached Bhagavan. He told them, ‘How is the management being carried out now? Do you think it is you or somebody else that is managing it? There is a higher power which is managing all this. The same higher power will continue to manage.’ When Bhagavan was to drop his body, he gave his last message, which was not only to the anxious devotees gathered around him but also to all of us: ‘Put the teaching into practice.’ ■

Source: Ramana Periya Puranam by V. Ganesan
August 7th is Kunju Swami’s Samadhi day.

Muruganar



The following excerpts have been taken from ‘Ramana Periya Puranam’ written by V. Ganesan. We have included a brief write up on Muruganar’s life to mark his birth anniversary

Excerpts:

Muruganar was an astounding Tamil poet-saint and an impeccable devotee to Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Apart from being a high caliber Tamil poet he was also a renowned Tamil scholar who was involved in the prestigious task of preparing the Tamil lexicon. Long before meeting Bhagavan, Muruganar was deeply devoted to Lord Siva. He was deeply inspired by reading Thiruvachakam, a poetic work of Manikavachakar a saint and devotee of Siva who lived seven hundred years ago. Whenever he read it, he would yearn for the same ecstasy and fulfillment that Manikavachakar felt in his Siva bhakti. Thrilled by the

work of Manikavachakar, he deeply longed to visit and serve saints and receive his blessings in the form of divine ecstasy.

It was around this time that his father-in-law presented him with two books written by Bhagavan: ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Arunachala Stuti Panchakam’, the former work on jnana marga and the latter an outpouring of devotional songs drenched in bhakti. He read these two books several times and soon came to know that Bhagavan was constantly in the state of blissful wisdom. This only increased his longing to go and serve such outstanding saint. While traveling to Thiruvanamalai, he spontaneously wrote eleven verses in the praise of Bhagavan, while addressing him as Siva.

When Muruganar met Bhagavan for the first time he saw a brilliant light, a Jyothi, a huge flame, which blinded his eyes. Blissfully, he tried reading out

the verses, but his tears prevented him from reading it. Then, from the Jyothi emerged Bhagavan and asked him for the paper. Bhagavan then read the poem aloud and remarked ‘This reads just like Thiruvachakam. Continue writing like Manikavachakar’. Then he looked deeply in his eyes and filled Muruganar in the state of bliss which he had never experienced before.

During this time, he worked as a teacher in Chennai to support his mother and wife. So he had to back to Chennai for doing his job after his darshan of Bhagavan. But while going back he would be so enveloped by the ocean of Bhagavan’s grace that he walks back three miles and start walking back towards Ramanashram. Filled in the state of bliss he would also forget to catch the train back to Chennai. During such visits to Bhagavan, he was deeply torn between his responsibilities at Chennai, deep attachment to his mother and his devotion to his master. In 1924 Muruganar’s mother passed away and after performing last rites. He took the portion of ashes and came to Ramanashram, where Bhagavan consoled him and directed him to immerse the ashes in the nearby pond. To this Muruganar was so touched by Master’s compassion that he resigned

from his job, cut off all worldly ties and came to stay in Ramanashram in 1926.

But soon Muruganar realized that he could hardly assist the ashram management in its day to day activities, although he tried his best to do worldly tasks. His attention was wholly turned towards inwards he was not fit to do any worldly work. So he moved to nearby Palaakothu and started leading an austere life. While staying in Palaakothu, he would beg for the food and spend most of his days in ecstasy. Furthermore, he began composing hundreds of verses along the lines of Thiruvachakam as Bhagavan had instructed him to do. It was during this time he wrote Ramana Sannidhi Murai (Prayers and Praises in the Presence of Ramana). This book contained one thousand eight hundred and fifty extempore verses, seen and edited and titled by Bhagavan.

