

March 2019



The Ramana Way

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THE RAMANA WAY

A Monthly Journal since 1981

Celebrating Ramana Rasa Anubhava



Editor: Dr. Sarada

Associate Editor: G. Kameshwar

Assistant Editor: Dileep Simha

*Brotherhood based on equality is the supreme
goal to be attained by human society*

- Ramana Gita X, 10

Journal started by:	Sri. A.R.Natarajan, Founder President, RMCL
Printed & Published by:	Sarada Natarajan on behalf of Ramana Maharshi Centre For Learning, Ramana Maharshi Heritage Building, Post office Road, Sanjaynagar, Bangalore - 560094 Ph:(080)23514930, (080)42061951 Direct Fax:23512640
Managing Editor:	Revathi Sankar +919448853748
E-mail:	office@ramanacentre.com, ramanaway@ramanacentre.com
Website:	ramanacentre.com, ramanamusic.com
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Editorial*Dr. Sarada*

'How is one to do self-enquiry?' This is one of the most frequently asked questions on the Ramana Way. This is despite the fact that the path has been described in the simplest terms with utmost clarity by Ramana himself. In one of his poems on Arunachala, the 'Arunachala Ashtakam', he says 'If there is no thought of 'I' until then nothing else is there. If any other should arise, ask, 'For whom?' 'From where?' and searching for the source of the 'I', dive deep within...'

Right from his answers to Gambhiram Seshier in 1900 recorded in 'Self-enquiry', to Sivaprakasam Pillai in 1901 recorded in the text with the very title 'Who am I?' and through his answers to several seekers in Virupaksha and Skandasram years recorded by Ganapati Muni in 'Ramana Gita' Ramana has repeatedly explained what is meant by self-enquiry. His answers to questions have continued in the Ramanasramam years and have been encapsulated in the 'Talks with Ramana Maharshi' and 'Guru Vachaka Kovai'. In addition we have the Master's own writings in prose and in poetry, primarily the Ramana scriptures 'Upadesa Saram', 'Ulladu Narpadu' and 'Five Hymns to Arunachala'. There are the 'Appalam Song', the 'Anma Vidya Song', the 'Ekanma Panchakam' and several stray verses. Further, as in the case of all scriptures, we have commentaries on these works as well. The path, therefore, should be clear. Where then is room for doubt?

Nonetheless, doubts persist. Some ask the basic question of how the path should be pursued. Other doubts that surface regarding this path are 'Do I have to keep on repeating the question?' 'Do I ask myself the question and then tell myself that I am not the body, not the mind and so on?' 'Do I ask myself the question and then tell myself that I am the Self, that I am Brahman or that I am all pervading and such?' 'Do I ask myself this question up until the point of time when I am able to dive into the Self and then simply keep getting back to the Self whenever attention moves away without asking myself the question any more thereafter?' 'Why not start with 'Who am I?'? Why the preliminary

steps of 'For whom is this thought?' the answer 'For me' and then the question 'Who am I?'' 'In the question 'Who am I?' does the 'I' refer to the ego or to the Self?'

All these have been asked of Ramana in different ways and answered by him on more than one occasion. So, when doubts on the path arise we can go back to his words. When we read the words and meditate on them, by the very power of Grace embodied in the words their meaning begins to open up to us until the words shine as our own experience.

Regarding the practise of self-enquiry Ramana has clearly said that it needs to be done only when thoughts arise. If no thought is rising, if one is abiding steadily in the Self then who is there to practise the enquiry? If, however, thought arises, then there must be a thinker whose thought it is. This is the reason why Ramana asks us to pose the first question 'For whom is this thought?' By the answer 'The thought is for me, it is my thought' we own the responsibility for that thought. It is not unusual for one to disclaim the entire responsibility for our thoughts by saying that thoughts come and go of their own accord. Very often people say, 'I have tried my best, but I am unable to get rid of this thought. This means it is more powerful than I am. Even though I do not want it, it haunts me.'

Such an approach gives a concrete existence to thoughts apart from oneself. If thoughts were in fact independent of us, then what of one thought that may haunt us, it would be impossible to have any control on any of our thoughts. On the other hand we would be completely at their mercy. The question of being able to concentrate on anything would not arise. We could not find fault with our children or our subordinates if they do not concentrate on any given task. After all they too would have no control over their thoughts. When a thought comes, it would come and it would leave only when it wishes to leave, like some intruder into our home. The intruder may be a 'mere' cockroach or a kitten or a human being. What can we do when such intrusions happen? If we are not afraid we may chase out the intruder. If we are afraid we would call for help in some manner. Help may be at hand or may not be, in which case we have to suffer it out until the intruder chooses to leave.

Is this the case with our thoughts? Not so at all says Ramana. Thoughts do not come and go of their own accord, they are given life only by attention. Thoughts are nothing but objects that we think about. The object may be gross or subtle. No matter how subtle, it would still be an object. The object of thought may be a thing or an emotion, it may be food or joy. In either case the object is insentient says Ramana, it is I who give life to it, it is I who make it my own. Like the moving light of a lighthouse or a rotating spotlight lights up various objects as it moves, the light of attention too picks up various objects. Each object that it lights becomes a thought for us at that point of time. When attention moves to another object, the earlier object disappears from our view and the new object becomes our thought. This happens with each successive thought because, as Ramana has pointed out, there can only be one thought at a time in our mind.

All this, the Master has told us. All this we may accept as well. But we need to experience this for ourselves. Only then will our self-enquiry deepen and take us directly to the source. This is the reason why we are asked to look at every thought even as it rises. At that very point catch hold of it, says Ramana, and question. 'For whom is this thought?' The answer will come, 'For me. It is my thought.' We do not have any doubt about this, do we? Whenever we have a thought do we feel 'Hey! What is this! This isn't my thought! How come it's here? Whose could it be?' No doubt there are some thoughts which seem to take us by surprise. Nonetheless we do not disclaim ownership of those thoughts as well. We may at worst say, 'I wonder wherefrom this thought came to me.'

This means that once we have accepted an object into our consciousness by our attention that is when it becomes alive for us, that is when it becomes a thought for us. Then we can say, 'This is my thought'. Up until that point of time it may have been in existence but would remain dormant so far as we are concerned. The moment we pay attention to an object that becomes a thought for us. Hence the importance of the question, 'For whom is this thought?'

As we practise asking ourselves this question many beautiful revelations slowly blossom. For one thing we become actually aware of the facts that Ramana states. We become aware of the fact that thought rises due to our attention. Simultaneously

it becomes clear to us that it is the thinker who waters thoughts and allows them to grow through attention. Actually wielding the power to move attention away from a thought may be exercised or not exercised to begin with. It may be awhile before we start moving away from thoughts and back to the thinker. Initially we may do this with some of the thoughts and we may get carried away by others. Nonetheless, there is a sure understanding that it is possible to do so if only we would try.

As the practice of shifting attention away from thoughts and back to the thinker strengthens, the awareness that every thought is merely a passing show would deepen. Every time a thought arises so too would the awareness, 'This is merely a thought, why pay attention to it?' Such would be one's approach. That this is only a perception of one's own mind would also be evident. The world is out there. How do I experience it? I experience it as a thought. Every one of my experiences is only a thought for me. It may be a physiological experience like pain or freedom from pain. It could be a physical experience connected with the senses like seeing a beautiful or ugly sight, touching something, listening to music or the harsh honking of a horn, tasting food and so on. It becomes evident to us that every one of these experiences is a thought for us.

As I watch my thoughts more and more and as I question repeatedly as they rise, 'For whom is this thought?' and as I answer, 'It is for me, it is my thought' these things become more and more evident. I can then see that pain is a thought for me. This may not immediately enable me to disassociate myself from the pain. Nonetheless, it would be clear that the pain is a thought and if I have the strength to turn my attention away from it, it is possible. It would be seen that before the pain there was no thought of that organ. Even when the pain is there it is possible that thought moves away from the pain and returns to it. When the pain is gone, the thought of that pain is no longer there. The pain is not I, it is something that comes and goes. The organ that had the pain is not I, awareness of the organ comes and goes.

It is the same with physical experiences. I see something. That I have seen is the thought that I entertain. I eat something. That I have eaten is the thought that I hold. That it was tasty or

not tasty is a thought which may follow thereafter. Only thoughts. Further, all thoughts come and go. They are mere perceptions that I hold on to from time to time. But why hold on to any thought?

All this the Master has clearly told us. But we forget. However, when we practise self-enquiry diligently, this begins to become clear to us as experience and not just as words. Slowly it would become clear that just as any single physiological and physical experience is a mere thought, the whole body itself is only a thought. It is a thought that changes subtly from time to time, so subtly that we do not notice the changes. And even when we do notice the changes that the mirror and our pictures must necessarily show us, we still feel a sense of continuity in being the same body. When we question our thoughts asking each time for whom they are, we begin to realise that there is some apparent entity who is holding on to the thought of the body. When I say 'my body' it is obviously not I. When I can think about my body, are they not all thoughts? If my body is a thought, then who am I who grasps this thought? Who am I?


