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The Ramana Way

FORTY YEARS



Ramana
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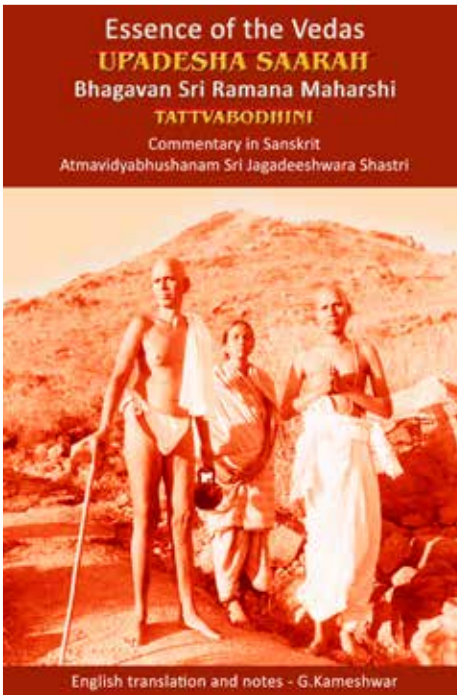
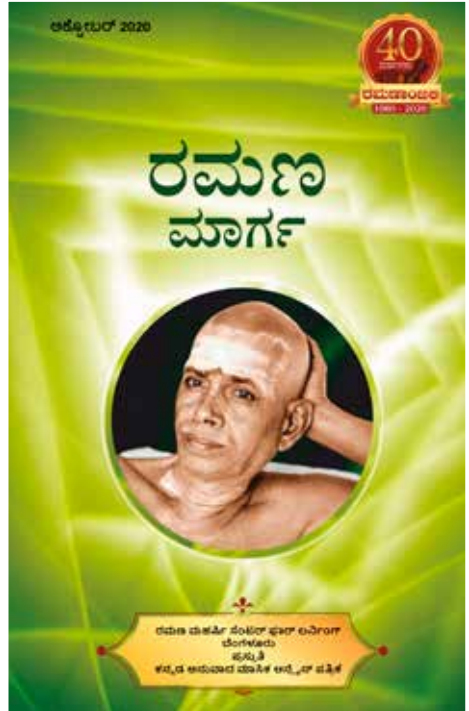
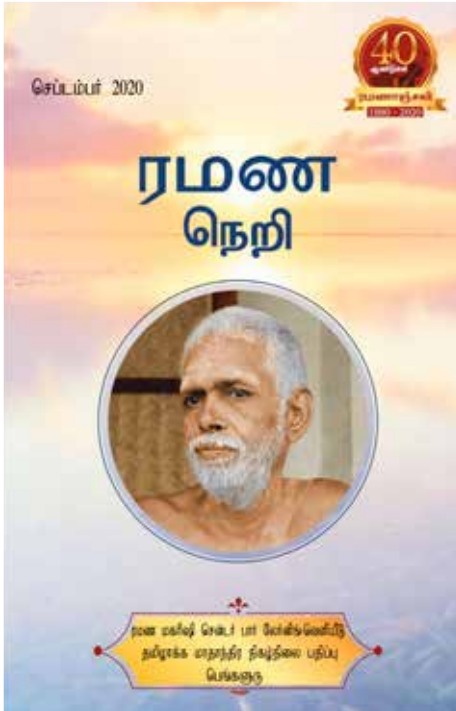
Ramana
Children's Wing



Ramana
Publications

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NEW Publications

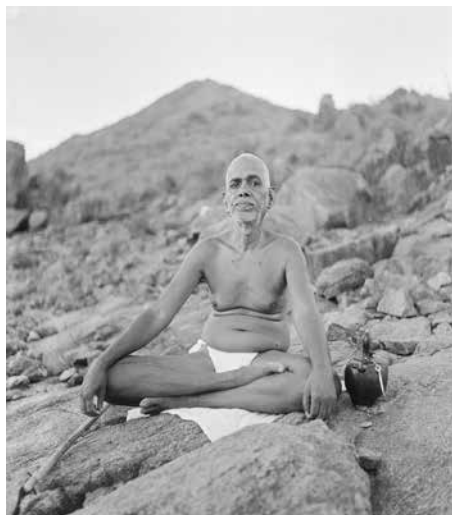


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THE RAMANA WAY

A Monthly Journal since 1981



Celebrating 'The Ramana Way' - 40 years

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

- Ramana Gita X, 10

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The very thought of the innocent boy of sixteen facing death with absolute courage and immediate surrender makes our hearts 'melt in shame'. These are the words that he uses in praise of Arunachala in his 'Padigam', years later. 'Lord of Ocean of Grace, my heart melts in shame, even to think of you' he says. Indeed, how can we describe his 'extravagance of grace' that made him embrace death to bestow the boon of immortality on one and all?

Muruganar Swami therefore sends out an invitation:

"To save us from the pain of death,
Immortal bliss has come and settled
In Aruna now with the name of Ramana.
This, this is the time, I tell you, to take
Refuge in him and start to live
This life everlasting."

This is the sacred July when, 125 years ago, on the 17th of the month, the young Ramana conquered death by living it, 'for, death in life is truly glorious', he says. We say he was innocent because he was completely unexposed to the world beyond his home, his school, his few friends and his first circle of relatives. We say he was innocent because Arunachala ever shone in him as something glorious from before his days of innocence, and he never questioned its glory. Though it was in a sense inexplicable, though he did not know what it was, he never doubted it. In fact, even a thought about it would diminish its glory by making it something that could be contained in thought. Such was his total faith in the magnificence of Arunachala that he had no need even to find out what it was or to define it.

This boy, completely innocent and full of faith was suddenly faced by an intense and overwhelming fear of death. He decided to submit to death, then and there. He lay down and stretched himself stiff as though rigor mortis had set in, held his breath and did not utter a sound externally or even internally, not even saying the word 'I' within himself. The utter stillness and silence of death. He surrendered to it. Yet, his spirit of enquiry remained ablaze and

he asked himself, 'What is it that dies? This body is dead and it will be burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of the body am I dead? Is the body I?' And in a flash the Self revealed itself, 'The body is dead. But I feel the full force of the current of I within, transcending and including the body. I am the deathless spirit.'

Therefore, he forged for us the blazing path of self-enquiry, the path to enquire into the nature of death, for, again as he gives the invaluable clue, 'what is death if scrutinized?' Nonetheless, his abounding love makes the encounter gentler for us. We are terrified even of the word 'death', how can we face death as he did? 'Father, I am afraid of the dark', we call out to him. 'Don't worry my child', he assures, 'I have already crossed the dark bridge of death for you. You need not face death. You are not afraid of sleep, are you? Isn't it sweet and gentle? Would you like to experience its sweetness even while awake? Just try to see where you go to in your sleep and you will understand the secret of life and death.'

Yes, we need not pay heed to death. We need to have courage enough, he indicates, only to drop a thought, a single thought, fully. Because, what is experienced when one thought is dropped is the very same as that which is experienced when all thoughts are dropped. In fact, there is no such thing as 'all thoughts'. There is only one thought at any given moment. The seeming experience of many thoughts is also only a thought.

Hence, says Ramana, don't even worry about many thoughts. Simply deal with one thought. If the next thought arises, simply deal with that one thought. If a third thought arises, deal with that thought. Deal with each thought, one at a time. Don't bother about how many more are waiting to come. He gives the example of laying siege to a fortress. Keep attacking the enemy soldiers one by one as they come out. Ultimately the last soldier must fall, he assures. But the important thing is to lay the siege, not to allow entry to fresh supplies of soldiers. How does this happen? By remaining totally alert to the rise of each thought and cutting it even as it rises with the swift arrow of enquiry 'For whom is this thought?' And further, to ensure that the thought is completely crushed, to let go the next deadly arrow, 'Who am I?'

The young Ramana as a boy of sixteen asked himself, 'Who is it that dies?' In effect he was asking himself 'Who am I?' In the intensity of that enquiry death was destroyed. As our enquiry may be far from intense, there is the need for repeated questioning. One blow with a sharp axe may sever a branch but it would take several blows if the axe is blunt. There is one great blessing here though. A blunt axe gets blunter when it is used for cutting wood. It needs to be whetted and sharpened on a stone or at a lathe independently and then used for cutting the wood. But the axe of self-enquiry gets sharper each time it is used. And as it gets sharper and cuts through thought more and more swiftly, the gracious joy of the Self begins to envelop us.

As Sri A.R.Natarajan writes, "When the individual's association with his thoughts are cut, he falls back on his true strength. The mind turns within and merges in the fullness of consciousness. The individual current of energy merges in the universal current which is ever existent, all embracing and whole. When this happens one is 'inundated with happiness', with joy which is at once spontaneous and natural."

Sarada Natarajan

RUNNING BACKWARDS

The conviction that the body is 'I' and that happiness is to be attained through this is so deep-rooted that we are nowhere near serious about tackling the illusion. The fallacy in our seeking is revealed in our very methodology of practicing self-enquiry. We set apart time for it each day. Good, we tell ourselves, that we at least give some time to it in the midst of our busy schedules. In doing so we forget that self-enquiry is not a part-time job, it is an attitude of doubt about our very nature, how then, can it be restricted to ten minutes or half-an-hour? Supposing we strongly suspect a worker of thieving, if we have ample circumstantial evidence about it and are only on the look-out for concrete proof, would we disbelieve the worker for half-an-hour a day and trust him for the rest? Would one say, 'Half-an-hour I will lock my almirahs and for the rest I will leave the keys with him because I have already established my distrust for the first half hour'? And, once the seed of doubt has been sown, is it at all possible for us to trust him even if we intend to do so?

Can suspicion and trust go hand in hand? Where there is trust, doubt has no room. But once doubt enters, it shatters trust at once. Then, if we really doubt the validity of our identity, if we are truly convinced that the body idea is a mere guise, how can we function with happy faith in it? The moment we seriously question the truth of what we have taken ourselves to be, that question must necessarily possess us, haunt us, permeate our every action, our every thought. The very fact that we are able to make self-enquiry a part of our schedule, instead of it dictating and governing our life, means that it is merely an intellectual exercise, it is not the urgent question that it ought to be. This further leads to a false complacency, a feeling of having understood and performed self-enquiry. To think 'I have understood what self-enquiry is' or 'I have performed self-enquiry' are contradictions in terms. For, the question is 'Who is the 'I' who has understood?' 'Who is the 'I' who practices?' 'Who seeks to attain?'. In fact, any thought

* The editorials have also appeared in the book 'The Surging Joy of Self Discovery'

being present means self-enquiry is not. Or, we have reduced self-enquiry to an intellectual question.

If the appreciation of the fact that one is not Self-aware is only intellectual, can there be any seriousness in the question 'Who am I?' Will it then be the identity shattering weapon? We are really in a strange or absurd position of believing in our identity and simultaneously believing in the efficacy of self-enquiry. How do we explain our situation? Doubt and faith cannot co-exist, it is true. However, they can exist alternately. For a moment we may be suspicious about someone. Next moment that someone may convince us that he is worthy of trust once again. Then, the next time we are hurt by his actions, our questioning would again be aroused. If the trickster is truly clever, again we might end up trusting him.

This is probably the case with our self-enquiry. At moments we are convinced that this identity is a hoax, an illusion. Or, to put it correctly, the mood of self-enquiry is intense one moment. But the next instant we are in the grip of identity once again. Hence our effort has to be directed to fanning the flames of enquiry, to be vigilant that identity does not trick us into accepting it. It takes so many subtle forms that we are practically unaware of its presence. From morning till night it poses as the doer, as the actor, as the agent of all actions and the enjoyer of the fruits of action. 'I wrote this book', it thinks. Let's stop it here. 'Who wrote the book?' 'I'. 'Who is this 'I'?' Silence for some time, then another action is performed, another thought creeps in. Someone reprimands us, our bristles are up at once. How dare she scold me, after all the work I have done! How we wallow in self-pity. 'Who has done the work? Who has been scolded? Who is upset?'. 'I', in every case it is 'I'.