Overall, while staying near Bhagavan, Muruganar used his receptive intellect to imbibe Bhagavan’s teachings on Vedanta. He would carefully listen to Bhagavan’s answer’s to various questions, come back to the hut and write down those answers as poems. This collection of question and answers ran into hundreds of verses and were collected

and printed as Guru Vachaka Kovai (Garland of Guru's Sayings). Further, Muruganar went on to write many excellent works like Ramana Deva Malai, Sri Ramana Charana Pallandu, Sri Ramana Anubhuti, and Sri Ramana Jnana Bhodam. The spiritual function behind all his books can be categorized under three heads: Prayers and praises, the pure and direct teaching, and the inner ecstasy of spiritual experience. Another fascinating aspect of Muruganar was he elicited the direct teachings from Bhagavan. He was instrumental in collecting some of the important verses of Bhagavan's monumental

commentary on Upanishads. These three works are Ulladu Narpadu, it's supplement, Anubandam Upadesa Undiyar and lastly a poem on wisdom Atma Vidya Keertanam. All three guide us on how to experience the reality of the limitless Self. Finally, such was Muruganar's devotion that during Bhagavan's last days he composed a poem every day ending with 'Bhagavan, you should live a hundred years.' ■

Source: Ramana Periya Puranam by V. Ganesan

August 30th is Muruganar's Samadhi day.

Viswanatha Swami



Viswanatha Swami was Bhagavan's maternal nephew. He was blessed by Bhagavan and himself became a spiritual beacon for many. Below is an edited excerpt from Sri V Ganesan's stories of the early devotees.

Viswanathan was involved in India's freedom movement. In 1921 he was arrested for opposing the British government. His father bailed him out. But, instead of going to his house he got off at Tiruvannamalai to meet his uncle, Venkataraman, now known as Ramana Maharshi.

He describes his very first encounter with Bhagavan: 'His look and smile had a remarkable spiritual charm. When he spoke, his words seemed to come out of an abyss. In his presence, the unique bliss of peace was directly experienced.'

Bhagavan turned to Viswanathan and said, 'When I left home in my seventeenth year, I was like a speck

swept away by a tremendous flood. I knew neither my body nor the world. My body became a mere skeleton. Visitors pitied my plight because they were not aware of how blissful I was.'

As (Viswanathan) bade farewell, Bhagavan handed him a copy of *Sri Ramana Gita*. This moved Viswanathan so deeply that he decided to give up the world and stay at the holy feet of Bhagavan.

In January 1923, he went back to Tiruvannamalai. After four months of coming to Bhagavan, Viswanatha Swami's father was (to) visit. Viswanathan's father knew (Bhagavan) as Venkataraman, a runaway relative who had taken to an ascetic life. When (he) saw Bhagavan, he could sense his spiritual stature. Bhagavan (told) him, 'Allow Viswanathan to stay here. It will do him good. I will take the entire responsibility of Viswanathan's

spiritual growth.’

Viswanatha Swami was extremely happy. The years rolled by in timeless ecstasy. He got a shock when Bhagavan’s health failed. On Bhagavan’s last day, there were a few people inside his room. Outside, Bhagavan’s devotees were chanting *Aksharamanamai*. The louder the chorus ‘Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva’ became, the more tears of ecstasy rolled down from Bhagavan’s eyes. Viswanatha Swami suddenly felt the gracious look of Bhagavan on him. He saw lightning flash within himself and the core of his Heart opened. He saw Bhagavan smile and give a nod. Bhagavan had awakened spiritual realization in the son following his word to the father.

After Bhagavan attained *Mahanirvana*, Viswanatha Swami received a call from Dindigul that his mother was ailing and bedridden. Viswanatha Swami went home and saw there was nobody to even serve her food. He attended to her day and night. He cooked for her, bathed her and nursed her for months. In her last moments she said, ‘Viswanatha, I bless you,’ and gave him her notebook in which Bhagavan himself had written *Sri Ramana Ashtottaram*.

Sometime after this, when he was still at Dindigul, he had a dream in which Bhagavan appeared to him and asked him to come to Ramanasramam. When he went there, he found that Chinna Swami was ailing. For the next six months, he attended to him day and night. When Chinna Swami died in 1953, Viswanatha Swami disappeared from Ramanasramam.