Thus repeated practise of the question 'For whom are these thoughts?' and answering 'Who am I?' leads us to an actualisation of the question. It makes us wonder truly about who I am. Every time a thought arises I begin to recognise that I am not the thought but the thinker. Further, it slowly begins to dawn on me that if thought is not a reality, if it is merely a passing show, how can the thinker be a reality? An entity called a thinker can have existence only in relation to an object called thought. If there is no thought then where is the thinker? In the absence of all thoughts, 'Who am I?'

As this question takes root in us we become aware of the subtlest of thoughts rising within us, thoughts that one is not the body, thoughts about our spiritual experiences, thoughts about the absence of thoughts and thoughts about experiencing freedom from thoughts as well. We realise that so long as there is any experience to recall, the experiencer remains, the thinker remains. Every such realisation takes us back to the question, 'Who am I?' with more and more intensity. The question begins to gain more and more strength at the intellectual level to begin with and finally would become the real question.

Once it is a real question what further needs to be said? Would any doubts remain if the validity of the very doubter is being truly doubted? Thoughts may still arise due to the force of habit. Then, even without the question 'for whom' one would immediately recognise that it is thought. One would also remember that the thinker is not valid. Attention would go back to the question 'Who am I?' as the first two questions would have happened as an automatic part of the process. There would be no choosing of not asking those questions, they would drop of their own accord. So also the question 'Who am I?' itself would get absorbed in the Self. But as Ramana has guided, in case a thought does arise again, then the whole process needs to be repeated.

Till when does one have to sustain the practice? Till an entity remains who asks this question. Is it a mere verbal question? It may be to begin with and as practice deepens it becomes a sharp intellectual question. Finally it becomes an intense, real question that stills all else but it is still intermittent. Then the question dissolves in the Self. Is it to be asked anymore? If one re-emerges from abidance and thinks, 'I was abiding in the Self, now I am not' then one is assuming there is an entity that holds the Self itself. Is it possible? Who is making such an assumption, 'Who am I?' Is there a need to give any auto suggestions at the beginning of the practice? But who is the entity who is saying 'I am not the body'? That entity has to be questioned, 'Who am I?' Equally who is the entity who says, 'I am the Supreme Self'? Does the Supreme Self make such a declaration? No, says Ramana. So who am I to affirm or deny? At every instance, 'Who am I?' Finally, who is asking 'Who am I?' Then, as Ramana clarifies, the stick that stirs the funeral pyre will itself be burnt by that fire. Self-enquiry too will dissolve in the Self.

As Sri A.R.Natarajan writes, "Self-enquiry renders the 'I' naked as it were, because the existence of all objects are seen to be related to the perceiver, the seer, the 'I'. Consequently their power to distract one's attention away from oneself ceases. One remains as the essence."



The New Dawn**A. R. Natarajan***TRANQUIL MIND**

Until there is the 'I'-thought there can be no other thought. When other thoughts arise, ask "To whom? To me? Where does this 'I' arise?" Thus diving inwards, if one traces the source of the mind and reaches the Heart, one becomes the Sovereign Lord of the Universe. There is no more dreaming of such as in and out, right and wrong, birth and death, pleasure and pain, light and darkness, O boundless ocean of Grace and Light, Arunachala dancing the dance of stillness in the dancing Hall of the Heart.

- Bhagavan Ramana

Only the enlightened one is truly powerful. For he is abiding in the Self always. And the Self is the source of all power. It is the fullness of consciousness, the Centre from which the mind and the body derive their strength. Such a one is fearless. For he is ever fulfilled, neither seeking nor desiring. What can add to the overflowing cup of joy of such a person? All other sources of power like the power of an emperor, a billionaire, or an erudite scholar are brittle and pass away. There is no stamp of permanence to them. Hence there will always be a nagging fear of losing the thing possessed. To be dispossessed is on the cards and often round the corner.

Therefore the compassionate Ramana is placing before us in the verse quoted at the beginning a way to become Self-aware, and that too steadily. He has put in a nutshell the technique of self-enquiry. One has to dive into the source of one's mind, the Heart, by focusing one's attention on the mind's centre, the 'I'-thought. When thoughts are warded off by 'clinging' to the 'I' by paying exclusive attention to it, it automatically gets merged into its source. For it partakes the same nature, consciousness. When exposed to the fullness of consciousness, the Heart or the Self, the separate 'I' merges naturally into the whole, the true import of the 'I'. The analogy generally given is that of a salt doll which will evaporate if it goes near the sea.

*An excerpt from the Publication of RMCL of the title - 'The New Dawn'.

Then the dualistic mind, with all its judgements, fears and elations ends and is replaced by the pure mind which functions from the Heart centre.

The question naturally arises that if Self-knowledge and the totality of power which flows from it are so simple, why is it that only a handful of seekers are able to reach its portals and remain there? The first obvious reason seems to be that our minds refuse to believe the truth, about the certain accessibility of Self-knowledge here and now, through focused attention initially on the mind's centre, the 'I', and subsequently on the source of this 'I' centre. When the 'I' is denuded of all its add-ons, all its accretions based on 'mine', my name, my profession, my wife and so on, then its true nature as consciousness alone remains. Self-enquiry renders the 'I' naked as it were, because the existence of all objects are seen to be related to the perceiver, the seer, the 'I'. Consequently their power to distract one's attention away from oneself ceases. One remains as the essence. All other spiritual practices postpone the awareness of the ever present truth by assuming a reality for the object apart from the subject. Consequently one is unaware of the truth that all objects are included in the perceiver, who alone therefore matters. Ramana repeatedly points out that any method which clothes the ego with reality cannot take one far for it is a structure without any foundation.

The second stumbling block to pursuing the holistic Ramana path of self-enquiry is the failure to put total faith in the path. More often than not it is only attempted along with other paths to which one has been exposed before reaching the direct path. Practice is such a hotch-potch, such a mixture of dualism and unitary approach of Ramana, that one really gets nowhere. The problem is further compounded by a firm refusal of some to delve deep into the Ramana path with all revolutionary possibilities.

The need for dropping this baggage cannot therefore be overstated. In this context one may refer to the reminiscences of Swami Abhishiktananda, a Catholic monk attracted to Ramana and his path. The Swami came to Sri Ramanasramam with eager expectation, with the certain feeling that he would be able to appreciate the uniqueness of Ramana and his path. But when this did not happen he became puzzled and went to a long standing devotee of Ramana, Ethel Merston. She told him, 'You have come

here with far too much 'baggage'. You should make yourself empty, simply be receptive". When he did that the impact of Ramana was compelling. Dropping of the baggage is a must for one should not hang on to what happened in the course of his spiritual evolution. The purpose of those experiences has been served by turning one's attention to the direct path.

The third obstacle to the earnest and steadfast pursuit of search for the source of 'I' is the distractions caused by technological explosions. A young friend assured me that by the year 2005, the Indian T.V. viewers would have one thousand channels to choose from. One would have thought that the present fifty is enough of a distraction. Another young friend told me that on the latest model computer it is very easy to chat with anyone in the world as long as one wished. The attention shifts completely to entertainment, information, relationships, away from the one who wishes to be entertained, to be informed and so on. Nothing is or can be a distraction for one whose mind is merged in its source the Heart.

The spiritual practice on the Ramana path is essentially to get linked to one's true dimension from the very beginning. The mind, the 'I' along with its associated thoughts, is the past. The mind is Time. If one switches his attention to 'I' and then to its source one almost cuts clear of the past in the form of thoughts, and even of the single 'I'- thought which does not survive the attention paid to it. On exposure to its source it merges into it. As a result while correctly practising the Ramana way one must perforce experience natural happiness for such periods when the mind is merged in its source. When the 'I' emerges again as a separate 'I'-thought due to habit, it has to be merged back time and again into its source till it loses its tendency to look for happiness outside instead of experiencing and being that naturally.

Before closing one might refer to the fact that the words of Ramana's 'Eight Verses' on Arunachala, the opening quote, appeared before his mind's eye during one of his circuits around Arunachala in his Virupaksha days. The words literally compelled him to put them down. Perhaps that is why we find the quintessence of his teachings communicated directly and forcefully in these verses.

What more does an earnest seeker need? How can he fail if he makes these inspired words his own?

The 'Talks' as a Guidance to Self Enquiry

N.Nandakumar

Talk 42. (Excerpt). HOW TO SUSTAIN JNANA.

Mr. Duncan Greenlees, Madanapalli, wrote as follows: One has at times had vivid flashes of a consciousness whose centre is outside the normal self and which seems to be inclusive. Without concerning the mind with philosophical concepts, how would Bhagavan advise us to work towards getting, retaining and extending those flashes?

Does abhyasa in such experiences involve retirement?

Sri Bhagavan answered: 'Outside' - For whom is inside or outside? They can be only so long as there are the subject and object. For whom are these two again? They both will resolve into the subject only. See who is the subject. The investigation leads you to pure consciousness beyond the subject.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: The seeker who had a glimpse of Jnana or Surrender, eventually faces this ultimate challenge, "HOW DO I SUSTAIN THIS?" In fact, this becomes the ONLY doubt. The ego cannot sustain the limitless! It has to erase itself into the limitless. The devotee has to surrender the ego for the limitless Surrender to reveal itself. For whom is the "inside" and "outside"? Who am I?