But who am I? Silence again. Then yet another thought. 'If I did my self-enquiry well I wouldn't get upset about these small things'. Who should do self-enquiry? Who is getting upset? Who is thinking about getting upset? 'I', it is 'I' in every instance. But who am I? There must necessarily be silence again. In this manner, self-enquiry must be used as a missile against every rising thought, and attention should be turned back to the 'I' - the thinker, the seeker, the actor. Continuous vigilance is essential. One moment's lapse and we are back to thinking of a hundred unnecessary things.

What about necessary thoughts which are needed to perform work? But then, who is labelling thoughts as necessary and unnecessary? Who feels the need to work? 'I'. But who am I? When the 'I' is not known where is the question of its working or not working? We protest, 'What about our duties?' Whose duties? Whose indifference? Whose joy? Whose sorrow? Whose anger? Whose tenderness? Whose ideas? Whose mistakes? Whose accuracy? Whose carelessness? Whose success? Whose failure? Mine, mine, mine. Who am I? Give me a single thought that can withstand the fire of enquiry. There can be none.

If thoughts continue to plague us, it is because we are not performing self-enquiry. If we have sorrows it is because we are not gripped by the spirit of enquiry. If we are indifferent or complacent, it is because we haven't yet truly begun to question our identity. If we still have our dreams and plans intact, we have not breathed the rarified atmosphere of self-enquiry. If we are gripped by that question 'Who am I?' nothing else can matter truly to us. So long as we remain with the attitude of enquiry, no care, no thought can even approach.

Yes, in the white heat of self-enquiry there cannot even be the thought of sadhana, there cannot be even the consciousness of trying to do self-enquiry - even that must be questioned. Does that mean there is no sadhana at all? Does this mean one should not or cannot practise self-enquiry? That is not so either. There is sadhana, but not the thought of sadhana. How is this? One does not think "I must ask myself 'Who am I?'" Nor does one repeat the question, nor does one mentally say, 'I am not this or that.' To say 'I am not this' means, I know what I am not, and thus, in a sense, what I am. But when I really wonder who I am, I can neither say what I am not nor what I am. There can be neither affirmation nor negation. It is simply an alert suspension of all thinking.

The effort lies in the cessation of effort, the effort lies in maintaining an intense attitude of doubt. The effort is there alright, but it is not towards attaining something, it does not move in the normal forward direction, it is not focussed on an object. Hence, Nayana aptly equated it to running backwards. When you run backwards you cannot see where you are heading, you do not know what awaits you. All expectation is suspended. There is

simply the movement backwards and awareness of it. Self-enquiry is similar. Normally the mind's energy is focussed outward. Here it is turned inwards, it has to run backwards into its source. It cannot see or anticipate or think. It can only remain vigilant, open, ready to land wherever it will. It cannot anticipate a goal distant or near. Thus, we cannot think Self-knowledge is far or near. Yes, we cannot think at all. And like running backwards it needs greater alertness because nothing can be taken for granted. Hence, far from saying it is effortless, it is a total all-consuming effort.

Bhagavan points out that what awaits is an inundation, a flood of bliss. This assurance, this bait is given for those moments when we are tempted by identity. For, really speaking, who will experience the bliss? And every question that we pose is merely one more thought, one more escape from paying attention to the 'I'. So, let us waste no time in getting back to self-enquiry, let's start running backwards right away and not wonder what awaits us. For who asks?

SUNSET AT ARUNACHALA

A sunset means many things. Awareness of the sky - its vastness, its stillness. If one lies on one's back, on the hill, or even on one's terrace, one is enveloped by the sky. There is the vastness of the sea too as one strolls on a beach, but one cannot enter the sea, not really, just play on its shores, just sport with waves. Perhaps a little swim in its waters. Those who dive within, they too must come out and come on to the shore once more. One never enters the sky in this manner, one just allows the sky to enter us, so that one feels part of that expanse. No, one feels as the expanse. It is an almost unconscious exchange. For the sky is everywhere, all about us, all around us. If one watches the sky from Arunachala the experience of silence is compounded. There is along with the silence of the sky, the magnificent quiet of the Hill. Above us, behind us, below us, is the Hill, radiating silence. The horns of trucks echo off the slopes. Some songs from radios are heard now and then, there is the occasional dialogue. Through all this, in all this is heard the continuous sound of silence, the vastness of silence is sensed.

There is also the chirping of birds coming back to roost. But now the trees stand still as the breeze stops rustling. The mosquitoes that rise in the stillness do not hum here. They are there, biting busily alright, but they make no music. There is only the silence, not disturbed by the stray sounds that are drawn into it. There is the expanse of the sky, not broken by the darkening silhouettes of trees. And between trees the setting sun on the horizon. The spreading landscape also seems part of the sky - hill sloping down in trees and across a thin meandering road, hillocks, merging into hills in the horizon, in turn dissolving into the reddening sky. Above us, the sky still clear blue behind the Hill, caressing it as it were with a few silk-cotton clouds. This blue sky connecting back from red to blue in a spray of colours overhead. The one unbroken unity of all that is, the unbroken silence that is sensed. The glowing red sun, dipping simply, sliding into the hills across.

It seems as if the 'sun-set' will not be visible. There are clouds, thick and glowing violet, a mixture of their natural grey-blue and the sun's brilliant orange. The sun disappears behind one. There are many more waiting below to swallow it in succession and secretly send it to its hilly rest for the night. Or so it seems. This sunset from Arunachala has been long awaited, planned for and missed several times. After all this wait can we not really see the sun set? But in the fullness of Arunachala against the evening sky there is no regret, there is no disappointment. One does not mind whether the sun is swallowed by clouds permanently or sets majestically behind the outline of mountains yonder. Strange place this. Because one does not protest, mentally, because there is no more a wish, the wish that was, is fulfilled. What seemed like a cloud screen is but a backdrop to the sun. Emerging from the single layered cloud the sun comes before the other rain-bearers, does not travel behind them in secrecy, but in evident glory softly enters the hilly heartland.

There are moments in the inward journey that are similar to these. The magnitude of the Lord's silent presence overwhelms. The mind does not cease to converse with itself, it still holds paltry discussions on superficial subjects. It is, after all, a creature of habit. Yet, there is a sensing of the silence that underlies and pervades all the noise of the mind. In this silence there arises a feeling of being close to Self-knowledge. The scene is set for the

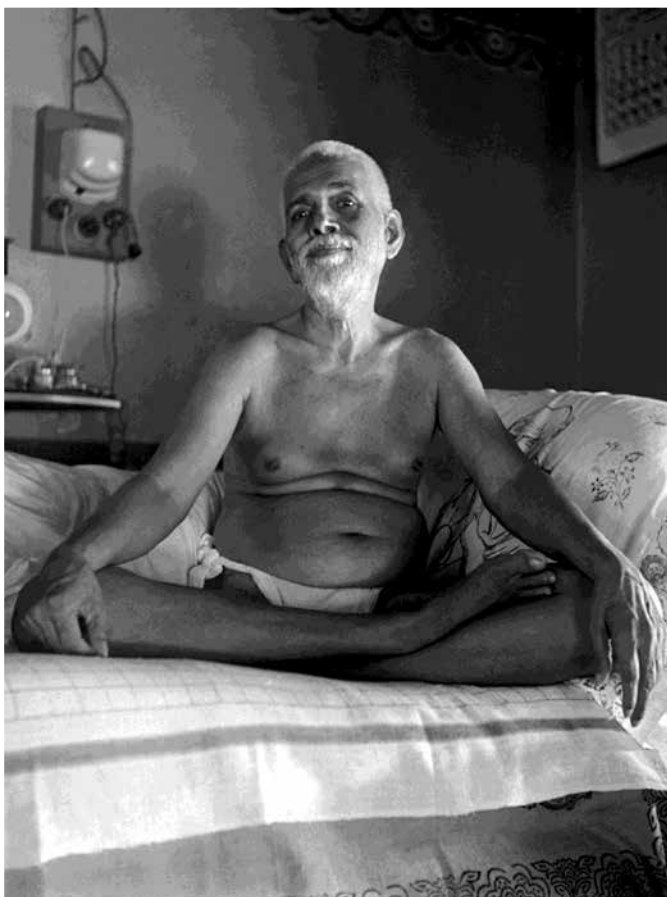
beautiful sun-set. The setting ego, glowing purer as it comes within the proximity of the Self. Then, suddenly, there is the clouding. The sun will set anyhow, so why worry, may be the thought. True, the sun sets every day and rises every day too. We are oblivious, though, to its rising and setting. We function by its light, but hardly pay attention to it and certainly not to its setting and rising.

Even so the ego sets daily in sleep and rises on waking. While awake we work by its light, by the consciousness that it reflects from the Self. Yet we are unconscious of its daily setting and rising, unaware of its source. If it sets once more, clouded, unawares, unseen, it will be just another day. The important thing is to be aware when it sets or rises. But clouded as the scene is, this may not be. Thus we worry about the clouding, the obstacles, the depressions that come in the way of a conscious dip into the source, of a source-merger. If our worry had the power to dispel the clouds, it would certainly be worth the while worrying. If our willing would create for us the ideal sun set, cloud free, till the last inch of sun dips in, will-power would be the best power under that very sun. Neither will, nor worry, however, can create a change of scene. What they can do, though, is disrupt the magic silence of Hill and sky, so untouched by all the ripples without. Why not, then, allow the silence to take over and forget the mind's innumerable hassles, simply ignore them?

If one recognises that all goal-orientation is thought, that all need to achieve, to experience is thought and it is the very thoughts that screen the Truth, then the clouds cease to disturb the view. One would then realise that the thoughts cannot touch the Self, that it is not affected by them even as noise does not disturb the stillness of Arunachala or clouds and trees that are seen in between do not break the vastness of the sky. One would recognise too, that the joy of seeming close to Self-awareness, and the sorrow of being away or disturbed are both projections of the mind. They are both for the experiencer, for the practitioner of the path. And who is the one who practises? Who is the sadhaka? Is he the joyous one? Is he the depressed one? Is he the one who makes progress? Is he the one who is obstructed on the inward way? Who is that 'I'? When one does not know, when the search is still on, what do the moods of that stranger matter?

Most important, what really is the power of the 'I'? Does it have power to search and find its own source? Wherefrom does it acquire the strength to do so? Does not the courage for the enquiry, the very ability to enquire, spring from Bhagavan's grace? Is it not Grace that drew us to Him, made us aware of His way and put us on the path? Is it not Grace that keeps us going?

And is it not Grace that is the very goal? What then is there to worry about? When we strive to remember this constantly, a striving too that is made possible only by Grace, then no cloud matters. Miraculously, clouds may dissolve too and the sun-set may be seen. But for us only the wonder of the atmosphere remains.



From the Founder's Pen: 1990-95

Insights

INTRODUCTION

The sacred words of Ramana are timeless. Because they are based on his direct experience of steady Self-abidance. The hallmark of Ramana was his accessibility. His doors were always open, be it in the 'Old Hall' or the 'New Hall' or the 'Nirvana Room'. The only thing he would insist upon was that none should be denied the opportunity of meeting him. As a result, there was a free flow of visitors, devotees and serious seekers of truth. Their backgrounds, their earnestness and spiritual evolution were different. Consequently, we have a variety of questions, a wide gambit of spiritual doubts which Ramana has handled with authority and simple directness. It is open to all those concerned with truth, with the search for Self-knowledge, to dwell on the meaning of his words, statements and clarifications. They are like an 'open book', from which one can derive strength and inspiration. There is no need for any special scriptural knowledge for understanding his teachings.

However, it is absolutely necessary to ponder over and reflect on the guidance given. Such a need is there for any path but it is more so in the Ramana Way. Why? For it is bafflingly simple, seemingly without steps between the practice and the goal. There is no system of 'dos' and 'don'ts'. No prescribed formulae. The nature of the experience, natural happiness, is the same during practice, and what one is used to calling the 'ultimate' experience. The difference being only that during the stage of practice one keeps moving in and out of this state of blissful, non-mental happiness. When the experience of this state is steady and undistracted, that itself is the goal.