Knowing Viswanatha Swami’s greatness, I kept searching for him after I came to Ramanasramam in 1960. One day a friend told me ‘Ganesa *anna!* I am just returning from meeting Viswanatha Swami.’ I immediately went there. He was living in his brother’s house. He was in the kitchen, cooking for the family. I begged him to come back to the ashram and he did.

Serving Viswanatha Swami was one of the most fulfilling functions in my life. Viswanatha Swami’s presence actually enhanced the aroma of the ashram. Slowly, other devotees came back. In those days, before the large hall was built, Bhagavan’s *samadhi* was a thatched shed with an open space in front. I used to sleep there on a mat on the floor. Some nights, I would feel the poke of a walking stick. I would wake up to find Viswanatha Swami silently

beckoning me to follow him to the cemetery near Yamalingam, two kilometers away. He would draw my attention to the hill, and we would sit in silence for two or three hours and then walk back.

Just as Bhagavan cared for Viswanatha Swami, Viswanatha Swami, whom I cared for, took care of me and my spiritual practice. Thus the beautiful chain of grace continues to link us to the truth that is ever-present as Bhagavan.

Viswanatha Swami was a symbol of utter simplicity and service. Many visitors who were emotionally upset or mentally imbalanced would come to the ashram. I did not know how to handle them. Viswanatha Swami would volunteer to take care of them. He would take them individually talking to them softly and seeing their problems dissolve by making them experience and transcend the limitations of mind and body.

I had just read the Bible and I was talking to a friend about it. I did not like the story where Moses touched a rock with his staff and water flowed out. As I was saying, 'How can water come out of a rock?' a hand took my arm. It was Viswanatha Swami. He led me to Skandashram, put my hand between two rocks and feel the

natural spring there. Then, he said, 'Bhagavan touched this rock and this water flows perennially. Never doubt a sage's statements or actions.' This corrected my spiritual thinking. Even now you can feel the spring coming from the rock and not from the sand.

Arthur Osborne managed the journal '*The Mountain Path*', single-handedly for six years when he suddenly passed away in 1970. I did not know what to do. Mrs. Osborne shouldered that responsibility for two years. However, because of ill health and other problems, she begged me to find someone better equipped to handle the responsibility. She brought unedited articles and put them on my table. The next day, Viswanatha Swami smiled at me and said, 'Bhagavan has instructed me to help you'. Send all those unedited articles to Professor K. Swaminathan who is an expert editor. When the edited articles come in, I will study them and learn.' Being a realized person, he picked up (editing) in no time at all.

Coming to stay permanently in the ashram at a very young age gave me the advantage of close contact with the old devotees. I could earn their wealth of *jnana* very easily by just serving them.

The greater reward that I got through such proximity was my persuading them to write their reminiscences. Though I could not succeed in this with Viswanatha Swami, I could persuade him to translate *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* into Tamil. This was how, in the 1970s, the first volume of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* was brought out in Tamil as *Bhagavat Vachanaamrutam*. It was an instant success!

In 1979, Viswanatha Swami and I planned that for Bhagavan's birth centenary in 1980, we needed to bring out issues dealing exclusively with the direct teachings of Bhagavan. Unfortunately, Viswanatha Swami had a sunstroke. He kept standing and sitting restlessly. I was shocked and upset. 'Do not pay attention to my body. I am inwardly in a blissful state,' he counseled. 'I will not give you trouble to nurse me for long. The second day I will drop my body. Come in the evening, I have a message for you.' I went at the appointed time.