Talk 42. (Excerpt). PURNAM ERASES/ ABSORBS ALL ACTIONS.

Mr. Duncan Greenlees, Madanapalli, wrote as follows: One has at times had vivid flashes of a consciousness whose centre is outside the normal self and which seems to be inclusive. Without concerning the mind with philosophical concepts, how would Bhagavan advise us to work towards getting, retaining and extending those flashes?

Does abhyasa in such experiences involve retirement?....(cont'd)

M.: Normal self is the mind. This mind is with limitations. But pure consciousness is beyond limitations and reached by investigation as above outlined.

Getting - Self is always there. One seeks to destroy the obstacles to the revelation of the Self.

Retaining - Having once gained the Self it will be understood to be Here and Now. It is never lost.

Extending - There is no extending the Self, for it is always without contraction or expansion.

Retirement - Abiding in the Self is solitude. Because there is nothing alien to the Self. Retirement must be from some one place to another. There is neither the one nor the other apart from the Self.

All being the Self, retirement is impossible and inconsistent.

Abhyasa is investigation into the Self.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: To the sadhaka, the Sadguru negates all other karma except Abhyasa - investigation into the Self.

Q: Why is it said that "jeeva bhava" is being a pauper and dropping it in the Self is realising one's Sovereign nature, here and now?

S: Jeeva identifies with the eye and begs to see better circumstances. Jeeva identifies with the breath and craves better health and action. Jeeva identifies with the mind and feels deprived of much knowledge. The Jeeva identifies with the intellect and craves for removal of doubt. The Jeeva holds on to its false separateness and craves for real bliss, swinging between waking and sleeping. When the Jeeva bhava is erased in the Self, all craving ends. Stop being a pauper and realise your Sovereign Self is the clarion call of the sages.

Talk 43. (Excerpt). ESCAPING MIND. RETRACING TO VICHARA.

Mr. S. Ranganathan, I.C.S., Collector of Vellore, Mr. S. V. Ramamurthi, I.C.S. and Mr. T. Raghaviah, late Diwan of Pudukottah State, visited the Asramam. Mr. Ranganathan asked, "Kindly instruct me as to how the mind may be controlled."

M.: There are two methods. The one is to see what the mind is; then it subsides. The second is to fix your attention on something; then the mind remains quiet.

The questioner repeated the question for further elucidation. The same answer was returned with a little more added. The questioner did not look satisfied.

Mr. Raghaviah: Men of the world that we are, we have some kind of grief or another and do not know how to get over it. We pray to God and still are not satisfied. What can we do?

M.: Trust God.

D.: We surrender; but still there is no help.

M.: Yes. If you have surrendered, you must be able to abide by the will of God and not make a grievance of what may not please you. Things may turn out differently from what they look apparently. Distress often leads men to faith in God.

D.: But we are worldly. There is the wife, there are the children, friends and relatives. We cannot ignore their existence and resign ourselves to Divine Will, without retaining some little of the personality in us.

M.: That means you have not surrendered as professed by you. You must only trust God.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED :The mind will tell, "I am not a vichari. I am only a simple devotee". Then the mind will say, "I have surrendered, but God is not helping me". It will start wallowing in its usual maze of thoughts. Bhagavan shows the path to climb back. Trust God. Hold on to that trust and surrender all worries. The mind is now clear - temporarily controlled - and ready for Self Enquiry. For whom is this thought that I have surrendered all worries?

Talk 43. (Excerpt). NOTHING DISTURBS THE SUPREME CONSCIOUSNESS.

Mr. Ramamurthi: Swamiji, I have read Brunton's book 'A Search in Secret India', and was much impressed by the last chapter, where he says that it is possible to be conscious without thinking. I know that one can think, remaining forgetful of the physical body. CAN ONE THINK WITHOUT THE MIND? Is it possible to gain that consciousness which is beyond thoughts?

M.: Yes. There is only one consciousness, which subsists in the waking, dream and sleep states. In sleep there is no 'I'. The 'I-thought' arises on waking and then the world appears. Where was this 'I' in sleep? Was it there or was it not? It must have been

there also, but not in the way that you feel now. The present is only the 'I-thought', whereas the sleeping 'I' is the real 'I'. It subsists all through. It is consciousness. If it is known you will see that it is beyond thoughts.

D.: CAN WE THINK WITHOUT THE MIND?

M.: Thoughts may be like any other activities, not disturbing to the Supreme consciousness.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: The enquiry "WHO AM I?", relentlessly pursued, reveals one's nature to be the "I" of deep-sleep which subsists through all the "present moments" of waking, dream and deep-sleep. It is consciousness beyond thoughts. When even the question "WHO AM I?" drops off and one is abiding as the Supreme Consciousness there is the understanding that this Self is undisturbed by any action including thought. They go on automatically in the Self, the Supreme Consciousness that IS, undisturbed.

Talk 43. (Excerpt) THE 'OTHER' IS ILLUSION.

D.: Can one read others' minds?

The Master as usual told him to find his Self before worrying about others.

"Where are others apart from one's own Self?" asked the Master.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: 'Parental raising has stunted me'. 'There is a Governmental conspiracy to influence our thinking'. 'Black magic has been cast over me'. 'Australian team is playing mind games'. 'I create subliminal advertisements to influence others'. 'I can influence him for good or worse'. 'Modern education can use psychological pressure rather than physical'. All these are examples of how the inner light can get apparently trapped in illusion. The Self alone IS. The 'other' is an illusion.

Q: If there is no "other" why do sages like Bhagavan leave a teaching?

S: Just as one uses Tamil in Tamil Nadu. The Guru is the Lion appearing in the dream of the elephant. The Lion is aware that it is a dream even in the dream.

Saddarshanam*Master Nome*

Q.: If, while doing one's daily tasks, one devoted this time to inquiry, well, even speaking of tasks is confusing.

N.: We need not limit inquiry to our tasks. If you are inwardly turned toward knowing yourself, the tasks and enjoyments, the activities necessary for every day, worldly life and the specifically spiritual activities are, without exception, infused with the same Light of Knowledge. The Light of Knowledge and the inquiry that brings it about can go on continuously. They are not task dependent. Inquiry does not depend upon your body moving, being still, moving quickly, or moving slowly.

Q.: It does not have to look spiritual.

N.: It does not have to look spiritual for somebody else. Spirituality is something that you carry within yourself. Even when you do something for which the intention is to look spiritual, it should look spiritual for you, and not be done to impress somebody else. If someone does something of a spiritual character or wears something that is of spiritual significance or symbolism, it should matter to her because it reminds her, or expresses to her, what she is finding within herself and reminds her of the Absolute. It should never be to impress other people.

Another Q.: "Becoming food," is indicative of surrender, but, really, it is surrender of nothing for everything.

N.: It is a good deal, is it not? (laughter) We have nothing and surrender our nothingness; in exchange, God gives everything. Who arranged for this trade? (laughter) We come up on the good side. (laughter)

Q.: Yes, by any definition, it is a good trade. It's a "no-brainer."

N.: It must be by divine arrangement. The surrender is not anything short of giving up your identity entirely.

Q.: Yes. My journey has been one of inquiry because that is more natural for me, but I see the convergence of surrendering of “me” and “mine” and inquiry into the “I” to discover its absence. Either way, one discovers the loss is of what never came to be in the first place.

N.: Either way, it is the giving up of that nonexistent ego notion. Whether we inquire and get to the root, or we give up all and become food for Him, there is absorption of identity. Surrender is not anything less than that, just as inquiry is not just an intellectual contemplation, but something much deeper.

Another Q.: I am thinking of becoming food for Him and absorption.

N.: God is hungry and is looking for tasteless morsels. (laughter)

Q.: I try to understand and, simultaneously, see my lack of understanding of the perfection of what you are saying and the perfection of how it is said. When I contemplate that, the only way to understand it is to become food for That. It is entirely beyond anything that I can do to understand, in a form that I can understand. There is nothing to say about it.

N.: When you approach in this way, do you lose track of your previously-conceived self?

Q.: I don't become food for the Supreme, because I keep trying to objectively understand. The more I understand, the less I know.

N.: So, the food tries to get away? Is that it? (laughter)? Is it moving over on the plate, (laughter) or is the leaf-plate getting up and walking out of the door? (laughter) The Maharshi's instructions clearly indicate that it is a matter of absorption of your sense of identity. It is a relinquishment of the individuality, because the individuality is false. When you relinquish it, you are not giving up something solid, and, hence, there is absorption and steady abidance. When you listen to the instruction and follow it, give yourself over to it and put it into practice. The instruction refers to the dissolution of the separate individuality which, alone, represents some kind of obstacle, bondage, ignorance, obstruction, etc. When you inquire with your best effort, this is also becoming food. It is not different.

Q.: It is the dissolution of the “understander.”