The means and the goal being the same is so alien to our dualistic thoughts. Hence one has to go back, time and again, to Ramana's statements, to understand their true meaning for practice. When it is a matter of unfoldment, of revelation, the

progress is invisible and cannot be judged with reference to tangible and measurable yardsticks. Hence the great need for calm in dwelling on the practical implications of Ramana's direct path for getting a proper insight into his teachings.

Ramana accepts all the traditional spiritual methods. He would encourage people to continue their practice along the lines to which they were naturally inclined. If ritualistic worship is your cup of tea, fine, if you think action dedicated to God is your way, that too is fine. If your faith is in the sacred syllables, by all means do go ahead. If your attraction is for Patanjali and his breath-regulation method it is quite all right. On the other hand, if you think that devotion to God is the way do not give it up. Ramana would say that all these methods are purificatory. They would prepare one for self-enquiry to which all seekers of truth have to come in the end.

Here it is necessary to go into some essential aspects of Ramana's path for it has special features of its own. As Ramana says, "Yoga teaches control of the activities of the mind. But I say self-enquiry. This is a practical way". What is the difference between the extant practices and what Ramana teaches? One might say that all other methods assume duality, the subject 'I' and the object, be it a sacred syllable, thoughts, or a form of a God held dear. Is this division really valid? Am I not the mind? The thinker and his thoughts are integral. Are they not? As Ramana remarks, "One must learn to realise that the subject and object are one". Meditation on an object would therefore be based on a non-existing division. By ignoring the sense of oneness, the other methods can take one only to the threshold and prepare one for self-enquiry by purifying the mind. Why? Because the sense of individuality, the feeling of separate existence would remain untackled.

There would also be differences in practice. For, in other methods one would necessarily be dealing with the content of the mind in order to make it virtuous, pure and desireless. Cultivation of good thoughts, cultivation of desirelessness, practice of regulation of breath and so on, would be attempted.

In contrast self-enquiry incessantly stressed by Ramana is holistic, unitary. Attention is only on the subject. The idea

about one's separate identity is constantly questioned until one discovers the falsity of the notion. The question 'Who am I?' is posed in order to raise a doubt about one's assumption that one is a particular name and form, 'I am this' or 'that'. Unless one enquires, unless one is saturated with the spirit of enquiry how can one find out? Attention is not allowed to wander from thought to thought.

The whole world of thoughts, innumerable varied and powerful in their numerical strength, is negated by shifting attention from thoughts to the thinker. Can there be thoughts without the thinker? Can there be doubts without a doubter? All dualistic ideas are put to sword for thoughts cannot flourish when the individual's attention is not on them. They are literally starved to death for want of the attention which gives life to them. When the individual's association with his thoughts are cut, he falls back on his true strength. The mind turns within and merges in the fullness of consciousness. The individual current of energy merges in the universal current which is ever existent, all embracing and whole. When this happens one is 'inundated with happiness', with joy which is at once spontaneous and natural.

What happens is the shedding of a great load; the load of thoughts. The mind is so full of thoughts, is it not? Functional thoughts, psychological thoughts and purposeless thoughts keep persisting. Purposeless for they have no relevance to one's life. When there is a 'load-shedding' of these thoughts, one feels free, happy. The mind becomes spacious when its cluttering is cleared. Functioning directly from the universal current, termed the 'Heart' by Ramana, intuition and feeling will replace mental conceptualisation. Each moment would then be new and suffused with joy.

The focus is on the mind, and the way to make it quiet, indrawn and restful. The primacy is for self-enquiry, for holistic meditation, for surrender and for freedom. Because what we are looking for is not intellectual appreciation of the verbal beauty or the lofty logic of Ramana's words but their significance for experiencing the natural state of joy. Hence the 'insights' are from the angle of getting off the mental movement, the angle of fostering the in-turning of the mind and the angle of merging the mind in its conscious source.

It is difficult to overstate the need for being aware of Ramana's presence as the inner guru. Who can be a better guide than Ramana himself? At times of depression, listlessness, and doubt, his support would be needed to sustain the momentum of inwardness. It would be there, unfailingly, if one seeks it.

Bangalore

1st September 1992

A.R. NATARAJAN

3. Never Mind the Mind

D: The mind always wanders. I cannot control it.

M: It is the nature of the mind to wander. You are not the mind. It is impermanent whereas you are eternal. To inhere in the Self is the thing. Never mind the mind. If its source is sought it will vanish leaving the Self unaffected.

-Talks 97

In any walk of life one has certain definite goals towards which one is working. These goals keep shifting and are jacked up with reference to prior achievements. A student would be working for merit ranking, scholarship, competitive examination, foreign studies and so on. An officer of the government would be aiming at going up the official ladder, or getting posted to a more influential seat and a politician is concerned with widening his popular base, in strengthening his position in his party hierarchy and generally to be regarded as a leader. A businessman would be keen on adding to the number of companies in his group by his keen competitive edge and political clout. One important point to remember is that one can always check up and one does check the progress or lack of it with reference to these goals and constantly reappraise the needs of the situation. Also, we are prepared to give all that we have got, to pour into our efforts every ounce of energy in order to be successful.

However, when it comes to the spiritual side alone one does not seem to be clear about what exactly one is seeking from it. Often one may be bogged down by theoretical and idealistic goals. For instance, one might think that the goal is 'mukti',

liberation, or Self-knowledge or God - vision. While undoubtedly those having these goals are serious about their beliefs, the difficulty is that one cannot be passionate about such goals so long as it is a theoretical adherence and not a felt need. How real can the objective of liberation be to one who does not feel that all this is a passing show, a 'vanity of vanities'? Without dispassion, without awareness of the transitoriness of everything which we seek and hold dear, mukti becomes only an idea, not something for which one would care deep down in oneself.

So in order to go far one has to come near and look at his own daily turmoils, look at his endless fears and fix his goals with reference to them. If one does give a reflective look at what he is and plans to end the gaps to happiness, then and only then there would be realism in the goals. If I am constantly living in fear of the reaction of others lest I should lose their love, if I am always in expectation of support from others to dear causes, if my mind is restless and agitated what should be my goal? To escape from the shadow of desire and fear must be our aim if we are to give a practical turn to our endeavours. Then the goal would be meaningful for it would have been integrated to life as we live it. One might stress the fact that unless the chosen goal has a direct relation to our problems it would not be possible to sustain the zest for effort. In one sense, this is a realistic turn to our goals and therefore to our sadhana.

Does this mean we are giving up spiritual goals, held out before us as ideals in the scriptures? The answer is 'no' if one goes into their true meaning. For instance, when one aims at 'mukti' he is in effect seeking to be restored to his natural state of peace. Ramana made this point emphatically when speaking to Pannalal, a senior member of the Indian Civil Service. Pannalal told Ramana that he was holding a top post in the government, had a loving wife, and bright children but still he had no peace of mind. He wanted to know why he hankered after peace. Ramana told him that this was because peace is our nature and restlessness is not. He illustrated it by adding "When we have a headache we immediately seek a cure for it, for health is natural and ill-health is unnatural. So we wish to get rid of it." Peace is the natural state of the mind in the same way as sound health is of the body. If we make our goal the tranquil mind undisturbed by activities

performed and by situations in life we would have opted not only for a practical goal but also for that which has been declared by Ramana to be the most natural one.

Let us assume that we are now clear about the goal. It is a mind which is always naturally restful irrespective of the circumstances. This very clarity gives one great strength for keeping at spiritual practices. The next question is as to what is the best means of achieving this goal?

One finds that most of the persons who came to Ramana expressed diffidence and doubt about the feasibility of a restful mind amidst the pressures and pulls of daily life. With very little time available for meditation, and with constant family worries dogging, they are convinced that even this goal which means so much is beyond their grasp. The story which Ramana told one such devotee is fascinating and drives home the point that one should not sit on the sidelines but enter the fray and find out the truth. The story narrated by Ramana in 1916 runs thus:

“A person who has never seen an ocean must make a trip to it to know about it. Standing there before the huge expanse of water, this person may wish to bathe in the sea. Of what use is it if, seeing the roaring and rolling of the waves, he were to just stand there thinking, ‘I shall wait for all this to subside. When it does, I shall enter it for a quiet bath just as in the pond back home’? He has to realise either by himself, or by being told, that the ocean is restlessness from the moment of Creation and will continue likewise till Pralaya (destruction). He will then resolve to learn to bathe in it as it is. He may wade into it by and by, and perhaps, through prior instruction, learn to duck under a wave and let it pass over him. He would naturally hold his breath while doing so. Soon he would be skilled enough to duck, at a stretch, wave after wave, and thus achieve the purpose of bathing without coming to grief. The ocean may go on and though in it, he is free from its grip ... So too here.”

The important thing is to take the plunge with confidence. Ramana would say, “Others have succeeded. Why not you?” Also, what we are attempting is only a revelatory process. The attempt is to become aware of the natural silence and quietness of the mind through appropriate enquiry.

What is the appropriate enquiry? It is the enquiry about the self. The question arises as to what we are referring to when we say we are enquiring into the self. What is self-enquiry? Does it refer to the mind, the ego or the Atman? Obviously it cannot refer to the Atman for the limited cannot measure the infinite. It therefore refers to the mind. Can the mind enquire about itself? Can it look at itself? Yes. Ramana has explained what exactly it means.

Firstly, there is the need to examine the validity of some of our assumptions about the mind itself. In all our attempts at mind control we take for granted that there is a separate entity called the mind. This is a fundamental mistake says Ramana. He would say, "Mind is intangible. In fact, it does not exist." "When we see what the mind is there is nothing like it". "If you search for it, it will vanish by itself for it has no real existence". "A search for it discloses its non-existence". "If an enquiry is made whether mind exists, it will be found that mind does not exist" and so on. At the same time, he would patiently explain to the devotees that the mind is only a series of thought patterns with the core thought of individuality and other thoughts which keep changing according to the response of the individual to the world at particular points of time. Again the multiplicity and variety of thoughts need not scare us. Why? Because though they are vast in number, they are all essentially dependent like creepers on a tree. Unless the individual pays attention to a specific thought it cannot surface on the thought horizon. Have you not heard of being absent minded? The other person may be chattering but his words do not register for the attention of the individual is not there.

Following from this is the importance of paying attention to the centre, to the me. This only means that whenever there is a mental movement wherever there is the formation of thought clouds before they gather momentum they have to be arrested. They need to be stopped at the hustling. This is done by questioning for whom these thoughts arise. Such questioning would bring back the attention from the thoughts to the thinker.

This is the first but essential step in warding off thought formations and for preventing their build up. Being off the mental movement enables one to stay with the 'I' - thought. The moment this happens the mind turns inwards. For the mind rises from the

Self, the Consciousness. When the connection with thoughts is severed it falls back into its source. In fact, in the Ramana Way the emphasis is not so much on the content of the mind, though we begin with it to explain the nature of the mind, as with the source of thought. Once there is success in turning the mind back and in exposing it to the light of the Self the mind is restored to its pristine purity and quietness.

The process of getting back to the source was once explained by Ramana to his attendant Rangaswami. A nest was built above Bhagavan's couch by a squirrel. A cat had eaten the mother of the young squirrels and the responsibility for their care was taken over by Bhagavan. Each time a young squirrel came out of the nest, Ramana would put it back into the nest so that it may be safe there. For there was danger outside which the young ones did not realise. Bhagavan's purpose was to make the squirrels enjoy staying within. Just then Rangaswami asked, "What is the path for keeping inward?", Ramana replied, "It is exactly the same as what I am doing now." Pushing back the mind to its source, the heart, is the purpose of spiritual practice so that the mind may taste the happiness and peace which is its essential nature.

But if peace and happiness is only the end product, if one does not have the experience of that state along the way, as one keeps at practice, one is likely to lose interest. The absence of an experience of a different dimension would make one fall back on known ways of assuming that pleasure comes from objects. Ramana assures that one does not need to have a patient or long wait. Even though the process of transformation is gradual one begins to feel the fresh inner joy fairly early. Ramana told Humphreys as far back as 1911 that even if he were to meditate, rightly, for about ten to fifteen minutes a day, in a couple of months there would be a change in mental attitudes. One would acquire power, always as a background, to deal more harmoniously with others, with ideas and events. Nothing would be overwhelming and things would be seen in the right perspective.