In that seemingly restless state, he again told me, 'Do not pay attention to the body. Listen to what I am saying.' This is Viswanatha Swami's message and it has been guiding me powerfully: 'The body is affected, perhaps the mind also. But, the spirit,

the Heart, is unaffected, and the Heart is speaking through me. Though there is so much confusion, turbulence and misery in manifestation, all of that belongs to the realm of the mind only—the ignorant mind split as object and subject. All experiences of life are relative, related to the experiencer who is nothing but a shadow having no intrinsic reality of his own. The reality in every person is the ultimate, pure existence which is the pure state of 'I AM', awareness-absolute. We should now and then stand aloof and experience this immutable and immaculate awareness-absolute, which alone matters, which alone is. The Buddha, Jesus Christ, Adi Shankara, and Bhagavan Ramana are monuments affirming the reality which is our very own being. Only the finite mind, the 'me', has to be relinquished to merge and dissolve in the ever-present, infinite reality of 'I AM'. I bless you Ganesan.'

Viswanatha Swami, as predicted by him, dropped his body peacefully on the second day. His *samadhi* inside the ashram, close to Arunachala, is a place of the same serenity his physical presence emanated all his life! ■

Source: Ramana Periya Puranam by V. Ganesan

October 22th is Viswanatha Swami's Samadhi day.

Bhagavan and Freedom Movement

The following talk from the 'Day by Day' has been included in this issue because of Gandhi Jayanti (2nd October). The talk is about the balancing one's own spiritual development and working towards social upliftment.

Talk #502.

14th August, 1938

Sjt. Rajendra Prasad and Sjt. Jamnalal Bajaj with others are on a visit

to Sri Maharshi.

16th August - Sjt. J. B. asked questions:

D.: How is the mind to be steadily kept right?

M.: All living beings are aware of their surroundings and therefore intellect must be surmised in all of them. At the same time, there is a difference between the intellect of man and that of other animals, because man not only sees the world as it is and acts accordingly, but also seeks fulfilment of desires and is not satisfied with the existing state of affairs. In his attempt to fulfil his desires he extends his vision far

and wide and yet he turns away dissatisfied. He now begins to think and reason.

The desire for permanency of happiness and of peace he speaks such permanency in his own nature. Therefore, he seeks to find and regain his own nature, i.e., his Self. That found, all is found. Such inward seeking is the path to be gained by man's intellect. The intellect itself realises after continuous practice that it is enabled by some Higher Power to function. It cannot itself reach that Power. So it ceases to function after a certain stage. When it thus ceases to function the Supreme Power is still left there all alone. That is Realisation; that is the finality; that is the goal. It is thus plain that the purpose of the intellect is to realise its own dependence upon the Higher Power and its inability to reach the same. So, it must annihilate itself before the goal is gained.

D.: A sloka is quoted which means: "I do not desire kingdoms, etc. Only let me serve Thee for ever and there lies my highest pleasure." Is that right?

M.: Yes. There is room for kama (desire) so long as there is an object apart from the subject (i.e., duality). There can be no desire if there is no object. The state of no-desire is moksha. There is no duality in sleep and also no desire. Whereas there is duality in the waking state and desire also is there. Because of duality a desire arises for the acquisition of the object. That is the outgoing mind, which is the basis of duality and of desire. If one knows that Bliss is none other than the Self the mind becomes inward turned. If the Self is gained all the desires are fulfilled. That is the apta kamah atmakamah akamascha (fulfilment of desire) of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. That is moksha.

Here J. B. tried to make himself clear by saying that what he meant by sad buddhi was not the same as buddhi. It means that which holds fast to the good, the right and the chosen path. He wanted to know how such steadfastness could be gained.

M.: What is wanted for gaining the highest goal is loss of individuality. The intellect is co-extensive with individuality. Loss of individuality can only be after the disappearance of buddhi, good or bad. The question therefore does not arise.

D.: But yet one must know the right thing, choose the right path, practise the right dharma and hold fast to it. Otherwise he is lost.

M.: True strength accrues by keeping in the right direction without swerving from it.

D.: Difficulties are met with. How is one to get the strength necessary to overcome the obstacles which beset one's path?

M.: By means of devotion and company of the sages.

D.: Loss of individuality was just before mentioned as a prerequisite to moksha. Now devotion and association with the wise are advised as the methods. Is there not individuality implied in them e.g., in "I am a bhakta", "I am a satsangi"?