N.: Yes, the dissolution of the separate knower is the revelation of the real understanding. All of our efforts, therefore, are directed at dissolution of the false ego-individual, inclusive of whatever tendencies he seems to wrap himself in to give himself a semblance of being concrete.

Another Q.: We are having a very interesting meal today. (laughter)

N.: Stale egos are being served. (laughter)

Another Q.: Do you want that ego for here, or is it to go? (laughter)

Another Q.: When you say, “Make your vision non-objective,” does that also mean to make my identity nonobjective?

N.: Yes. If nothing objective is superimposed on your identity, what remains?

Q.: For sure, nothing objective remains. It is gone completely.

N.: Does nothing pertaining to the body, senses, or conceived in any form of the mind or intellect remain?

Q.: Yes.

N.: So, what remains?

Q.: Just the good stuff is all that is left. (laughter).

N.: Shivam. Siva means “the Good.”

Q.: Yes, Siva.

N.: “Good stuff,” could be an American translation, perhaps. (laughter). It is true that only that which is true Bliss remains. That is the truly Good.

Every suffering is due to misidentification, which is mistaking something objective to be one's Self, which is forever nonobjective. Such misidentification manifests as an attachment to some thought or thing, to some event or circumstance, person or place or time, etc. A state of being completely detached from such depends on non - identification with the not-Self. Then, you do not hide your own Bliss from yourself.

Another Q.: There are two things of which I have been trying to get to the bottom.

N.: "I" and "this"? (laughter) It could just be one thing, "I," and that takes care of everything , as the Maharshi points out.

Q.: The first idea is that the false belief in anything objective is identical to the false belief in perceptions of any kind. The second idea is that this is a sankalpa that needs to be given up and not held or made into another objective thing.

N.: Just be very sure about the nature of the perceiver, and the perceptions will take care of themselves. Just be very sure about the nature of the one who conceives of such sankalpas and vikalpas, and they will take care of themselves.

Another Q.: That is, perhaps, true, but hold on! (laughter)

N.: In the meantime, before you inquire, you have another question?

Q.: In the meantime?

N.: Yes, in the mean time. (laughter)

Q.: Looking into the nature of perception seems useful to me, because the more one looks into it, the less there is of it. It is totally imaginary and fictitious. It is without the slightest ground, yet, I tell myself, "If that is true, it should produce the result I think it should produce," which would be a complete disbelief in objectivity of any kind. It does not seem to do that, though, and that must be why Bhagavan discourages me about it.

N.: Well, if Bhagavan discourages you about it. . .

Q.: No. I am not going to be put off here. (laughter)

N.: If he has discouraged it, why should you go on with it? You can go on examining perception “to your heart's content.” If your heart does not find complete contentment, though, you will need to trace the perception to the perceiver, and know his nature. Whether you think perception occurs or you consider perception to be an illusion or you realize that there is no such thing as any kind of perception, you still must come around to the nature of the perceiver.

Q.: But one will not do that so long as he believes in something objective and as long as he continues with misidentification in the form of objectification.

N.: You have summed it up as misidentification in the form of objectification. So, the misidentifications ought to be dealt with.

Q.: And that is the perception.

N.: Whatever the perceiver's nature is, so appears the relation to the perceived object, which is the perceiving or perception. Whatever it is that appears as the perceiver appears as the perceiving and the perceived. If you can swallow the perceived in the perceiving, so that you know that there is nothing perceived, do the same thing by swallowing the perceiving in the perceiver, for there cannot be a relation between a nonexistent object and a supposed subject. Having swallowed perception and the perceived object in the perceiver, focus on and inquire into the nature of the perceiver. Knowing that, everything is complete. Then, what you have been seeking, you find already eternally present, in perfection.

Q.: It seems that any kind of perception is a sankalpa that needs to be destroyed, and how am I to do that except by seeing that there is no such thing?

N.: Trace your own nature by experiential inquiry. Gain Knowledge of who you are. You cannot be a sankalpa, a perception, or

anything else. First and foremost, know your own nature. Then, we will see if you are one to which sankalpas attach themselves or if you are one that generates such things.

Q.: All of that is imagined, from top to bottom, is it not?

N.: Seek the one who imagines. That is the sure way of being done with imagination.

Another Q.: The verse states that one has a doubt and thinks that it is difficult. I am trying to confirm in my own experience what is said here.

N.: Yes. It seems as if difficult, if, being told, “See the Self, see the Lord,” you attempt to do so in an objective fashion. If you, the seer, or the seeker, become food for Him and are consumed, it is not difficult at all. We could even say, “Not difficult, not difficult, it is the easiest thing there is.” [ed.: this refers to the opening line of the Maharshi's “Atma Vidya”]

Q.: What is “being food”?

N.: Destruction of the individuality is “becoming food,” whether that is accomplished by an inquiry that reveals its nonexistence or that is accomplished through complete surrender, in which no scope is given for that morsel, and God, alone, is acknowledged, always and at all times, as the only reality. Either way, the ego is destroyed. The “becoming food for Him” is utter absorption, so that no trace of anything that can be called “me” remains.

Q.: The same absorption will be the end result whether one inquires or surrenders.

N.: It is the same absorption, and, though God, or the Self, is not hungry at all, still He graciously swallows whatever is offered; but you must offer.

Shri Arunachala Padikam

G Kameshwar

Eleven Verses on Arunachala Of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

Verse-8

*vaittanai vALA vaiyakat tuyyum
vaziyaRi matiyazhit tiggan¹
vaittiTi lArkku minpilai tunpE
vAzvitiR cAvatE mANpAm
paittiyam paRRip payanaRu menakkun
patamuRu marumarun taruLvAy
paittiya maruntAp pAroLi raruNa
paruppata vuruppeRu paranE.*

Word split, and meaning:

vaittanai vALA: You kept me a wastrel

vaiyakattu: in this world

uyyum: to make a living

vazhi aRi: to know the way

mati azittu: having destroyed the intelligence

iggaN: in this manner

vaittiTil: having kept

ARkkum: To no one

inpu ilai: no happiness

tunpE: only sorrow

vAzvu itil: In such a life as this

¹ The transliteration scheme followed is largely according to Tamil Lexicon, Madras 1924-39:

Vowels: a A i I u U e E ai o O au

Consonants: H k g c n[^]/jn T N t n p m y r l v z L R n_/n2

Grantha: j [C (SRI)] S s h kS

cAvatE mAnpAm: To die is great, for sure

paittiyam paRRi: Having been seized by insanity

payan aRum enakku: To me, who have been cut off from the fruit

un patam uRum: To unite with your feet

arumaruntu: precious medicine

aruLvAy: Please grace me with

paittiya marunTAp pAr oLir: Resplendent in this world, as the
medicine for madness

aruNa paruppata uruppeRu paranE: O the Supreme, who got the
form of Aruna mountain

Verse rendering:

You kept me a wastrel
Having destroyed in me
The intelligence
Of getting ahead in this world;

Keeping me like this,
For none is there any happiness;
Rather, it is but sorrow.

Rather than such a life
To die is great, for sure.

To me
Who am seized by madness (for you)
And am (yet) cut off
From the fruits thereof;

Please Grace me
With the precious medicine
Of union with your feet/state!

(O Lord)
Shining in this world
As the medicine for madness

O Supreme
Who has got
The form of Aruna mountain!

Prose rendering:

Having destroyed in me, the intelligence as to how to get ahead in this world, you have made into a good-for-nothing, worthless, wastrel. If you keep me in this state, does it give any happiness to anyone? No. Not to me, nor to you, nor anyone else. Rather, it is but a painful state.

Here I am, seized by this madness (of love for you), and yet deprived of the fruits of that madness (the abidance as the Non-dual Self)! Lord, do give me the cure for this madness, by gracing me with union with your feet, your state, O Lord Supreme, who has got the form of Aruna Hill, who shine in this world, as the medicine for madness (worldly and divine)!

Notes:

This verse of *Padikam*, brings to mind some verses of Aksharamanamalai.

yavanen vAyil maNNinai yatti
Yenpizaip pozitta taruNAcala !

Ruining my livelihood, with mud in place of food,
Who was it who stuffed my mouth, Arunachala!²

(Aksharamanamalai, verse 88)

enaiyazit tippO tenaikkala vAviT
lituVO vANmai yaruNAcala!

Having crushed me outright, if you do not now unite,
Would it be manliness, Arunachala!

(Aksharamanamalai, verse 9)

cErA yeninmey neerA yurukikkaN
NeerAR RazivE naruNAcala!

² The English translations of the Aksharamanamalai verses are by the author, taken from the book 'Ramana Darshana Trayee', published by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bengaluru, 2016 CE

*Unless you unite with me, my body will melt totally,
In a flood of tears, I will die, Arunachala!*

(Aksharamanamalai, verse 34)

*pittuvit tunainEr pittanAk kinaiyaruL
pittan teLimarun taruNAcala!*

*From madness for this sensual world, to madness for
you, me you hurled,*

Cure this craze, by your grace, Arunachala!

(Aksharamanamalai, verse 66)

*mokan tavirttun mOkamA vaittumen
mOkantee rAyen naruNAcala!*

*Curing me of sense-craze, you kept me in your love-
daze,*

Now rid me of this madness too, Arunachala!