There are also some tests which would be the barometers of change. Firstly, in our 'loveless heart' seeds of love would have been sown. There would be a growing expansion of the heart in compassion, in fellow-feeling and love for those around us. All

things which eat into love like judgements, jealousies and the like would wane. Then there would be a general feeling of well-being, an exhilaration in everything, a true zest in whatever we are involved in. Freed from the cramping effects of an overcrowded mind, one would live immersed in peace and joy.

5. The Direct Method

D: What is the difference between meditation and enquiry into the self?

M: Meditation is possible only if the ego ('I') is kept up. There is the ego ('I') and the object meditated upon. The method is indirect. Whereas the Self is one. Seeking the ego's source, it disappears. What is left is the Self. This method is direct.

-Talks 174

An American lady seeker came to India in search of truth. She went from ashram to ashram and kept asking what is the common unalterable dictum underlying Vedanta. Wherever she went the reply was the same. The world is 'unreal' and Brahman alone is 'real'. She knew nothing about Brahman. Its reality was lost on her. On the other hand she was aware of the world with its myriad beauty, with all its bewildering variety. How could it be unreal? Was there no truth in her relationships with 'her people', 'her family', 'her friends' and 'the society'? Was it all meaningless? Were her bank account and economic circumstance inconsequential? Was she to deny the evidence of her eyes, her ears and indeed all her senses?

Bewildered and confused she came to Sri Ramanasramam. The Master asked, 'What happens to your 'real world' in sleep? Do you exist then, let alone your world? Again, was your dream world the same as your waking world? Were your friends able to give you their company when you were feeling lonely and lost while dreaming? How can the phenomena which keeps coming and going be real?' Slowly the truth dawned on her. She could realise the error in seeing the world as apart from the perceiver, apart from the continuing substratum of all the daily states of waking, dream, and sleep. It dawned on her that the superimposition of the notion of reality on changing movement and labelling the individual and his world as real was like 'an infatuated lover foisting chastity on a prostitute'. We too have to recognise this truth. It is time

to step out of illusion. Otherwise we could be trying to ride two horses simultaneously. One would be clinging to one's worldly attachments and seeking that which can dawn only when their hold loosens and drops off.

But this knowledge is only the first step. Chastity is unknown to thought. It keeps flirting in contra directions, attracted by pulls and contra-pulls and innate tendencies, which keep playing games more puzzling than the tricks that a magician pulls out of his hat. One must remain the victim of the mind's many allurements and illusions so long as one has separated oneself from the mind. Unless this primary ignorance regarding the mind as separate from oneself is ended there is no escape from mind's vagaries. For one is the mind. The whole thought structure with all its intricate patterns is for the thinker. The thinker and his thoughts are an integrated whole. Where are thoughts without the thinker? Why don't they come to life when his attention is absent? Once this is recognised we are on the right track. We have laid our hands on the malaise. We have diagnosed the cause of the mental muddle. We have arrived at the point that as long as the thinker is not the focus of one's attention, any sadhana to control the mind, to be free of its illusions, would be peripheral and perhaps even counter-productive.

Having come thus far we are still baffled when we start fixing attention on the question 'to whom do these thoughts relate?'. Baffled because we are so used to thinking in terms of solutions within the framework of the mind. Counter 'bad' thoughts with 'good' thoughts, give up desires and so on. The whole approach is foredoomed for the very act of pruning thoughts gives them strength as the pruning of the leaves of a tree would lead only to their profuse and lustrous growth. Hence the root and branch 'revolution' of Ramana, which enables side-stepping the world of thoughts through 'subject based' sadhana. It is not the usual subject-object oriented way but an exclusive focus on the subject, the thinker.

Along the path problems crop up. All of us know only too well the deafening roar of thoughts crowding in whenever an attempt is made to create a thought vacuum. It is almost as if the dirty muck is being churned. There is such a volcanic surfacing of thoughts in quick and benumbing succession. One wonders

whether one has succeeded only in opening up the Pandora's box in attempting to meditate. How are we to meet the challenges posed by hidden thoughts? For it is easy to be disheartened in the face of this thought-explosion, easy to give up or become luke warm in sadhana. To complain about this situation is like asking why the water boils in a kettle kept on an electric stove. The very purpose of lighting the torch of enquiry about who the thinker is through the simple query 'Who am I?' is to expose the enemy, the innumerable thoughts which lie camouflaged in seed form in the heart. By all means let them come out singly or in groups or in their battalions or regimental strength. They cannot disturb your poise unless you let them. What power do they have merely because of their numerical strength?

Ramana compares the way we load our minds with layers and layers of thoughts to a man 'who fills all the rooms of his house and makes them chockful of unnecessary junk'. Ramana would add that 'if all the false ideas and impressions are swept away what remains is only the plenitude of the Self'.

This is possible only if you do not 'run with the running mind'. Thoughts should not be given any foothold. There should be no loopholes for their surreptitious entry. A precondition is to starve thoughts. For heaven's sake do not pay attention to them. Let the focal point of your attention remain always on the thinker. So long as this attention is not allowed to stray one can be sure to go beyond the limitations of bizarre and uncontrolled thoughts.

What happens when the single minded focus is on the thinker is quite surprising. Surprising because we do not expect it, because we do not know how it occurs. It is totally unexpected but it happens. The idea of a separate thinker disappears. What is meant by this? The sense of individuality ceases. One becomes aware that nothing exists apart from oneself. The unity of the conscious source, the individual, and the world is experienced. All life pulsates in oneness. Oh! for the joy of it and the beauty of its benediction.

Talk 97. (Excerpt).

One Mr. Ramachandar, a gentleman from Ambala, asked where the Heart is and what Realisation is.

M.: The Heart is not physical; it is spiritual. Hridayam = hrit + ayam - This is the centre. It is that from which thoughts arise, on which they subsist and where they are resolved. The thoughts are the content of the mind and, they shape the universe. The Heart is the centre of all. Yatova imani bhutani jayante (that from which these beings come into existence) etc. is said to be Brahman in the Upanishads. That is the Heart. Brahman is the Heart.

D.: How to realise the Heart?

M.: There is no one who even for a trice fails to experience the Self. For no one admits that he ever stands apart from the Self. He is the Self. The Self is the Heart.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: If one's outlook is merely material, one merely tries in vain to increase the life of the physical heart-body and possessions limitlessly. When one is spiritually oriented but still has body orientation, Bhagavan points out that the spiritual heart is on the right side of the chest. To those spiritual seekers who understand the supremacy of the mind over body, Bhagavan teaches that the Heart is the source, sustenance and resolution of all thoughts. To the seeker who practices this seeking through Self Enquiry, the world, body and mind get resolved in the Self. To those seekers who have had this thought free Self as experience but not abidance, Bhagavan teaches, Summa Iru. The Self alone IS.

Talk 97. (Excerpt)

M.: There is no one who even for a trice fails to experience the Self. For no one admits that he ever stands apart from the Self. He is the Self. The Self is the Heart.

D.: It is not clear.

M.: In deep sleep you exist; awake, you remain. The same Self is in both states. The difference is only in the awareness and the non-

awareness of the world. The world rises with the mind and sets with the mind. That which rises and sets is not the Self. The Self is different, giving rise to the mind, sustaining it and resolving it. So the Self is the underlying principle.

When asked who you are, you place your hand on the right side of the breast and say 'I am'. There you involuntarily point out the Self. The Self is thus known. But the individual is miserable because he confounds the mind and the body with the Self. This confusion is due to wrong knowledge. Elimination of wrong knowledge is alone needed. Such elimination results in Realisation.

Talk 97. (Excerpt).

M.: Never mind the mind. If its source is sought, it will vanish leaving the Self unaffected.

D.: So one need not seek to control the mind?

M.: There is no mind to control if you realise the Self. The mind vanishing, the Self shines forth. In the realised man the mind may be active or inactive, the Self alone remains for him. For, the mind, the body and the world are not separate from the Self. They rise from and sink into the Self. They do not remain apart from the Self. Can they be different from the Self? Only be aware of the Self. Why worry about these shadows? How do they affect the Self?

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: In a pot of vegetables boiling in water, heat is not the intrinsic nature of vegetables, water or pot. Heat is the intrinsic nature of fire alone. Similarly, in an experience containing problem, mind, body, world and the Self, Existence is not the intrinsic nature of the problem, mind, body or world. Existence is the intrinsic nature of the Self alone. Problem, mind, body and world do not have real existence. For whom is the problem? For whom is the thought? For whom is the body? For whom is the world? Bhagavan has given the Sadhaka the practical way to hold the real Self. Hold. Be.

Talk 98.

Bhagavan further explained: The Self is the Heart. The Heart is self-luminous. Light arises from the Heart and reaches the brain, which is the seat of the mind. The world is seen with the mind, that is, by the reflected light of the Self. It is perceived with the aid of the mind. When the mind is illumined it is aware of the world. When

it is not itself so illumined, it is not aware of the world. If the mind is turned in towards the source of light, objective knowledge ceases and Self alone shines forth as the Heart.

The moon shines by the reflected light of the sun. When the sun has set, the moon is useful for revealing objects. When the sun has risen, no one needs the moon, although the pale disc of the moon is visible in the sky.

So it is with the mind and the Heart. The mind is useful because of its reflected light. It is used for seeing objects. When it is turned inwards, the source of illumination shines forth by itself, and the mind remains dim and useless like the moon in day-time.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: All the millions of years that the limited self appears to take to re-discover the limitless Self through all forms, all toil - sweat, rest, heaven, hell, highs, lows - vanish in the limitless Self. All paths - spirituality, religions, art, science, sociology, psychology, philosophy - vanish. Only one limitless Self-Luminous Self. Turn Inward. Enquire, "Who am I?"

Talk 99.

A sannyasi asked: It is said that the Self is beyond the mind and yet the realisation is with the mind. Mano na manute, Manasa na matam, and Manasaivedamaptavya (The mind cannot think it. It cannot be thought of by the mind and the mind alone can realise it). How are these contradictions to be reconciled?

M.: Atman is realised with mruta manas (dead mind), i.e., mind devoid of thoughts and turned inward. Then the mind sees its own source and becomes That. It is not as the subject perceiving an object.

When the room is dark a lamp is necessary to illumine and eyes to cognise objects. But when the sun is risen there is no need of a lamp, and the objects are seen; and to see the sun no lamp is necessary, it is enough that you turn your eyes towards the self-luminous sun.

Similarly with the mind. To see the objects the reflected light of the mind is necessary. To see the Heart it is enough that the mind is turned towards it. Then the mind loses itself and the Heart shines forth.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: Bhagavan gives the same teaching to a Sannyasi - renunciate - as well as a Gruhasti - householder. This is because he addresses the root proclivities of the mind principle itself. In Self-enquiry, Bhagavan teaches that one should let go of thought and hold the "I". The mind principle - not individual mind - has "outwardness", "grasping" and "shifting from thought to thought" as the root proclivities. These are present in the individual along with many individual proclivities, dependent on the root proclivities of the mind principle. Self-enquiry addresses the root proclivities of outwardness, grasping and multiplicity, directly. For whom is this thought? Who am I?

Q: How is the "outwardness", "multiplicity" and "grasping" required for duties as householder or sannyasi taken care of in Jnana?

S: Jnana removes the doer and has no dependency or conflict with the activities of Prakruti or Ishwara. When asked how he came down from Skandasramam on the Hill to the present Ramanasramam, Bhagavan would respond sometimes with, "There is one Power..."



karomi karmeti naro vijAnan
 bAdhyo bhavet-karma-phalam cha bhoktum |
 vichAra-dhUtA hRdi kartRtA chet
 karma-trayam nashyati saiva muktih || 38 ||

“I do karma (action),” thus a man considering (regarding)

A bound one becomes and enjoys (experiences) the result (fruit) of karma.

If, by inquiry in the heart, doership is removed (cast off)

The triple karma perishes (is destroyed). That alone is Liberation.