M.: The method is pointed out to the seeker. The seeker has certainly not lost his individuality so far. Otherwise the question would not have arisen. The way is shown to effect the loss of individuality of the seeker. It is thus appropriate.

D.: Is the desire for swaraj right?

M.: Such desire no doubt begins with self-interest. Yet practical work for the goal gradually widens the outlook so that the individual becomes merged in the country. Such merging

of the individuality is desirable and the related karma is nishkama (unselfish).

D.: If swaraj is gained after a long struggle and terrible sacrifices, is not the person justified in being pleased with the result and elated by it?

M.: He must have in the course of his work surrendered himself to the Higher Power whose Might must be kept in mind and never lost sight of. How then can he be elated? He should not even care for the result of his actions. Then alone the karma becomes unselfish.

D.: How can unerring rectitude be ensured for the worker?

M.: If he has surrendered himself to God or to Guru the Power to which he had surrendered will take him on the right course. The worker need no longer concern himself about the rectitude or otherwise of the course. The doubt will arise only if he fails to obey the Master in all details.

D.: Is there not any Power on earth which can bestow Grace on Its devotees so that they may grow strong to work for the country and gain

swaraj? (Sri Maharshi remained silent. This, He later said, signified that such was the case).

D.: Is not the tapasya of the ancient mahatmas of the land available for the benefit of its present-day inheritors?

M.: It is, but the fact must not be overlooked that no one can claim to be the sole beneficiary. The benefits are shared by all alike.

(After a pause) Is it without such saving Grace that the present awakening has come into being? (Here Sri Bhagavan said that before His arrival in Tiruvannamalai in 1896, there was not any clear political thought in India. Only Dadabhai Nauroji had become an M.P.). After a short pause, J. B. said: Sri Rajendra Prasad is such a noble and selfless worker for the country that he has sacrificed a very lucrative career for this work. The country needs him. And yet he is not in good health, and is always weak and ailing. Why should there be such cruelty to such a noble son of the country? ■

(Sri Maharshi simply smiled a benign smile).

Kendra Bulletin

(Mid-March to Mid-May)



May 19th

Wexplaining verses 80-86 of Vivekachudamani, Swami Durgeshanandji said: For those seekers of Liberation who have only an apparent dispassion (*Vairagya*) yet are trying to cross the ocean of existence (*Samsara*), the crocodile of earthly cravings speedily catches them by the throat and violently drowns them midway in the ocean.

One who has killed this crocodile, crosses the ocean of innumerable births and deaths, free from all obstacles. Know that death quickly overtakes the man who walks along with the ways of sense pleasures, whereas one who walks by following the instructions of a worthy Guru, achieves his end - Liberation. Know this to be true.

If indeed one has a craving for Liberation, one would need to shun sense objects as one would shun poison, carefully cultivating sattvic qualities like contentment, compassion, forgiveness, calmness, and self-control. By not cultivating these virtues, instead, nourishing this gross body with passion, is akin to committing suicide.

He who wishes to realize the Self, but at the same time seeks sense pleasures is like one crossing the river by holding onto a crocodile – and mistaking it for a log of wood!

-Rashmi Vyas

May 26th

Taking up verses 87-94 of *Vivekachudamani*, Swami Durgeshanandaji said that to be free from the body is not death. It is the death of desires that is the real death – the death experienced through pramana or evidence, the death taught in the shastras. The aspirant slowly realizes he is in the body but not this body. By conquering attachment to the body-mind complex, the *sadhaka* attains *muktipadam*, also known as *paramam padam*, the Supreme state of Vishnu.

This gross body itself comprising skin, flesh, blood, arteries, fat, marrow and bones is produced by one's past actions which form the gross elements resulting from the union of subtle elements. This body becomes the medium of experience in the waking state through which the soul experiences its own physical characteristics, sensory experiences, restrictions regarding castes, progression through the orders of life and the different experiences of honour, insult, worship, etc, s/he must undergo.