(Aksharamanamalai, verse 86)

And finally, a line from another verse

malaimarun tAyoLi raruNAcala!

Shine as the medicine mountain Arunachala!

(Aksharamanamalai, verse 76)

Upadeshasaram*Ujwal Jagadeesh****veshahAnatah svAtmadarshanam*****When perception of name and form ceases, there is the vision of the Self**

In a Self-Enquiry Workshop conducted by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning the participants were made to participate in an activity. Each participant was given a picture to mask their face and enact an action or a dialogue appropriate to the expression in the mask. A special instruction was given to each participant to become the role one is playing.

A mixed group of enthusiastic and shy participants started their enactment one after the other. A participant held a mask of a boy walking towards the school and started marching in their own place. The audience clapped in glee. The next participant had a picture with a lady in wonderment. The participants cried “O! I am amazed to be here with all of you today.” Next gentlemen had got a picture of a girl skipping. He started skipping and dancing in joy. The activity continued in this way with pictures of various emotion viz. joy, wonderment, sorrow, anger and so on. One of the participants had got a picture of a boy eating a sandwich. The participant held the picture in front of her face and said “Lovely breakfast” and made a happy munching sound. Later another participant too had got the same picture. But she completely differed in her feelings and said “Oh! Bread? What a boring breakfast, as if I am unwell”.

Once all the participants had finished their turn, the facilitator congratulated everyone for their performance. She asked “While you were holding the mask and enacting the actions, did you become the character?” Some said “Yes, we felt happy dancing like a girl or running and playing like a child” some others said “We were aware that this was only an activity and were inhibited to become the character”.

The facilitator explained the next part of the activity. The participants were now told to close their eyes and imagine a situation which made them afraid. The special instruction for this activity was to only “imagine” the situation and the emotion related to it. All participants started imagining the situation in their life which had made them fearful. After sometime they were told to imagine a situation which made them angry. Later each participant was asked about their experience during this activity. One of the participants described a situation which happened recently and how it had made him very furious.

The facilitator asked “Between the two activities, one where you were supposed to hold the mask of the emotions and the later one where you had to imagine a personal life situation, in which activity was the emotions strong?” All agreed that they were more emotional in second activity where they imagined the emotions. The facilitator reminded them about the special instructions which said one had to become the character while holding the mask but only imagine the emotions. But the imagination of the mind seems stronger than the gross masks. We tend to actually become our anger or fear or sorrow when undesirable events happen or even if we think of them.

The facilitator now came to the point of the purpose of this activity. Ramana says both the physical identities and also the mental identities we assume ourselves to be are only masks that we are holding on to. Physically we are playing many roles of being a mother or a father, a brother or sister, a friend or a foe, a teacher or a student and many others. Each moment we assume a role and in the next we throw it away. Every role comes to us and goes away. Who are we if we are none of these roles? These are gross masks that we are holding just like the picture held by the participants. But the mental masks are subtler and innumerable in nature. Every emotion, every thought and every idea is a mask we are holding on to. We do not realize that each thought is just a mask because we are clouded with a stream of thoughts without a gap. Not realizing them to be masks we have been habituated to identify ourselves with each thought.

Ramana says we should be good actors. An actor plays a role of a king in one scene and in the other he is a valet. He plays both roles fittingly. He never feels sad that he was a king in the last scene and in this one he is a servant. All roles are equal to a good actor. Whichever role he plays he is always aware that he is an actor.

Ramana asks us to enquire whether I am not playing any role, 'Who am I?' If all my masks are dropped, who am I? If all my attributes, my sense perceptions, all my knowledge and my ignorance are taken away from me, who am I?

He says in reality we are Sat Swarupa which is pure silent consciousness which manifests in whichever form we meditate on it.

Vigraha (Body), Indriya (perceptions through the senses), Prana (life), dhi (Intellect) and tama(sleep) are all vesha (masks/disguise). They are not the "Sat", our true nature. In reality our essence is divine. When we see ourselves free of all attributes we see the Lord, for He shines ever as the pure Self.

*veshahAnatah svAtmadarshanam |
Ishadarshanam svAtmarUpatah ||*

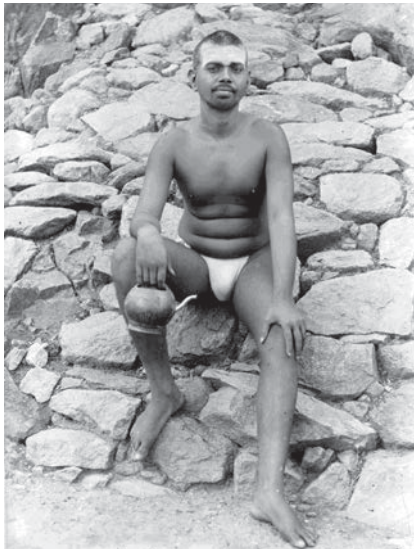
When perception of name and form ceases, there is the vision of the Self. This is also the vision of God, for, God and the Self are the same.

Power of the Word

Sanjay Lohia

Surrender

- There is no other way
- There is no other way to succeed than to draw the mind back every time it turns outwards and fix it in the Self.
- The mind, having been so long a cow accustomed to grazing stealthily on others' estates, is not easily confined to her stall.
- The more you get fixed in the Self the more the other thoughts will drop off of themselves.



Aksharamanamalai

Dr.Sarada

Bhagavan begins this set of verses with *tattuvam teriyAdu attanai uTRAI tattuvam iduven Arunachala*. Having talked about the *tattuvam*, having talked to us about the truth, the essence of the truth, next Bhagavan is bringing us to us his direct teachings in these verses. First he says *tattuvam teriyAdu attanai uTRAI....*this truth is not something that is to be known. There is no duality in the truth. Without any knower being there, without knowing anything you are that fullness, *tattuvam idu*.

So he points out the non-dual truth and then he reiterates *tAnE tAnE tattuvam*. It is non-dual, it need not be known, because it is itself the truth, *tAnE tattuvam*.

The Self is the truth, there is nothing apart from it to be known, since there is no object, since there is no division, it cannot be known. And this is revealed by itself says Bhagavan. In 'Upadesa Saram', he tells there is no separate consciousness apart from the existence, the Self itself is the consciousness just as the sun is itself light. The compassion of the Supreme is such that even in our relative existence, we are given examples which can point to the truth. Although these examples can never be the entirety of the truth there are a number of examples in our daily life which serve as pointers to the truth. In fact every moment of our life is graced by the Supreme to point to the truth. If only we would take the clue, the clues are in plenty, in all the manifestations in our daily life, in our daily experiences of waking, sleep there are a number of pointers to the truth. So Bhagavan says *tAnE tAnE tattuvam*. The Self is as it is.

In 'uLLadu nArpadu' he asks, 'Is there anything else apart from it to know it? How is one to know it?' *uLLapaDi uLLattE uLLadAI uLLal evan?* Because it remains without any movement, how to know it? It remains without any other. For us to know something with the mind it has to be apart from us. For us to know with the mind, everything that we take to be knowledge, everything that we are assuming to be truth is outside of us. We have divided the truth

to be inside and outside. This is how we perceive the world. We take the inside also to be true, we take the outside also to be true, we have this division. But Bhagavan says there is no such division.

tAnE tAnE tattuvam. The Self alone is the truth. And it does not require any external agency to reveal the truth. *idinai tAnE kATTuvAi*, it is self revealed. We ask Bhagavan, 'You say it is self revealed. But I am not experiencing it. To me this relative world seems to be real. You are saying that even without any knowledge of it, the entire knowledge stands revealed. But I am not able to comprehend this.' Then in compassion Bhagavan says 'O! Is it so? This is because you have made a division of Self and other than Self. The Self is complete. It is not divided. But what have you done? You say that the self is somewhere, and everything 'eslse' is somewhere else. Where do you experience the Self? Since the Self is truth, about that there is no doubt, no second question, so let us come to your experience of the Self. Tell me how do you and where do you experience the Self?'

"Inside", we say. We believe there is an inside and outside and the self is experienced inside the body. In 'Ekantha Panchakam' Bhagavan says that everything is inside the Self, but we say that the Self is inside the body. Though the body is within the Self, we say that the Self is within the body. Bhagavan is compassionate and says "Alright you say that the Self is within the body. All you need to do is to be in tune with the Self. You need to be in harmony with your own nature. So *tirumbu*, turn. You need to know the Self, pay attention to it.'

"Then what should I do Bhagavan?" 'Turn within. Obviously you are not conscious of the Self, you are not paying attention to the Self which is revealing itself. You are not aware because your attention is not on it. Where is your attention? It is on something which is outside, something which you do not consider to be the Self. It is on objects, not on the subject' he tells us.