N.: If there is the notion “I do,” you experience the result. If, freeing yourself of the “I”-notion and the “I am the body” misconception, you realize that you never do anything ever, you have no karma. Not only do you have no karma now, but you have no karma in the future or in the past, because you never will do or did anything. It is not that one is a doer, or an experiencer, at one time, and one ceases to be such in Liberation. One can speak only figuratively in that manner. In Liberation, you find that you were never “you,” or a “body.” You were never an “experiencer.” You have never been and never will be a “doer.” For that which you are, pure Brahman, there is no karma.

The reference to three kinds of karma pertains to sancita, which is the whole collection of all karma, prarabdha, which is the karma to be played out in this life and which is regarded by some as their destiny, and agami, which is what is being done now with results stored for a later time. Thus, the karma is described as three-fold. In some teachings within Vedanta, for the purpose of instruction, it is said that the collection of karma dissolves, and the karma for the future that has not yet begun to bear results dissolves, but the prarabdha continues. This is an explanation, for the onlooker, of why the jnani’s body still appears and still seems to go through experiences. From the position of Jnana, Knowledge, though, there is no body, and there is no

conception of the body being oneself. Therefore, there is no set of experiences in life through which one passes. So, in truth, there is no prarabdha karma. The explanation of prarabdha is to conform to the aspirant's idea that the world is real and that the body has some connection with the Self. When those ideas are obliterated, by being known to be false, and are regarded as only ignorance, the Liberation from the triple karma becomes obvious.

I have not done anything. I am not doing anything, and I never will do anything. I have never experienced anything else. I see nothing other than the Self. I am not experiencing anything but the Self. I never will experience anything but the Self, because the only "I" that there is, is the Self, which is infinite and eternal and is never modified in its nature. Such Realization alone is Liberation, as declared by the Maharshi.

The word "enjoys" should be understood as "experiences." Not all karma is enjoyable, in the sense of being pleasant. One reaps the fruits good and bad. If there are the notions "I," and "I do," the law of karma is inexorable. As is done, so is the effect, and that continues apparently endlessly. By that, one becomes bound. In the initial verses of Upadesa Saram, the Maharshi instructs that it is an ocean of bondage to be within the context of doing karma, of "I do." If you do, you reap.

If you become a non-doer, that is, if you realize your bodiless Existence and know that your ego is not a performer of action, if you understand that you do nothing at any time and comprehend that you are not endowed with mind, speech, body, and such, but ever remain still and silent, and if such is your experience, this is "inquiry in the heart." In that, Sri Bhagavan declares, the performer of action, "the doership," "is cast off."

What is the result? The triple karma perishes. Karma is analyzed in a three-fold way. There is sancita karma, which is the collection of karma. There is prarabdha karma, which is the karma that plays out as this life. If we do not recognize it as karma, we call it fate. There is agami karma, which is done now in the present life and the results of which will be reaped later. Together, all of them are loosely called "karma."

Sri Ramana says, “The triple karma is destroyed.” This is an unusual statement. In Advaita Vedanta works, it is often said that, for the mukta, the liberated one, the storehouse of karma is obliterated and there is no karma being produced in the present life. The mukta will not take birth again, for there is no future karma. Yet, to explain how his manifest life continues and how his body and mind seem to operate in the eyes of others, it is said that prarabdha karma continues until it is exhausted. The analogy presented is that of an arrow. Once it has been shot by being released from the bow, even though no more arrows are coming, that arrow continues to fly until it meets its target or hits the ground. When its motion is exhausted, its flight is over. That is said to explain the remaining lifetime of a jnani, one who has realized the Truth.

Yet, Sri Bhagavan says, “The triple karma perishes.” That pertains to all the karma. There is no karma playing out in the present life, because from what viewpoint does the present life appear? For whom is the appearance? Sri Ramana said, “He knows nothing that is other than the Self.” For the Self for which there is nothing other, there is no karma. He has no identity other than the Self. He has no lifetime to play out. He remains only as the space, and the arrow does not affect him. There is no target. The bow has been snapped. The space in which all that appeared is utterly unaffected. This, he teaches, “alone is Liberation.” There remains no identification whatsoever with the body, with the mind, or as any kind of individual.

baddhatva-bhAve sati moksha-chintA
bandhas-tu kasyeti vichAraNena |
siddhe svayam svAtmani nitya-mukte
kva bandha-cintA kva ca moksha-chintA || 39 ||

With the being in the conception of bondage, is the anxious thought of Liberation.

**But bondage of whom? Thus, by the inquiry,
In the accomplishment of himself (of itself), in one's**

own (true) Self, one is ever-liberated. (or: Is established of itself, in one's own Self, the ever liberated.)

Where is the anxious thought of bondage, and where is the anxious thought of Liberation?

N.: When there is bondage, one thinks of liberation. It is a lifesaver for one who is dreaming that he is drowning in an ocean. The inquiry, “but bondage of whom?” is like waking up from that dream of drowning. Thus, by the inquiry, “in the accomplishment of himself,” waking up to his own nature, one finds one’s true Self, and that Self is ever liberated. You are never drowning. It was only a mistaken notion. You find that which is established of itself, in your own Self, and that is the ever liberated. The ever-liberated nature is thought of as the state of liberation when one conceives of bondage. When the conception of bondage is gone, where can there be the thought, or conception, of liberation? Not being anxious over being bound, one is not anxious for Liberation. One is not anxious for Liberation, for it is ever-existent. One is not anxious about being bound, because one simply is not bound.

If you conceive of bondage, you conceive of liberation. The hardship of bondage causes the anxious urge for Liberation, but Ramana asks, “bondage of whom?” This should be the inquiry. Who is it that is bound? If you inquire in such a manner, what do you accomplish? You accomplish of yourself, by yourself, in yourself, the Realization of your own true Self, which is, by nature, ever liberated and has never known any bondage. Since it has never known any bondage, it has no idea of such, and, likewise, it has no idea of Liberation.

Bondage and liberation are spoken of from the supposedly individualized perspective. If one is bound, one is told to seek Liberation. The only way to truly seek this Liberation is to inquire into the nature of the one who is bound. He proves to be nonexistent, as does his bondage. What happens to the separate, happy state called “Liberation”? It is found to be the innate, happy Being of your own true Self and not a state at all. Liberation, then, is not truly attained by anyone. Bondage is not actually lost by anyone. The bondage does not exist. It is not that one is bound and then becomes free. There is no bondage, and there is no bound individual. There is no one striving for liberation, there is no one liberated, and there is no liberated state. Being, which is ever free, is the highest Truth. It is the only Reality. So, Ramana says, thus “established in one’s own Self, where is the anxious thought of bondage, and where is the anxious thought of Liberation?” The question is rhetorical. The answer is obvious in the Silence that is stateless and ever free.

Eight Verses on Arunachala**Of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**

(Verse-6 Continued... Part 2)

Verse-6

uNToru poruLaRi voLiyuLa mEnee
 yuLatuni lalatilA vaticaya cattI
 ninRaNu nizhanirai ninaivaRi vOTE
 nikazhvinaic cuzhalilan ninaivoLi yATi
 kaNTana nizhaRcaka vicittira muLLun(g)
 kaNmutaR poRivazhi puRattumor cillA
 ninRiTU nizhalpaTa nikararuT kunRE
 ninRiTā cenRiTā ninaivITā vinRE.

Verse rendering:

Aye, there exists One substance/reality,
 (namely) You
 Who are, in reality,
 Consciousness-Effulgence-Heart alone!

(And) In you,
 As non-distinct from you
 Exists
 A wondrous/indescribable power!

And from that (power)
 By the light of consciousness
 Manifests,
 Via the (reflected) light of the mind-mirror
 A swarm of atom-like shadowy thoughts

¹ The first part was carried in the April 2021 issue of Ramana Way

*in the swirl of predestiny;
 And like a lens projected movie-picture;
 Inside,
 (in one's mind),
 And outside,
 by way of the eyes and other sense-organs;
 The world-picture is projected, seen,
 In the manner of moving pictures
 on a (cinema) screen!*

*O Mountain of Grace!
 Whether they (these pictures)
 Stay, as appearance,
 Or go away,
 They exist not
 As apart from thee!*

Prose rendering:

Oh yes, there exists One substance/reality; (namely) You! You, who are, in reality, Consciousness-Effulgence-Heart alone! (And) In you, there exists a wondrous/indescribable power, which is non-distinct from You! And from that (power), by the light of consciousness, there rises a swarm of atom-like shadowy thoughts, whirling in the swirl of prArabdhA karma (predestiny), manifesting (are illumined) by the (reflected) light of the mind-mirror. And thereby, like a lens projected movie-picture, the world-picture is projected, seen (by the mind); both, inside one's mind, and outside, by way of the eyes and other sense-organs. This is in the manner of moving pictures on a (cinema) screen!

O Mountain of Grace, whether they (these pictures) manifest, or cease to be seen, all this is, in reality, not distinct from you, who are the sole reality/existence (just as movie pictures, which do not exist as different from the screen on which they are projected).

Notes:

This is a very profound verse, where Bhagavan is sharing His direct experience of the great secret that underlies all existence and experience. In this one verse, Bhagavan has stated the essence of all Vedanta. For the great benefit of all seekers,

Bhagavan Himself has provided a detailed explanation of this verse, which has been recorded in 'Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi'.

(In the April-2021 Issue of Ramana Way, we saw the first part of the above explanation. In the current issue, Bhagavan's explanation continues...)

Bhagavan Ramana explains:

... for the Pure Radiant Being to rise up as the Ego - it is possible only in Its Light diffused through darkness. This darkness is otherwise known as the Original Ignorance (Original Sin). The Light passing through it is called Reflected Light. The Reflected Light on its own merits is commonly known as the Pure Mind or *Isvara* or God. *Isvara* is well-known to be unified with *Maya*: in other words, the Reflected Light is *Isvara*.

The other name - Pure Mind - implies impure mind also. It is the *rajasic* or active mind or the ego; this too can be projected from the former *satvic* mind through another reflection only; thus the ego is the product of the second darkness (*avidya*) Then comes the *tamasic* or the dull mind in the shape of *antahkaranas* (the inner organs); this appears as the world.

From the standpoint of the gross body it may be said to shine forth externally as the world by means of the brain.

But the gross body is of the mind only. The mind may be said to consist of four inner organs, or the principle composed of thoughts, or the sixth sense; or combining intellect with the ego, and *chitta* with the mind (i.e. memory-faculty with the thinking faculty), it may be taken to consist of two parts (the ego and the mind). In the latter case the *vijnanatma* (the intellectual Self) or the ego or the seer forms the subject, and the mental sheath or the seen, the object.

The waking, dream and sleep states have their origin in the Original Darkness (*mula avidya*). With the mind outgoing and deriving experiences from its modes in the waking and dream states, and indrawn in sleep, experiencing with modes of *Maya*, a unique power regulates all activities of the individuals and of the universe. All these are only phenomena passing through the Reflected Light on the substratum of the Self-radiant Being.

Just as a rope-snake cannot be seen in broad daylight, nor rope itself in thick darkness, so also the world appears neither in the *samadhi* state of Self-shining pure Being or in deep sleep, swoon, etc. Only in Reflected Light (Light mixed with Darkness or knowledge soiled by Ignorance) can the world, *not independent of its Source*, seem to rise up, flourish and be resolved. Its diversity too cannot be exclusive of the Reality, the original Source. Here a play is going on in which the One Single Being becomes manifold is objectified and then withdrawn. There must be a *Sakti* (Power) to do it, and wonderful too! She cannot also be independent of Her origin. In the Self-shining Pure Being this *Sakti* cannot be seen. Nevertheless, Her actions are only too well-known. How sublime!

From Her sublime original activity (i.e., power vibrating) *satva*-filled reflection results; from it the *rajasic* ego; then *tamasic* thought-forms which are commonly known as knowledge, or the light corresponding to the magnifying lens. Just as the artificial light is projected through a lens on to the screen, so also the Reflected Light passes through thought (the magnifier) before expanding as the world beyond it; furthermore, thought, itself the world in-seed form, seems to be the wide external world. Such is the extraordinary Power! In this way *Isvara*, individual and the world are only of the Reflected Light, having the Self-shining Single Being for the substratum.