The gross body is like a house to the householder on which rests the jiva's entire dealing with the world. The ears, skin, eyes, nose, and tongue are the organs of knowledge – *jnana indriyas* – which help us cognize objects; the vocal cords, hands, legs, rectum, and genitals – *karma indriyas* – are the organs of action enabling work. These categories come under *Purvamimasa* which is related to our body and its associated duties. Under *Adhyatama*, there are no categories for this is Knowledge undifferentiated.

-Neera Kashyap

June 2nd

In the third of the series on Bhagavan's selection from the Bhagavad Gita, Shri Ambarish Daveji explained the fourth shloka selected from Chapter 10.20, considered to be the most important by Bhagavan. Here Lord Krishna addresses Arjuna as Gudakesa, meaning the one who has conquered the darkness of sleep or ignorance. He explains to him His own swarupa as the very soul of all manifestation: the individual soul as well as the super soul residing in each individual, this presence being felt as 'I', inspired and sustained by the One Supreme. Space where the Atman resides in the human body is the Heart.

Krishna asks Arjuna to meditate on HIM there. The Gita describes the Lord as 'the beginning and the middle and the end of all beings'. Simply put, HE is eternal. The whole creation comes from HIM and will merge into HIM.

In the next verse selected by Bhagavan - Chapter 2.27 - Lord Krishna makes it clear that whosoever is born will die and will be reborn again. He further says 'Nothing is completely destroyed ... only the form changes'. So, Arjun is advised not to grieve but to follow his dharma. Our life has an objective with duties prescribed based on one's varna. For the bhogi, jagat is mainly for fulfilling his unlimited desires. For a yogi, the world exists for self-realization. Krishna advises Arjun to act in accordance with his varna - as king - and protect his people rather than fall prey to moha and to shoka (grief).

In the next selected verse – Chapter 2.20, Ambarishji beautifully explained the true swarup of Atman: It is neither born nor dies and never ceases to be. It is the body which is subject to change - from birth and growth to aging, dwindling and dying. The Atman's presence can be felt in us as 'I', the presence of consciousness.

-Indra Sharma

July 28th

In the third of a series of talks on the 42 verses selected by Bhagavan from the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Shri Ambarish Daveji said that the essence of the entire Gita is contained in the second chapter itself. As the Supreme Truth is unchanging, it is the same truth which is the essence of all shastras and can be expressed simply as: 'Know jagat and know your true nature'. If there is a kshetra (field), there is a knower of the kshetra who is the kshetrajna. Lord Shri Krishna says: 'I'm the kshetra and the kshetrajna'.

We perform karma to obtain happiness. We need not renounce action, but the desire for a particular fruit or reward. At the same time, we shouldn't long for inaction. The actions of the body are ruled by Prakriti which don't cease with Self-realization. Bhagavan Ramana, for example, continued performing actions even after Self-realisation.

Reality lies in the eternal. Those who understand this have the supreme

knowledge, and sorrow can't affect them for they abide in the Heart where Lord Krishna resides. Lord Shri Krishna says: 'In that space inside you, I'm there. Meditate on the Heart because there I am'.

Harboring the wrong conception that happiness comes from the objects of the world, the cycle goes on till one realizes that happiness is one's true nature and doesn't depend on the fulfillment of worldly desires. For what is born will die, what has a beginning will have an end, what I get, I will lose. Said Ambarishji, 'I look for happiness outside me when I think I'm incomplete. When I realize that I'm complete in myself, I won't look for happiness outside'. This profound reflection summarizes Bhagavan Ramana's statement: 'Happiness is your nature, it's not wrong to desire it. What is wrong is seeking it outside when it is inside'.

Shri Ambarishji concluded by urging all devotees to know themselves. 'When you attain the knowledge of your true nature which is the real goal of life, you see yourself everywhere and in everything. It's the ultimate realization'. Lord Krishna has said: 'I am the beginning, the middle and the end.'