So Bhagavan says *tirumbu*.... Turn and see the Self. Always practise this. Always means how long? When we hear the word 'always' we immediately feel tired. I do not want to do this. The mind is constantly seeking change. Why? Because it is its nature. Mind itself is of the nature of change. It will not remain still, it will

not remain with a single thought or focus. If it remains thus it will disappear. In 'Upadesa Saram' Bhagavan says that if we focus on a single thought the mind gets destroyed. So Bhagavan says keep that single thought, hold on to the single thought. Bhagavan has laid great emphasis on this continuous practise. He says *saraLa Cintana viraLa tahparam*. It is good remember whenever you can, but it is better to remember continuously. And in 'Appalam Song' he says it should not be with any sense of burden. Don't feel tired by it. When will you not feel tired by it, when you are enjoying the journey, enjoying the practice, *santOshamAhavE...*

Turn back, try to see the Self. Because it is the truth, it alone is the truth. There is no truth apart from it. Turn to it constantly. And try to see it. How will I see it? By the power of the same Self. By the mind, see the mind.

Now Bhagavan has already told us the Self cannot be seen or known. Because there is nothing apart from it, to see it or know it. It is by itself. If you call it the Supreme, Bhagavan says to become food to it is the only way to see it. If you call it Self, be the Self. But here Bhagavan is telling us 'see the self, with the self'. See the mind, with the mind. Here the term 'self' or 'aham' means mind and not the Self, because the Self cannot be seen. We cannot pay attention to the Self because there is none apart from It to pay attention to It. But when we pay attention to what we assume to be the self, then automatically the truth is revealed. So in self enquiry when we are introspecting, about what we have assumed to be I, by what is that being seen? By the mind. Because the mind by nature is divided. It is itself the subject, it is itself the object. There is no other subject, no object in the mind.

Suppose we are having an experience of tastiness, the experience of that tastiness is in the mind. So in that mind there is an experience of tastiness, there is also an experience of the fact that I am having this experience. Both are in the same mind - the subject that is enjoying and the object that is being enjoyed. The same mind is actually divided into subject and object. Our attention is normally on the object even in this division because of thinking that objects are the constant source of happiness. So in every experience there is subject and object. I am happy...sad....

There is subject and object. We think that through the objective experience we are going to be happy. We believe that one after the other I am is getting linked to objects.

What Bhagavan is saying is that if the I is capable of getting associated with objects this means it is primarily aware of itself. So turn its attention back to itself, instead of on the objects. Turn back to the I am in every thought, in every experience. In every experience, the sense of I is there, but we do not pay attention to it, we do not wish to seek it, we do not wish to know what its nature is. We are not interested in it at all, we are interested only in the objects. Although both are in the same mind, both are of the same nature, but we think that the object part is very significant and the subject part is meaningless to us.

So when we turn the attention back to the subject part of every experience which is in the form of thought, then it will be revealed, this is what Bhagavan says.

He is giving us the same assurance that his Father, Arunachala, has given him. When Bhagavan had become established in the Self at the age of 16, why keep the body? Because he had to complete his Father's job. 'If I turn within will I be able to see the Self?' we ask. 'Yes', says Bhagavan, 'there is no doubt'. But we should do this turning inward through self-enquiry daily, always, untiringly. When we practise it everyday, continuously, naturally and spontaneously the Self will be revealed. This is the assurance given.

'But', says Bhagavan speaking for us as it were, 'I do not have the courage to pay such attention, so give me your grace O Arunachala'. Huge courage is required to understand that all objects are meaningless. What we are doing is living in the mental experience of the object. We are not enjoying the natural bliss of the Self. We are caught up in the whirl of thoughts. If we even ask ourselves 'For what purpose am I continuously engaged in this thinking, what am I attaining by this continuous stream of thoughts?' the answer will be, 'Nothing at all.'

In the physical realm, in the world 'outside' things happen of their own accord. What are we capable of? Can we create even

a particle of dust or sustain it or destroy it. By our thoughts we could have destroyed the world itself. Fortunately, Bhagavan has protected the world by not giving us the direct power to 'realize' our thoughts. Of course thought has power, but what have we achieved by our thoughts? In fact even when we start thinking of one thing we are already thinking of something else. For what purpose then are we thinking of anything? It puts us in such confusion. Actually Bhagavan says it takes us away from our natural bliss. Why should we be caught up in this?

Even when we recognise this we are powerless to drop all thoughts because of the force of habit. *deeramil ahattil tEDi unadanai yAn tirumba uTREN aruL aruNAcala*. Then we feel desperate. Of what use is this life without the power to do self-enquiry, we cry. *tupparivilla ippirappen payan?* We must only turn to His Grace for succor, *oppiDa vAyEn aruNAcala*. Muruganar Swami says, 'I am holding onto your feet, I am helpless, I am caught up in this objective realm. At the same time I am unable to escape, so I have held on to your feet.'

O Arunachala may your grace absorb me in your true Self in which the pure of mind and speech are ever absorbed, we pray, *tUymana mozhiyar tOyumun mei aham tOyavE aruLen aruNAcala*. When we thus hold onto Him in utter helplessness, He takes care, He destroys all sense of duality and shines forth as the Self, *deivamenRunnai sAravE ennai sEra ozhittAi aruNAcala*.

It is not our search that has led us to it, it is always there, revealed by its own grace. Having talked about the search, about the importance of the search, having talked about its importance, having talked about the need to have continuous search, Bhagavan says Arunachal you are that great treasure of grace which has come to me without searching because once it is attained, at that time the one who searched for it has disappeared. Hence the searching had nothing to do with its attainment, yet I had to search in order to know this truth, *tEDADuTRa nartiruvuL nidi*.

Bhagavan has thus given us the beautiful crux of self-enquiry. This is the greatest devotion and devotion to Bhagavan automatically manifests as steadfastness in self enquiry.

Sri Ramana Ashtottara Shatanamavali

Sri Viswanatha Swami

We bring to you the meaning and commentary for the litany of 108 names on Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. These are translated into English by Sri A.R.Natarajan from the original by Sri Viswanatha Swami. He has also given an introduction to the work. In addition a few meditations are added.

- Editor

This prayer to Lord Ganesa was explained by Ganapati Muni as being applicable to all Gods and to Bhagavan Ramana as well.

*SuklAmbaradharam viSNum SaSivarNam Caturbhujam
Prasanna vadanam dhyAyet sarva vighnOpa SANTayE*

One who is adorned by white garments,
One who is all pervading,
One who in complexion is like the cool moon,
Who has four arms/ Who has conquered the four
aspects of the Ego,
Who has a beautiful smile on his face,
We meditate on him to remove all obstacles.

Introduction

The grace of the Sadguru is essential for the success of Spiritual effort. The Sadguru who is a Jnani, a person of steady wisdom is not different from God or the Self. In Ramana, we find all the hallmarks of a Sadguru, constant revelling in the Self and equal treatment, samabhava towards all life. If we are to be aware of his guidance on the path, we should learn to keep his company. It is the best Satsang, Association with Truth. This has to be done by invoking his presence in every way that we can. The important thing is to re-establish the link, to learn to hold on to him in every way. For this prime significance is to be given to the name. It is said that the name permeates the entire universe densely. Repetition of Ramana's name and the remembrance of what it signifies has

untold merit. What great thanks we owe to Ganapati Muni, that the World and we know the Maharshi as Ramana, the sweet one, and as Bhagavan, the worshipful one.

Now daily worship is done to Ramaneswara Mahalinga at Ramana's Shrine at Sri Ramanasramam through the 108 names or attributes known as Ramana Ashtottara SatanAmAvali. This nAmAvaLi or garland of nAmAs along with the RamaNa aSTottara SatanAma stOtra has been composed by Sri Viswanatha Swami who had been with Ramana for nearly 30 years. This was composed many years before Bhagavan Ramana's Mahasamadhi and Ganapati Muni has appreciated the composition. The words of this aSTottaram refer to Bhagavan's auspicious attributes or his bewitching form or to some biographical details.

Once a devotee requested Ramana to recommend some verses for his daily parayana, he selected this aSTottaram. When a Telugu devotee consulted Ramana about a biography which he was writing, he told the Author, if you expand the biographical particulars in this aSTottaram, it would provide the needed matter. Ramana envelops the Universe. So these sacred words are helpful to everyone who wishes to worship, wishes to feel his presence. As one reads this aSTottara, and uses it for daily or congregational worship, Bhagavan's grace is deeply felt.

This praise is in Sanskrit. Its author, Sri Viswanatha Swami, has written a commentary on it in Tamil. Sri A.R.Natarajan has translated this to English to open up this treasure to the Ramana devotees world over. The aSTottara SatanAmAvaLi has been chanted by Ramananjali led by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan.

In this work of the ramaNa aSTottara, there are two verses for invoking Ramana's presence. One invocatory verse is recited in the beginning

*apArasatchit suKavArirAShEr yasyOrmi mAtram bhuvanam samastam
guhAhitam tam ramaNam gabhIram cintAvihInam hrudi cintayAmi*

The whole Universe is but a tiny ripple on the infinite Ocean of Satchidananda, Ramana. I meditate on him, the sublime in-dweller of the heart cavity, transcending all thought.

As we lovingly meditate on Ramana, remembering and chanting his glorious attributes, we worship him with flowers of devotion.