Smaller I(thought)resists greater I(existence).

- Ramana Maharshi

Means

Absolute consciousness.

Looking at ourselves from outside causes continuous thinking.

If we can abide as Self, there is no thinking at all.

Because being troubled by ego everyone likes self-realization most deeply. One can see devotees did not like to go away from the presence of Ramana Maharshi.

When everything is found in the Self, one does not need to do anything or go anywhere. He sits in sukhasan or hridayasan within himself.

Mind is thought and thought is mind. When the thought is searched it is not found. It is found in connection with something, not alone.

“See if there is such a thing as the mind. Then the mind merges in the Self, and there is neither seer nor seen.”

- Ramana Maharshi

“A jnani sees only the self and all in the self.”

“If one jnani exists in the world, his influence will be felt or benefit all people in the world and not simply his immediate disciples.”

- Ramana Maharshi

Everyone loves “his” existence. The mistake he does is that he does not see existence as existence which is God but behaves as if existence is his own property.

“The Self or Lord is not somewhere else but is inside each of us, and in loving oneself, one loves only the Self.”

- Ramana Maharshi

"The self is not somewhere far away to be reached. You are always that. You have only to give up your habit, a long-standing one, of identifying yourself with the non-self."

- Ramana Maharshi

Self is in the heart. I see body from outside as I see other bodies therefore it seems I am away from the Self. But when I am completely relaxed without thoughts I am automatically there where I should be in the centre, at my own place.

"The Guru is a very powerful aid on the path... But your effort is also essential... It is you who sees the sun, can spectacles do it for you? You have to see your true nature..."

- Ramana Maharshi

Ramana way is the simplest way.

To be established in the thoughtless experience of I am is to be established in the source always here and now.

To be still is to be Self.

To be Self is to be still.

"All that is required to realize the self is to be still."

- Ramana Maharshi

Rejecting I am the doer thought will help this enormously.

Rejecting the thought "I am thinking" can end all problems of the thought screen.

What happens when someone praises or condemns us and we reject the thought "I am listening" completely?

Consciousness is free from ego and its pain.

Is this not grace of Maharshi?



The Silence Ever Is

S.Krishnaswamy

Sri S.Krishnaswamy was the Founder Secretary of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning and a soul mate of the Founder President, Sri A.R.Natarajan. If ARN gave the welcome address in the inaugural function of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, SK gave the vote of thanks.



His understanding of the purpose of the Centre stemmed from his in-depth understanding of the power of Bhagavan Ramana's Presence and teachings. In a brilliant summing up of a session of three talks in the National Seminar of 1982, he spoke about the true silence of

Ramana. He also spoke of his own experience of that all-enveloping and transmuting silence in the mere presence of a Jeevan Mukta. This was when he had the darshan of Sri Chandrashekhara Bharathi Mahaswami. He shared the very same experience in his talk in 2014 as well, with the same sense of immense gratitude and devotion. This revealed that throughout those years the undercurrent of his life had always been this true silence which ever is.

Our Founder Secretary was absorbed into the Silence of Bhagavan on Friday, the 16th of April 2021. We bring below his speech as the moderator during the 'National Seminar 1982' in which he gives a summary of three speeches of that morning. Thereby we see him encapsulate his in-depth understanding of Ramana and his teachings and how he applies it in his own life.

I would like to convert what I have heard in these three sessions to my own level of understanding and put them across to you. The first was by Mr.Harding. It was a video presentation - saying

‘Having no head’. What is this subject all about? He asked, ‘Why should you know who I am really?’ All human endeavour is directed to words, exploitation of God given faculties, to unleash the values that lay embedded in resources given to you by God and therefore referring to this ultimately, he spoke of the value of value. Why should you value ‘value’?

God has created you with a purpose, he has not wasted his time in creating you. God has a purpose and therefore there is a value in creation, there is a meaning in creation. It is as if God asks ‘I have given you faculties, I have given you resources, why don’t you unleash the values that lie embedded in this?’ So, every man’s purpose, whatever station he may occupy in life, is to see that he conforms to the expectation of society in building up value. Therefore, Harding explains further, ‘Why don’t you realise that there is a source for all these resources and the value that lies embedded in that source is the source of all the sources. It is the value that you should unleash’.

This unleashing is possible he says, it is simple, it is practical if only you use your faculties. Faculties by themselves are neutral, you can create value, you can destroy value. You can buy a cup of beer with Rs.100. You can buy a mug of milk with Rs.100. One destroys you, another adds to your health, but money is neutral. Therefore, the whole purpose of life, your purpose must be to unleash the value that lies embedded in a resource which is within and not without and therefore put your faculties to use. This is why he says you should know who really am I.

The second is, experience who I am really. Having said that you should get it, into it, the whole being must experience the greatness of the source within, who I am really. In other words, the splendour and the power must come to light, must get exposed, then only you live a real life. Otherwise it is a wasted life. Therefore, it is necessary that you should know who I am really. Not only know but also experience who I am really. It is in this experience that lies joy. We talk of a free enterprise, globalization. We ourselves are not free. We talk of vAstu outside, we don’t talk of this vastu, this being. What difference will this make in life? Unleashed value, experienced value – does it make a real difference? The difference that it makes, he himself says, is to create space.

Always create space, create space within your house, create space within your resources, create space within your self, so that you can accommodate anything. How does this happen? Creation of space happens when you have removed the shackles, the shackles of this body, that is what he says. Thereafter, face to face I don't recognize Mr. Natarajan. I recognize him as the product of the divine, I recognize myself as a divine being. All of us together are one divine stream, stream of divine consciousness. Therefore, if you unleash the shackles, break the shackles of this human body then you are one with each other. This extension of love from the personal level to the universal level is what he spoke about.



I pass on to the next speaker, Mr. Ganesan. He spoke about vertical integration, vertical growth and horizontal growth. To my comprehension vertical growth means you add on to something that is core, core competence. I have 100 million capacity, I will

increase it to 200 million capacity – this is vertical growth. In vertical growth there is no compromise as to the product that you are aiming at. In vertical growth you are aiming for something which you already have expertise in. It is quest for truth, which is vertical.

What is horizontal growth? You speak different languages, but the question is the same. You may have multisite, multi product, multi locational products, institutions – one in Bangalore, one in Trivandrum, but all of them must contribute to the vertical growth. So, don't mind diversification in terms of caste, in terms of religions, of any kind, ultimately it is the vertical growth that matters. Vertical growth is only single. Single production, add to that capacity of quest for life.

Second, what he emphasized was education in the obvious. There was a great English judge – Windell. He said that what is important today is education in the obvious with reference to professional development, with reference to management of professional affairs, education in the obvious. You search for a thing only when it is not in front of you, that requires effort. So, whenever there is a missing thing the first thing you do is to go all

around the world, all round the place, search, search, search and ultimately say – ‘It is here only, I forgot’. Therefore, education in the obvious is very important because you think what is obvious doesn’t matter. I think I will learn it later on, something very complicated I will learn first. But, without education in the obvious you are not laying any foundation to your learning. This is second point that he made.

The third was words, words, words. Bhagavan had no need for words, but words compelled themselves out of his bosom. Now when you look at the great saints of the world, like Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Ramana, the experience is same. But expressions are different. What happens is that expression is soaked in the experience. Therefore, the word of Ramana is honey for us. When a jnani speaks he comes to our level, and gives expression to his experience. The expressions are different. Ramakrishna explains it in a different way, Ramana explains it in a different way, Buddha in a different way. But all of them have a common experience. All that you should know is that all the expressions are rooted in a common experience.

Then he went on to saying something which alerted me a bit. He said strategy/means/goal are all the same. Self-knowledge is the goal, self-enquiry is the means, so ultimately it is the same. From my level of understanding – we normally speak about a vision. A person has a vision. What is a vision? Something which I see but which nobody else sees. Therefore, you first disagree with me, but I have a vision. This is the core concept of a mission that follows. Martin Luther King said I have a dream, Gandhiji had a dream, Lincoln had a dream. This is not the ordinary dream we have day in and day out. This is a vision which comes consequent to the impact on perceptions. Buddha sees so many things outside, it has a deep impact upon him, he becomes a different person the next day. Bhagavan has an experience, it makes an impact. The impact of the experience suddenly throws out the vision that is within. When we have this vision, for the common person what we have to do is to put it out as a goal. We say this in management. Vision is put down as a goal. This goal has to be then strategized. There are many methods. What is a strategy? It is a pattern in a stream of decisions. All roads lead to Rome, whatever path you take. This is the strategy. So, you have to have a strategy. Now, goal is Self-knowledge, strategy is self-enquiry. Self-enquiry has to be practised, implemented, so the hub is the vision. But whatever the

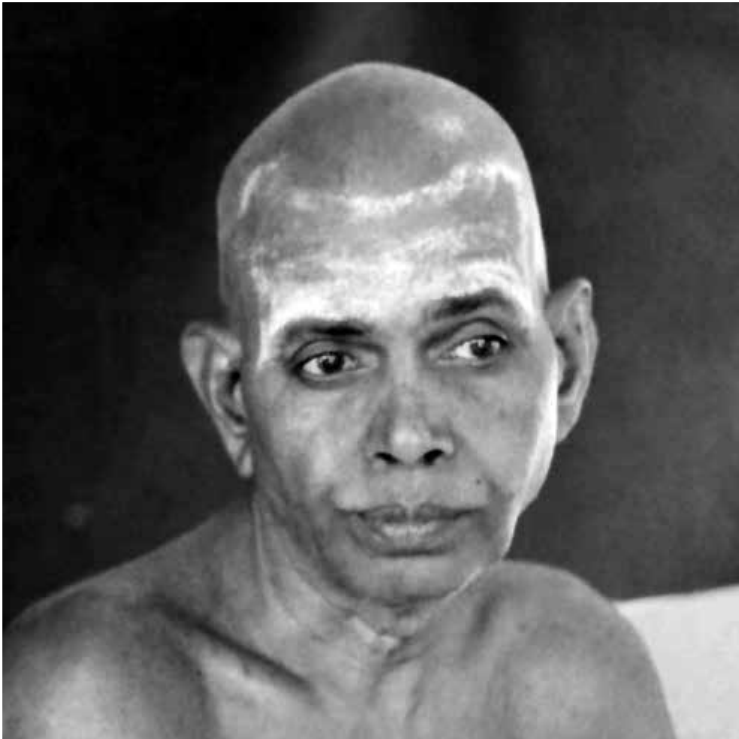
goal and strategy, implementation you have to do because, you are at the human level, you are imperfect, corrections are required through the assistance of a guru. Therefore, you go on correcting yourself so that the vision is always clear and not opaque to you.

How are the goal and the strategy the same? In management theory also we say that these are not sequential, not one after the other. I will give an illustration. I said that for value one must have a mindset. Sir Visveshwara went to Jog Falls, saw the water falling from around 700 feet. He said, what a waste. He saw value in that waterfall. If only this water could fall on a turbine, how much power can be produced. This was a vision, the goal was to produce electricity, the strategy was to put up a station there, implementation was done and all corrections were done. Ultimately everything merged into one – the vision was converted into power. This is what I gathered from Mr. Ganesan's speech. Ultimately the vision explained by the saint in terms of a goal gave you a strategy by which, if implemented and corrected from time to time, you will ultimately find that there is no difference between the goal and the strategy. Ultimately, they coalesce into one.

Last we had the speech from Swami Virajananda. One, he said self-enquiry is not a question for somebody else to answer. Secondly, he spoke of the significance of enquiry. We have a classic case of General Motors. After the 2nd World War, it was in shambles. GM is one of 500 fortune companies of the world and 10 intelligent people joined the company. Through constant quizzing, through constant questioning they brought it to a great level of economic strength. Because they were constantly quizzing these 10 kids were called whizkids. They produced wonders. So go on questioning yourself in whatever you do in your life, 'Am I adding value in my life or am I destroying value in my life?' If you constantly ask this question, nobody else has to answer this question. Basmasura destroyed himself by putting his own hand of self-enquiry on his head. Nobody else can do this. So, quiz can become whiz, question marks can become star marks if only questions can become stars.