-Marie Elangovan

August 11th

Taking up adhyaya one, Valli 13 & 14 of the Kathopanishad, Swami Prabuddhanandaji, at the very outset, emphasized the need for control over all impulses - anger, distraction, lust, greed, illusion, pride, envy. He suggests that each impulse should be controlled through the will. This in itself is meditation or *upasana*. This control guarantees instant peace, unlike action and result where there can be a time gap. While Vedanta talks of control as useful, its essential purpose is that it leads to the correction of wrong thinking: that I am the body, not the Self; that happiness can be found outside our real Nature. Expanding on this theme, Swamiji gave several pointers: when we wake up, we think only about the world, not freedom from it; thought is an appearance, freedom from it is our real Nature; Silence is not an objectifiable detail of existence because it is our very Being; goodness and the right values prepare one for purity and peace so we can live to discern between thought

and the Absolute.

Utishthata is the mental preparation for following the right values. This makes the difficulties we must face less difficult. *Jagrata* is to wake up to the value of our existence: not to see happiness but to Be happiness; our love is for Being, not doing; the wave searches for water when it is itself water. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajnavalkya says: all your desires to achieve are your desire to Be. Hence the Vedantic injunctions of the silent observer and the mobile observed, of tracing language to thought, thought to thinker and thinker to Source.

-Neera Kashyap

August 25th

Assembling after a long break of two months, Swami Durgeshanandaji recapped points from earlier classes and touched upon various new and interesting subjects. According to our ancient Indian scriptures, there are nine major schools of philosophy: six are gnostic/Aastik (which consider *Vedas* as proof) and three agnostic/Naastik - defined as--'na asti iti' (which don't consider *Vedas* as proof). The highest of all philosophies is Vedanta (which explains the relationship between *Jiva*, *Jagat*, and *Ishwara*) because it is not a human creation but '*Apaurusheya*' or of the nature of the miraculous. Swamiji explained how the Ultimate Reality is addressed by different names viz 'Brahman' in Vedanta, 'Bhagavan' by the practitioners of Bhakti and 'Parmatma' in the Yoga sutras.

The spiritual aspirant, exhausted from seeking the pleasures of the world for happiness - both the world and its pleasures being changing and impermanent in nature - begins a search for a permanent bliss and enlightenment. He asks seven questions to his guru (verse 51). The Guru's reply, leading to the dawn of Self-realization is the subject matter of Vivekachudamani, this classical spiritual text - third in the series after Tattvabodh and Atmabodh.

As the Ultimate Reality is beyond the scope of the sense organs, mind and intellect, it can only be experienced as Being. That which remains after negating what is not (Neti neti- 'na-iti, na-iti' –not this, not this) is the Ultimate Truth, the ever-present, ever-shining Self.

Another interesting and deeply secret point Swamiji made was that Brahman is the Silence that remains after chanting Om. Known as '*Amatra stithi*' in the scriptures, it is the witness 'I' of the body-mind-intellect complex. Quoting the Phalshruti (fruits/rewards of listening) to the Ramcharitmanas, Goswami Tulsidasji explains the importance of a Guru's guidance as the bridge between God and the aspirant. A Guru can make a student in the likeness of himself by imparting True Knowledge...'Jaanat tumahi, Tumahi hoi jaai'.

Swamiji further explained verses 94-97 thus:

The ears, skin, eyes, nose, and tongue are organs of perception which help us recognize objects, while hands, legs, etc are organs of action. The inner organ, 'Antahkaran' is composed of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta*, *ahankar*, each with it's following respective functions:

1. The role of *manas* is to consider the pros and cons of objects/situations.
2. *Buddhi* takes the final decision after determining the truth of the objects.
3. *Chitta* is the memory house which seeks pleasurable objects based on past impressions.
4. *Ahankar* or ego is its identification with the body.

Verse 97 deals with five types of *Prana-prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana* and *samana*, each with its own functions.

Through the talk, Swamiji made some very subtle and deep observations from the scriptures, recapping earlier points while enlarging and introducing new ones.