1. Om mahAsEna mahOmSena jAtAya namaha

To Ramana, born of the effulgence of mahAsEna, we offer the first flower. To Ramana, born of the effulgence of mahasena, Lord Subramanya, the victorious commander in chief of the celestial army.

Ramana is worshipped as Subrahmanya, the foremost among the knowers of Brahman. Ganapathi Muni had a number of visions in which he repeatedly saw Ramana as such. Many others have shared his vision.

When someone in Ramana's hall wept for the vision of Subrahmanya, Muruganar asked him, 'Why do you weep? See, who is seated in front of you.' And lo! The devotee had a vision of Ramana as Muruga. But when another devotee insisted that Ramana is the very image of Subrahmanya, Muruganar asked, "How do you say so? Have you seen Subrahmanya?" The devotee replied, "No, but I believe it is so." Muruganar said, "It is not good poetics to compare what you see with what you have not seen. You see Ramana, do you not? When someone asks you, 'How does Subrahmanya look?' Then show Ramana and say, this is how he looks."

2. Om Sri ramaNaya namaha

To Ramana, known by the sweet name of Sri Ramana, we offer the second flower.

Sri Ramana is the name given to him by Ganapathi Muni. He is known throughout the world by this name which is the heart's delight of devotees. The power of the name of Ramana for pulling one within the heart cannot be described.

How Bhagavan Captured Us

By Smt. Sulochana Natarajan

Smt.Sulochana Natarajan had written a series of articles in this journal in an autobiographical manner also covering the biography of her husband, A.R.Natarajan, the Founder President of RMCL. We are continuing these after a recap. Here she shares with us how Bhagavan laid the foundation in Karnatik Music to prepare her for her life's work in Ramana Music.

Love for Karnatik Music was probably fed to me along with mother's milk as the saying goes in Tamil. And more to say, I was seated on my grandmother's loving lap while continuing to drink the elixir. Being in the Indian Civil Service, my father, Justice K.S.Venkataraman, was in a transferable job and moved to different remote towns in the then combined state of Madras Presidency, hence I spent three years of my early life with my maternal uncles, with whom my grandmother was then staying. Even earlier to that holiday time would always be with my maternal grandparents (as my father had lost both his parents early in life and had no siblings either). Thus my grandmother was my first music teacher.

My ammamma (maternal grandmother), Smt.Valambal, was my heroine and love all rolled into one. Herself a child prodigy in Karnatik Music, she nurtured my joy in music even in the early years of my infancy. My grandfather encouraged my grandmother to hold concerts by senior musicians of those days in their home and to accompany them both on the vocal and the violin. Many erudite discussions on music were also held.

My grandmother reigned as a veritable queen over her husband's gigantic estate that covered many villages and managed the entire properties with perfect poise, until fate tore it away from the family. She then continued to live with the same dignity in her new home. She bore severe physical sufferings from diabetes and later cancer with the fortitude of a seasoned soldier. She passed away in a spiritually dramatic manner when I was around eleven years of age.

She knew the exact hour of her death and asked my mother to send telegrams to my uncles to reach before nightfall. When half an hour passed after the sound of the last train into town, she sighed and declared that she would not see her two younger sons before her last breath (her eldest son was then living with her). However, they arrived soon after by taxi, having missed the last train. She had even made meticulous plans for her own obsequies and left behind in a special cupboard all the materials needed for it, down to the last detail. She called her husband to her bedside and took leave of him formally, leaving him wondering where she was planning to travel to in her then condition. It was my mother who explained to him that her mother was taking permission to travel into the land of the God of Death. At the appointed hour, she tranquilly breathed her last.

I stayed with my grandparents at Tanjavur in my 8th year. Although my father had left me there so that my academic pursuit would go on unhampered, my life took an unexpected turn. Because the principal caned me one day for being late to school, my grandfather refused to send me to such a 'barbarian' place. Neither did he take my father's counsel regarding this decision, nor did he choose to even inform him about it. As far as I was concerned, it was one year of only music and fun.

My maternal uncles, with whom I lived for two years thereafter in Madurai, were also great lovers of Karnatik Music. Musicians would constantly visit them and very often reside in their home and the thought of classical music was the mainstay at all times. Much to my great joy, my grandmother, who had shifted in with my uncles at that time, continued to be my chief tutor in music.

In my 13th year, when my father got posted to Coimbatore, I went back to stay with my parents. Soon thereafter, my father shifted to Tirunelveli, an important cultural centre of Tamilnadu. My father engaged the services of the best of teachers under whose dedicated tutelage my natural flair for Karnatik Music began to blossom. My father had in fact arranged for a senior music teacher to stay in our own house and conduct music classes for me

morning and evening. Karnatik musicians performing anywhere in the vicinity of our town would invariably be our guests and all of us would travel together to the venue of the concert, sometimes even a hundred miles away! They would also never fail to set aside an evening in their tour program to give a chamber music concert in our home as well. As my father resided in the then 'Judge's Bungalow' our living room was as large as a mini convention centre and the concerts were hugely attended and always a rare treat.

I was only an average student when it came to my studies, although my principal once told my father not to worry about my scores as I was a 'girl with brains'. (For many years I would be affectionately teased in the family with the title 'GWB', especially by my father and later by my husband). However, whenever it came to a one on one training in any subject, my teachers always found me to be their best student. I was sincere to the core and very systematic and thorough in anything that I took up. I would not stop practising until I had learnt a piece of music to my satisfaction and the teacher's (oftentimes the former would take longer than the latter) and that too was always within a couple of hours at the most.

I always followed up every lesson with perfect documentation as well. I did not know then why I had been blessed with these innate qualities but now it is clear that the blessing has been in order to empower me to document the entire body of Ramana Music, the Ramana Sangeetham repertoire of more than 1500 songs with precision combined with great joy and enthusiasm. Thus Bhagavan gave me an intensive and extensive training in the best of Karnatik music.

*** To be continued ***

News & Events

Revathi Sankar

Ramana Bala Kaandam in Kannada played at the National Seminar and Cultural Festival









RAISE presentation by Manjunatha School

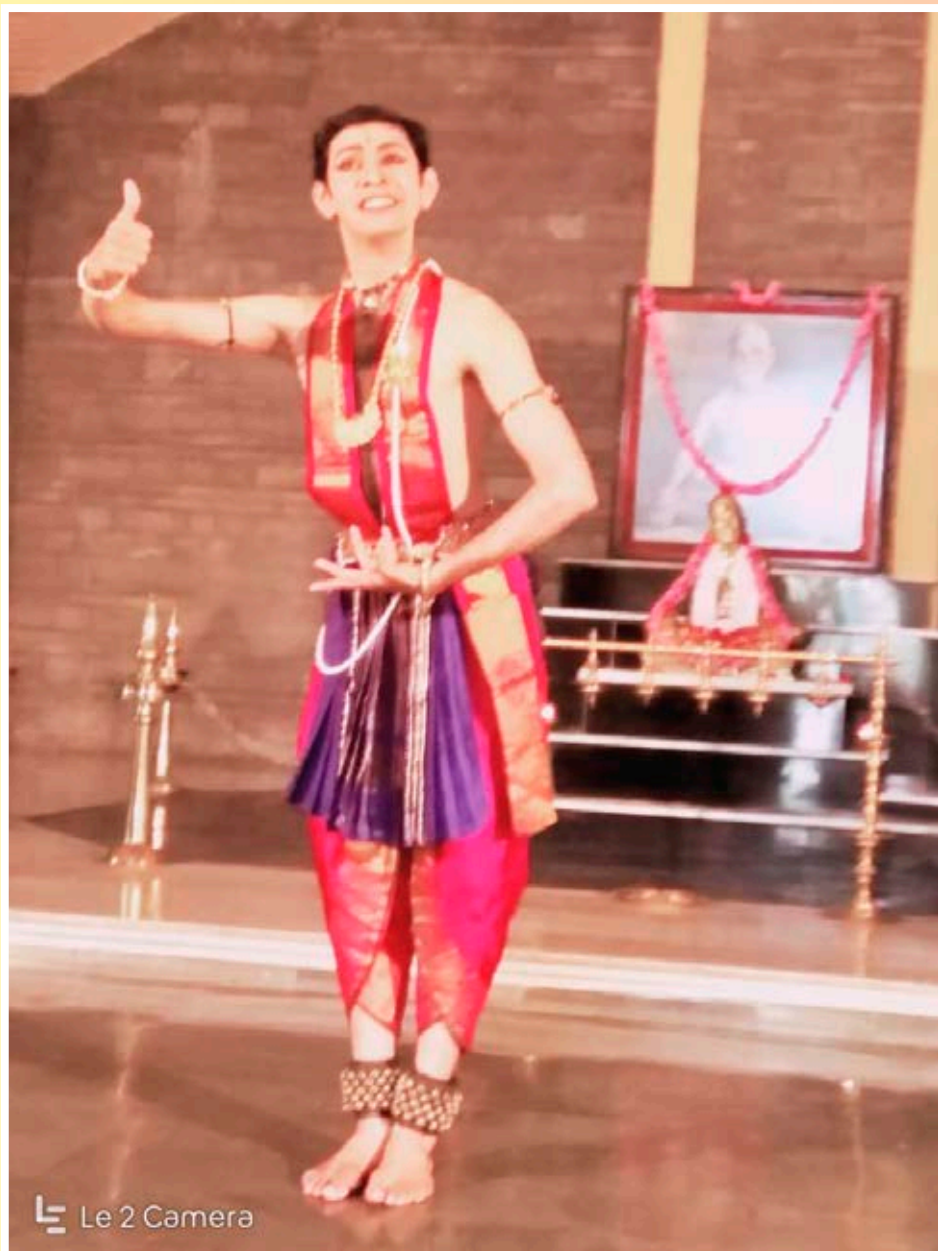








Father's Day Bharatanatyam Feature by Ujwal Jagadeesh





Natyopasana 2019 – Celebrating Spring and Summer by students of RMCL













Pournami Celebrations 'Ramana Kathamrutha' by Vincent Poul, Anjali Desai and Samhitha Raj. Compering by Krishna