Connecting the three talks together - when does a question become a star? Only when you perform. When do you perform? When you have a value mindset. When do you have a value mindset? When you know God has created you to add value. What is that value? It is Swasthiti, it is the natural state, the real state.

In order to understand the real state when you are not in the real state is to see a person in the real state. I had the opportunity to see Chandrashekara Bharathi Swami of Sringeri. He is a Jeevan mukta par excellence. Only when you see a Jeevan mukta, a person who resides in the real state, only then can you understand what the real state is. What is silence... The person was standing and I was standing before him. I was struck with the awareness, 'How come I am able to see God in my presence?' Suppose God appears before you, what will you think? This is the feeling you will get, 'I have no merit, but how come I see him?' He does not speak to you and you don't want to speak to him. Because if you speak to him, you will not have the benefit of that darshan, of his face, of his glowing lustre. That is God. God is represented in this world through Jeevan muktas like Ramana. The very sight of them cleanses the whole system. He said there is nothing like past, present and all that. In a stream there is no yesterday's water or today's water. It is just continuous water. Bliss is like that, pray to Ramana and all your problems will be solved.



The Yogi's Union

In the past one decade, during which he volunteered his services at Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Subramaniyan P.N. endeared himself to everyone there as 'Subbu' or 'Subbu Sir'. He led the life of a yogi, a deeply spiritual life, fully dedicated to Bhagavan Ramana. Yoga means union and in keeping with this Subramaniyan became united with Bhagavan's feet at the young age of 51, on June 5th, 2021. A few of the devotees recall their association with him and his service at the Centre.

Unstinting Love

Dr.Sarada



For several years, inspired by the teachings and works of Bhagavan, he had quietly and unassumingly visited the Shrine at Bangalore regularly and also been to Tiruvannamalai and the Asram many times in a year with his penchant for doing giri valam. At one of the annual workshops at Madurai by Ramana Maharshi

Centre for Learning less than a decade ago, when all the participants were asked to introduce themselves, he simply said 'Subramanyam, RMCL Bangalore'. And that was the beginning of his being inducted into serving Bhagavan in multiple ways.

His service expanded into all the areas of the Centre's activities. He began by taking photos and videos of the numerous events conducted by the Centre. He went on to play cameo roles in the Centre's mega dance-dramas. Whatever he did, he did with a penchant planning in detail for each role he had to play, on stage and off stage.



He played the Chera Maharaja in our mega production 'Arunachala Ramana – Bala Kaandam' and Pusalar in the 'Gnana Kaandam' with the same meditateness in every role.



And we can see his meditateness even when the play was over and the curtain call was happening. Surely, when he had to take his own curtain call in life too, he must have been in deep meditation on Bhagavan as the very Self.



He went on to make the Ramana Maharshi Auditorium a sustainable activity for the Centre and gave his heart and soul to supervising its renovation. We hope to re-open the Auditorium soon and can imagine the enthusiasm with which he would have jumped off the stage and run up to the lighting cabin on the balcony to get things started again.

And then, during the one year when life was crippled by Covid 19, he took on the responsibility of offering puja to Bhagavan at the Ramana Shrine in Bangalore.



Every day was an offering given with great devotion and aksharamanamalai would be chanted with the garland being lovingly offered to Bhagavan in the 108th verse, 'Place your garland on me and wear my garland graciously, Arunachala!' But special occasions like the Pournami that was celebrated every month or the Jayanthi and Aradhana had him excited like a child who had been gifted a whole set of his most favourite

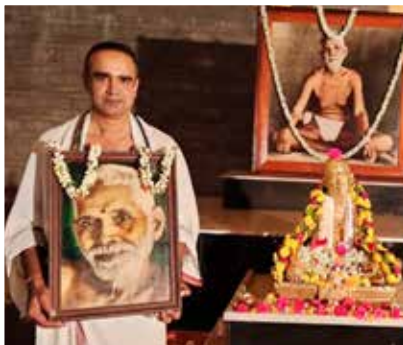
toys. He would personally go to the market and buy multiple types of flowers for the worship.

Uma recalled how he had bought ten varieties of flowers for the Sahasranama puja on Jayanthi, one variety for every hundred names of Bhagavan that were chanted. He instructed her to indicate to him with a glance at the end of every hundred names so that he could change to the next type of flower. 'But where was the question of catching his glance? He was so engrossed in the puja that even if I had clapped my hands he wouldn't have known' she said with a smile.



His culinary skills were excellent and he would himself cook the naivedyam offering for Bhagavan on every special occasion. On Pournamis, he would carry Bhagavan's photo and stride around the sanctum at the pace of offering giri valam to Arunachala.

All this he managed to do alongside his own personal business which he carried on for his physical sustenance. His real



sustenance was his daily diet of Ramana alone. During Jayanthi and Aradhana it was a great privilege for him to join the RMCL team in serving food at the Asram in the outside pandal. In fact, he enjoyed service of every kind.

A bachelor, he unstintingly gave love and care to his aged parents and served every member of his own extended family in every way. At the same time, the larger family of Ramana devotees got a lion's share of his time and attention. It may be picking up and dropping devotees to and from the Shrine or after programs. It may be driving them to Tiruvannamalai in his car or going there by himself to join a devotee who needed his company for a giri valam. He would buy sweets for an aged and poor couple who were childless, saying 'I am like your son'. He would find time to speak to every devotee who would come to the Shrine, enquiring about their welfare and giving them small tips about their 'worldly' and 'spiritual' problems. He would make time to talk to several devotees about Bhagavan's teachings, just listening to their experiences with great joy. So many said after his going that they had lost their best friend. At Ramana Maharshi Centre we had the joy of his travelling as part of our performing troupe to Singapore and Malaysia and each one of us finding a great friend in him.





He would have something good to say about everyone and made them feel special. He was the 'go to' person for many of the devotees, helping in any area where help was needed, it may be hospital visits, paying taxes, fixing a plumbing or electrical issue, sorting out a legal document... the list was endless. He would never acknowledge that anything could not be known or done. It was always, 'We'll get that done.' And it would be done too.



He knew every detail about every temple in South India and specially in Tamil land, their legends and lore and had probably visited most of them too. Yet, undoubtedly the heart was Arunachala. With great love he built a home three kilometres from the Asram. He recently finished furnishing it fully and invited each and every person he knew to come and stay there and enjoy Arunachala. He invited several inmates of the Asram too to visit and bless his home.

No matter how busy his schedule, he did not give up his early morning hour of silence in self-enquiry and during the Covid lockdown when RMCL started online satsangs, he conducted the nightly session of self-enquiry and silence on couple of days every week. He would not have tears in his eyes at the loss of a friend or relative saying that is how Bhagavan planned it but tears of joy would fill his eyes while speaking of Bhagavan's poetic works, especially the 'Arunachala Ashtakam'.

His innocence and ever joyful smile won the hearts of all who interacted with him. Upon lighting the moksha deepam for

him at the Shrine of Grace, Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam, at Sri Ramanasramam, Mani Anna sent a message to RMCL 'Moksha deepam lit for the noble Subramanyam'. Surely Bhagavan has welcomed him to His own abode with a shower of grace.



The Life of a Yogi - A Fellow Traveller in Ramana

A tribute to Sri Subramaniyan P N by G.Kameshwar during the online memorial meeting from Ramana Maharshi Centre.

Om Namō Bhagavate Sri Ramanaaya

Firstly, namaskaram to all of you... it is a very sad... (chokes)

When on that day when I got the call from Sarada and she was broken and she conveyed to me that Subramaniyan is no more, it was of course shocking, sort of emptiness came to me. Because... like all of us have had these experience. I have lost my brother when he was 46, and he had a profoundly handicapped child.... only one child... (chokes)

So, the question often comes... Why? One day a Swamiji from Ramakrishna mission had come home and saw the pictures in my pooja room. He asked me who it is and I replied – my brother. Swamiji immediately realised that the brother was young, when he passed away. He immediately said “Swamiji was also young, when he passed away”. Swamiji means Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda passed away when he was 39. Adi Shankara gave up his body even earlier. So, there is something to this which is far

beyond our understanding. There is a shubhashita (shloka) which says – *maataro yasya govindaha pita yasya dhananjayaha abhimanyu raneshete kaloyam duratikramaha*. That boy whose uncle was Krishna Govinda, whose father was Arjuna Dhananjaya... he lies dead in the battlefield... Destiny... karma is impossible to go against.

Actually in the story of Abhimanyu, the character of Abhimanyu is introduced long before in the Adi Parva itself when there is a conference of Devas, the gods... because the Bharatam is going to happen, Lord Krishna is going to be born, Balarama is going to be born, all the Devas are respectively going to be born. Indra is going to be born as Arjuna. The Moon God had a son called Varchas and the Devas wanted Varchas also to be born on earth to help in this great battle of Bharatam. The Moon God is so fond of Varchas that he says I don't want to be away from him for long, I am too fond of him. Although he will join you all on Earth, he will not be there for a long time. Although he will play an important role, I cannot be without him even for a day beyond the age of 16, he has to come back by that time. I also want him to be born as Arjuna's son. That is what happens - Abhimanyu is Varchas and he has to go back because Chandra has wanted it.

There is a phalashruti to this small story that whoever hears this story will be freed off all paapa, of all sin. So, these are all stories from time immemorial. What are these epics for there then? To say that Rama did not have a bed of roses, Krishna did not have a bed of roses, Nala Damayanti did not have a bed of rose, the Pandavas had to suffer.

The shloka that is given to devotees is *anaayasena maranam, vinaa dainyena jeevanam, dehime kripayaa shambo, tvayi bhakti achanchalam*. We all pray for that – death without any problem, any pain anything; to be able to live without begging from anybody else. Give me bhakti for you Oh! Siva. Our Subbu (Subramaniam) epitomised this, absolutely.

All of us have memories about him, mine also go a long way back. It was even before he came to RMCL, when I used to go to Ramanasramam for Sivaratri, I used to go for Giri pradakshina on Sivaratri, he used to come...many years ago. Then he came to RMCL, so more often than not, from that time, for many years we have gone together for Giri pradakshina on Sivaratri night. I would automatically pick the phone as if I had a right to say – 'Subbu,



come...are you coming?' In his own way, he would say... actually next week I am supposed to go to Tiruvannamalai, but he would invariably come, in fact one day earlier and do a giri pradakshina once extra also. He was like that.

Actually, there is one shloka in Bhagavad Gita, he epitomised it. It is Chapter 11, verse 55 of which Adi Shankara in his commentary says this shloka contains the essence of the entire Gita and shows the way to liberation. The shloka is – *mat karma krit mat paramo mat bhaktaha sangha varjitaha nirvairaha sarvabhuteshu yeh samameti Paandava*. When messages about Subbu were passing around, I felt Subbu is this shloka. The meaning of this shloka is – Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: That devotee attains me in liberation, he who does my work first – (mat karma krit) Ramana karyam... mat paramo... we all work for someone. We have some worldly master, is that why we do work? No, Krishna says no, mat paramo... it is because he considers me Supreme. I am It, the Highest – that is why he does my work.

Is he doing my work because he is afraid of me? No, no, he loves me (mat bhakto). He knows I am the Supreme, but he loves me, therefore he does my work. Sangha varjitaha – he has no other attachment. He touches everything, but he is unattached. He is there all the time – whether for family, friends, he is there, but he is unattached. Nirvairaha sarvabhuteshu – he has no enmity towards anybody, no creature he has any ill will, no violence, no anger. This is sannyasa dharma lakshanam. The acharyas have said that even towards people who have done you ill, who have harmed you... you carry no ill will. Such a person, who is like this, he attains me... says Krishna. This means that such a person

attains liberation. The acharyas have said this can be read the other way also – Who attains me? Nirvaira Sarvabhuteshu – one who has no enmity towards anybody. Who is one like this? One who is sangha varjita – one who has no attachment. Who has no attachment? My bhakta, my devotee. Why is he my devotee? Because he considers me Supreme. How do we know he considers me Supreme? He does my work.