-Rashmi Vyas

September 1st

Following the puja at the shrine at Delhi's Ramana Kendra, Vijay Vancheswar, Vice President at the Kendra spoke about why Advent day is celebrated by followers of Sri Ramana. In 1896, the young Ramana had already felt the inner calling of his true home. On 1st September he reached Tiruvannamalai

never to leave it for the next 54 years, till he left the body. This day marks his joyous merging with Sri Arunachala Shiva.

Vancheswarji pointed out that this day reminds us of our true-life purpose: to connect with who we really are, to go to our real home by merging with the divinity within. He also reminded us that Bhagavan did not feel the need to preach, the radiance of his presence being communicated in silence. The importance of seeking solitude and silence was emphasized by Vancheswarji as we tend to forget this search in our clamor for company and endless activity. He concluded his introductory remarks with the words: ‘Home is our own Self. Being with Bhagavan leads us there.’

This introduction was followed by Shri Shankar Narayanji continuing with his series of talks on Bhagavan’s poem, *Saddarshanam* which he began by chanting verses 17-18 from it. Verse 17 had previously explored time, *kaala*. Verse 18 adds space, *dik*, to *kaala* as being projections of imagination, having existence only relative to the Self. Bhagavan asks us to drop all preconceived notions and explore the nature of truth by diving into an enquiry of what we are, *koham*.

The Self or Atman takes on many layers of body and mind which include wealth, status and achievements, in an unending complex. Clarity of investigation reveals that the first subtle addendum is *ahamkara*, not meaning ‘arrogance’ but a subtle attachment to manifestation. Like an actor donning a costume, the jiva dons both the human body and the cosmos. Sri Shankar Narayanji used different quotations as well as Bhagavan’s own descriptions from *Talks* to explain Verse 18:

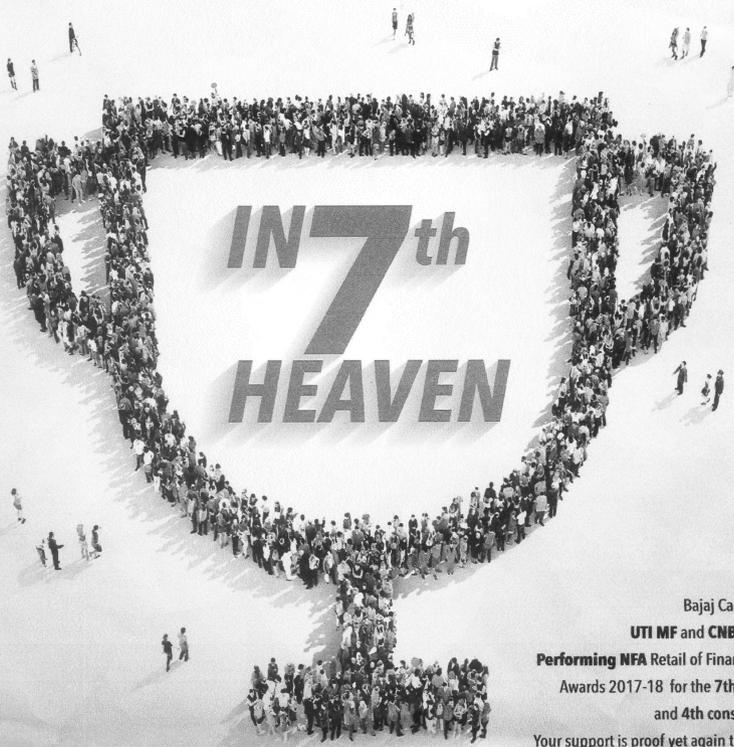
Talk 304: In response to a lady requesting Bhagavan to visit Switzerland, he asked, ‘Are you now in India... or is India in you?’

Talk 625: ‘The idea of time is only in your mind.’

Talk 480: ‘If thoughts do not arise, there will be no future; there will be no earth...’

As a regular at his satsangs, it is a sheer delight to be in the presence of Shri Shankar Narayanji in his upasana of Sri Bhagavan.

-Bharati Mirchandani



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

Ramana Maharshi {Upadesa Saram (2)}

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

Ramana Maharshi (Upadesa Saram-16)

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“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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