Presentation by RMCL artistes at Institution of Engineers



Special Programs in March

At Ramana Shrine, Mekhri Circle, Bengaluru

4th, Monday

7.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m. Mahasivaratri Festival

Four kaala pujas with Veda parayana

Sangeetha and Nrithya Seva

10th, Sunday

10.45 a.m. Sthapana Divasa – Ramana Sahasranama Homa

Commencement of Laksharchana

06.00 p.m. Laksharchana

11th and 12th, Monday and Tuesday

11.00 a.m. and 06.00 p.m. Laksharchana

(Concluding on Tuesday, 12th at 06.45 p.m.)

17th, Sunday and 18th, Monday

Mani Shadakshari Memorial Seminar and Cultural Programs

(Program overleaf)

20th, Wednesday

06.45 p.m. Pournami Celebrations – Samskrithi Seva

Ashtottara Puja, Aksharamanamalai and Valam

At Ramanalayam, Chromepet, Chennai

16th, Saturday - Ramananjali Devotional Music for Punarvasu Celebrations

At Yoga Nikaya, Thally (Near Hosur)

23rd, Saturday

04.00 p.m. to 08.00 p.m. Satsang with Sri Nochur Venkataraman

04.00 p.m. Sri Ramana Leela and Paripoorna Ramana

Dance dramas on the life and teachings of Sri Ramana

By artistes of RMCL led by Dr.Ambika Kameshwar and Dr.Sarada

06.15 p.m. Puja

07.00 p.m. Pravachana by Sri Nochur Venkataraman

08.00 p.m. Maha Prasadam

Email: contact@voiceofrishis.org Phone: Smt. Usha +91 96632 84111

Location: 47 KMs From Silk Board, turn right after Electronic City for Thally. About 1hr :30 min by car from Bangalore city. Search for Yoga Nikaya in Google Map. Take right at Attibele towards TVS factory and then on to Hosur-Thally Road towards Thally

Special Programs in April

At Ramana Shrine, Mekhri Circle, Bengaluru

13th, Saturday

06.45 p.m. Aradhana Cultural Festival
Devotional Music by Smt. Poorna Sooraj

14th, Sunday

11.00 a.m. Sahasranama Puja
07.00 p.m. Ramana Pada Pancharatnam, Aksharamanamalai

19th, Friday

06.45 p.m. Pournami Celebrations – Samskrithi Seva
Ashtottara Puja, Aksharamanamalai and Valam

At Ramana Maharshi Heritage Auditorium, Sanjaynagar

25th, Thursday

06.45 p.m. Summer Camp 1, Valedictory

At Ram Mandir, Rajajinagar

21st, Sunday

06.30 p.m. 'Ramana Lahari' – A dance drama
By Artistes of BSRMRC and RMCL
Led by Smt.Rupa Hemanth

At the Ramana Kendra, Chennai

14th, Sunday

06.45 p.m. Aradhana Cultural Festival – Ramana Pada
Pancharatnam

At Narada Gana Sabha, Chennai

15th, Monday

06.45 p.m. Arunachala Ramana - Gnana Leelai Kaandam
The second of the seven part series on Ramana's life
By artistes of RMCL
Led by Dr.Ambika Kameshwar and Dr.Sarada

**SRI RAMANA MAHARSHIGALA "UPADESHA SAARA"
SMT. MANI SHADAKSHARI MEMORIAL
SEMINAR & CULTURAL FESTIVAL IN KANNADA**

On Sunday, 17th & Monday, 18th March 2019

Venue: Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Shrine & Meditation Hall, Mekri Circle

Sunday, 17th March:

9.30 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.: Inauguration & Talk

by Parama Poojya Swami Japananda ji Maharaj,
President, Sri Ramakrishna Sevasrama, Pavagada

10.30 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.: Tea Break

11.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.: Musical Discourse

by Dr. Vidhyabhushana

12.30 p.m. – 1.30 p.m.: Talk

by Parama Poojya Swami Madhusudhanananda ji,
Omkar Ashrama, Bengaluru

1.30 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.: Lunch break

2.30 p.m. – 3.15 p.m.: Talk

by Parama Poojya Swami Chandreshananda ji,
President, Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda
Sadhana Kendra, Krishnarajapuram, Bengaluru

3.15 p.m. – 3.30 p.m.: Ramana Music

by students of Udaya Ramanashree School

3.30 p.m. – 4.15 p.m.: Talk

by Dr. Veena Bannanje

4.15 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.: A short skit

by students of Udaya Ramanashree School

4.30 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.: Tea Break

5.00 p.m. – 5.45 p.m.: Talk

by Sanskrit Vidwan Sri Ganapati Hegde

5.45 p.m. – 6.00 p.m.: Pooja

6.00 p.m. – 7.30 p.m.: "Shad Mani Ramana" - A Dance Feature
on Shanmatha in Bharatanatyam & Kathak
by Artistes of RMCL & BSRMRC

Monday, 18th March

6.30 p.m. – 7.00 p.m.: Pooja

7.00 p.m. – 8.00 p.m.: Ramananjali

Devotional Music led by Dr. Sarada

8.00 p.m.: Maha Prasadam

Ramana Every Day

RMHC - Ramana Maharshi Heritage Centre - Sanjaynagar

RMS - Ramana Maharshi Shrine - Mekhri Circle

RSCS - RMCL Satsang Centre at South Bangalore

RSCR - RMCL Satsang Centre at Rajarajeshwari Nagar

Self Enquiry session - English by Sri. Nandakumarji (080-42094073)

Thursday: 6:00pm at RSCS

Friday: 6:30pm - 7:30pm at RMHC

Saturday: 6:00pm at RSCS (Special Talk by K.G. Subraya Sharma)

Saturday: 11:00am at RMS

Sunday: 10:30am at RMS

Everyday: 6:00am at RSCS (Chanting, Meditation and Walk)

Self Enquiry session - Kannada by Sri. Dileep Simha (9448374818)

Tuesday: 6:30pm - 7:30pm at RMHC

Music and Dance classes [Contact - Uma (9538472026)]

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday: 5:00pm - 7:00pm at RMHC.

Yoga classes [Contact - Uma (9538472026)]

Monday - Wednesday - Friday: 6:30am & 6:00pm at RMHC

Talks - Kannada by Sri. Sridhar Sarma, disciple of Sri Nochur

Saturday 4:00pm - 5:30pm at RMS. [Contact Usha Sankar (9663284111)]

Talks - English by Dr. Sarada Natarajan/Venkatesh Deshpande/Dileep Simha

Sunday: 11:30am at RMS

Bhajans - by Smt. Radha, Revathi, Uma and Ujwal

Sunday: 10:30am at RMS

Parayana of Bhagavans Sanskrit Composition by Ms. Savithri and Smt. Ratnamma

Saturday: 11:00am - 12:00pm at RMS

Talks, Parayana and Puja by Sri Chandrashekar (9448839594)

Thursday 6:30pm at RSCR

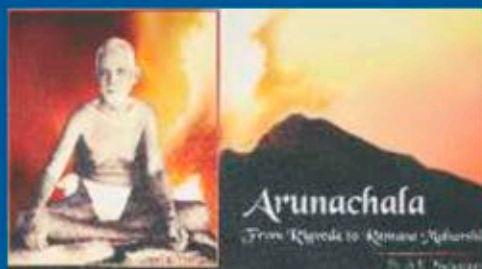
Guru Vachaka Kovai in English

Original : Muruganar

Translation: David Godman

Investigation into Truth

78. There is no happiness that exists in its own right in any single one of the objects of the inert world. When this is the case, why does the stupid mind delude itself, imagining that happiness arises from the objects of the world?
79. Wealth will pass away, leaving in want and suffering those foolish ones who once exulted in and felt pride in the wealth they formerly possessed.



ARUNACHALA FROM RIGVEDA TO RAMANA MAHARSHI

This book covers a vast panorama of over four thousand years from the Rigvedic seers to Ramana Maharshi. Arunachala, the seemingly insentient hill, and the golden hued Ramana are embodied fire of Knowledge. The purpose of this book is to rekindle in every human heart this smouldering fire now doused by ignorance.