Subbu was a main for details, and a hands-on mand. Even if asked for some arbitrary information, Subbu would know the answer. For example my house at Tiruvannamalai – if I required anything and I asked him, he would perfectly know where to get it from. He was like that with everybody – whether it was Sulochana Mami or Ramanasramam or RMCL. During lockdown, during Pournami he would go to the Shrine and carry Bhagavan's picture and go round the Shrine, round and round. Bhagavan gave him a lot of opportunities to do Ekanta Seva. In fact this year too I had the good opportunity of going for Giri pradakshinam with him on Sivaratri night. Because of the lockdown, very few people were allowed in the ashram. He took special permission during the morning 'paal pooja' where he was alone other than the priest and had to sing the Ramana Chatvarimshat where Ramana is praised by Ganapati Muni as being Subrahmanya. Our Subramanya chanted to Ramana Subrahmanya.

In our earlier visits, at the ashram we used to have breakfast together. He and I would go to all the samadhis of Muruganar, Vishwanatha Swami, at the far end of the Ashram and then we would go up the hill, to a certain level, sit down on the rocks. Not much talk; we could be in silence with each other, absolutely. There is a rock there, which is fondly called as Bhagavan's rock. It has some characteristic marks by which it can be recognized. In some photos of Bhagavan, we can see Bhagavan sitting on that rock,





in Dakshinamurthy pose. I have taken a photo of Subbu sitting on that rock, Bhagavan's rock.

There is a picture of Bhagavan in his home to which he would offer daily evening puja as he could not go to the Shrine in the evenings because of the lockdown regulations. That picture is vibrant. We can feel Bhagavan's presence very evidently there. We can see Bhagavan and cow Lakshmi in the picture above it, which was a favourite with him and which Subbu carried into his home at Tiruvannamalai too during the house warming. And then, above

that, we have Bhagavan's teaching to Mother Azhagamma about the irrevocable nature of destiny as God's power.

For whatever reason he was there on this earth, he made it a beautiful place. We would have for our own reasons wanted him to be with us for ever and ever. But God calls some people back. Whatever he did, he did with passion and faith, belief in it. So, he believed in Bhagavan, in total – *mat paramo, mat bhakta*. All his work he would do, he would not even think about it. If someone said, 'Hey Subbu, that rock has to be taken up there, to the top of that temple tower, he would say – *Haan pannidalaam*, yes, sure we can do it.' At the same time, I have never seen him lose his cool over anything, happy all the time.

There is no doubt at all, even Dileep ji said that he felt when he did the pooja at the Shrine the next day, that Subramaniam had attained the supreme state at the feet of Bhagavan, that he was one with Bhagavan... there is no doubt about it.

Arunachalam.

A few memories from other fellow travellers...

Affection personified

As I have observed during Seminar time, he used to take the initiative for serving lunch and dinner. Especially before Ramananjali he would ask every artiste twice or thrice whether all got their share of lunch and snacks during their rehearsal and preparations for the program. Only after ensuring this he would proceed for other work. Such a sweet person.

- Mallika Ravi

Subbu is loved

A very sweet soul. Never said No. Always smiling. He loved Bhagavan and Arunachala. Fearless and dedicated. A man to go to. His physical presence will be really missed.

His hand movements, his repeating of sentences, his love for food ... His excitement at the little as the big joys of life, his enthusiasm to build the Tiruvannamalai homes...



A detached soul. Happy with whatever he got. A total package. Bhagavan loves such souls to be with Him. Perhaps Subbu drove to Him on his new scooter, to directly offer it to Him.

We will always love him.

- Venkatesh Deshpande



Forever is in the Now

Forever is in the Now

Book Extract

These are extracts from Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning's publication 'Forever is in the Now' containing articles by a rich galaxy of contributors. There are 35 contributors and over fifty articles. Each one of them exposes us to a facet of the myriad beauty of Ramana. The book has been divided into three parts-The Teachings, Remembering Ramana Maharshi and The Confluence. This is because the life and teachings of Ramana Maharshi are intermingled. This book was published in 1993.

BHAGAVAN RAMANA AND HIS IMMORTAL MESSAGE

Swami Ranganathananda

I had been twice to Sri Ramanasramam when Sri Bhagavan was in the body. The first visit was in 1936. Those were memorable days. I still remember the extremely human attraction of Bhagavan. Extremely human without any pretension, he was an extraordinary personality who could draw the minds and hearts of people from all over the world. How many different types of people were drawn to him! Such drawing power is the trait of those who remain immersed in the divine. They cease to be separate individuals - they become universal. In the Srimad Bhagavatam there are two beautiful verses which describe the nature of this attraction and the effect it has on those who are drawn by it. The first verse refers to the unbreakable and binding nature of the attachments we all have and adds that if only we could turn these attachments to universal personalities, like Bhagavan, these very attachments become the cause of our liberation. Such attachment is an attachment which destroys all attachment. The second verse describes the nature of the holy person, attachment to whom becomes a liberating force. It should be to those who are extremely tranquil, whose mind is like the calm ocean without waves, who are filled with compassion, a friend of all embodied beings. Another feature is that an enemy is yet to be born for such a person. Such persons are a real ornament to the world of sadhus. That fine description fits our

Bhagavan most. Those of you who are attracted to Bhagavan are breaking your bondages through attachment to him, and we have plenty of attachments to break. It is a great augury that so many people are fascinated by this immense personality.

We are experiencing great joy on this occasion of centenary of the birth of Bhagavan. When we observe the centenary let us not forget that it is only one aspect of the Bhagavan, what may be termed the time aspect, the historical aspect. We have to remember his remarks, 'What is birth, what is death? It pertains to the body.' These remarks convey the profound truth that Reality has a non-historical dimension-the eternal aspect. In Ramana Maharshi you see the confluence of the historical and non-historical, the time bound and the eternal. As a human personality he has a history and we celebrate the 100th birthday of that great teacher. But he had condensed in himself the immortal, the eternal. Hence the tremendous stature of his life. He lived amongst us just like a simple human being. Outwardly simple but inwardly an immense personality. You could not measure him, just as the column of light of Siva which had appeared once in Arunachala. You cannot see the height, you cannot see the depth.

Those who had seen the human form of Bhagavan are blessed indeed. His touch was the touch of the immortal, a touch which elevates and makes you feel that you are also someone worthwhile. In this age of physical verification, we find in Bhagavan the human form of that eternal truth. Maharshi has always diverted our attention from secondary things to primary things. He put always questions which would put the questioner back on the track of the eternal. He would say search for the eternal that is your nature, it is not far away, it is close to you. It is the wonderful 'I' which is behind the tiny 'I'.

That is the Adhyatma Vidya of the Upanisads, whose message we find glowing in the teachings of the Maharshi. A highly quoted verse of Mundakopanisad says that wise sages who discover this great truth by direct experience are full of joy, ananda, and are drunk with bliss. In the Maharshi we could grasp the true meaning of this verse. He was constantly in the divine awareness - whether he was sitting alone - whether he was radiating his silent presence - whether he was correcting proof - whether he was

reading the newspaper - whether he was cutting vegetables in the kitchen, he was brimming with joy, he was the very personification of the infinite, of the divine. Every word he spoke was charged with the wisdom of Atma vidya. In the Upanisads we have some great utterances which bring to us the description of this great experience. But they are all literature. Today's humanity can see it realized in the personality of Bhagavan. He exemplified the great teaching 'I am That'. Hence his fascination-relaxed, no rigidity, creative, human and full of joy.

Bhagavan says that this experience is easy to come by. Literally true. It is easy. But for whom? For those who can understand that truth is simple. However, we want things to be complicated and complex. When this attitude is changed, we comprehend the truth and its simplicity. There are no gymnastics to go through. It is just changing the centre of our awareness. It is only when we become experimenters in religion, scientists in religion that every word of the Maharshi would become clear and we can understand this great teaching. We have seen Ramana Maharshi and read about Suka of Bhagavatam. There is so much similarity between the two. They found delight in and were reveling in the Self - experiencing infinite joy, free from bondage and yet filled with motiveless love. It is the eternal message manifesting in a human dimension whom we call Ramana Maharshi.

There is a beautiful verse in Shankaracharya's Vivekachudamani which is so apt for the Maharshi - absolutely poor but full of happiness, no army behind but infinitely strong, no experience of sense satisfaction but always happy, none equal to him but he feels all to be his equals. I wish to stress the last feature, the sense of equality, the utter unpretentious greatness of the Maharshi. I would like to refer to just one instance. When I arrived, I had told him that I would be staying for three days and leave by train on the evening of the third day. I had forgotten. He looked at me at the right time and said 'Your tonga is arranged, it is time for you to go?' How human - talking like man to man and yet how gigantic!

There will be a tremendous revolution when his teachings and example are more widely understood. The beautiful flavour of this beautiful Flower of pure spirituality is now spreading all over

the world. If you are hungry for truth, if you are ardent in your search, you will get fulfillment out of the Maharshi. Once again, I would like to refer to some verses from Srimad Bhagavatam. What is said of Sri Krishna there applies equally to Bhagavan. 'The more we hear the more the desire arises to hear more and more'. May all of us be worthy of this tremendous spiritual dynamo who enters our heart even without our knowing it.

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BHAGAVAN RAMANA THE TEACHER AND THE HEALER

Professor S.K. Ramachandra Rao

There are two possible approaches to the Maharshi. One, the approach of the intellectually alert man, one who wants to know, one who wants to think, one who is intellectually restive, one who has gone to the philosophies - East and West, old and new and not found a solution. He goes to Bhagavan Ramana as a sort of a questioner seeking an answer to some of the deep doubts that are within him, and he finds an answer in Ramana's teachings. Ramana presents himself to him as a teacher whose philosophy does not contradict any philosophy that is known to the world, the philosophy that is complete in itself, the philosophy that is self-sufficient and above all, a philosophy with a practical interest or import which is very basic. Ramana's teaching is very germane to the man in his life in the world. This is one approach; and I approach Ramana this way only as a sort of an intellectually alert man, intellectually restive, a restless soul going here and there to all possible tanks and rivers and oceans to quench the thirst, and find that here is a teacher whose teaching is supremely harmonising. It does not conflict with you or anyone else.

The other approach which I consider equally valid is 'Ramana as a healer'. It is not every one that is intellectually restive. Some are emotionally tense, emotionally restive and emotionally ill. Such people also went to Bhagavan Ramana and what did they find in him? He was the healer of the broken hearts. He healed them. This 'bishak', doctor, aspect is germane to every saint. The natural urge for man is to seek some solace, to seek

some comfort, because the mind-spirit disharmony is very basic to human existence. We are born to suffer and suffer much at heart. So the man, in whatever station he is, in whatever level of intellectual advance he is, he needs an emotional fillip, he needs an emotional support. Bhagavan Ramana fulfilled this function, as perhaps no one else did during the present days. I was not fortunate enough to be in his presence. But I could visualize what his presence was like, for when my own master, the former pontiff of Sringeri, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharathi Swamikal, looked at a person, he looked into his whole being. The transaction was not of this world.

So this kind of a presence of a sadguru like Ramana is not what we normally get. In a presence like this, no doubt could possibly exist, no tension could possibly exist, for it is a healing Presence. You won't require anything else. You don't want to talk with him. You don't want to ask him questions, and you don't want him to give you psychiatric counseling and advice. His presence is enough since he has gone beyond his own individual existence. We are confined within narrow selves. We are not in touch with the beyond. But he was in continuous and intimate touch with the beyond. So when you are in his presence, you are in contact with the beyond; and it is this that has a message for us. It lives on not only in Ramanasramam, not only in the portrait of Bhagavan Ramana, but also in each one's heart. These are the two approaches, one as a Teacher, the other as a Healer. As I said, the healing aspect is most relevant to us now. The modern man wants to be healed. There are systems of medicines which reach our body, which reach our mind, but there is hardly a system of medicine that can forge the link between the body and mind and establish a contact with the beyond; and it is this kind of healing that is required today and Bhagavan Ramana provides this in abundant measure.

In Bhagavan Ramana's teachings the mind occupies a very special place. The mind is at once our asset and also our liability, because all the delusions are caused by the mind and all the strength too is provided by the mind. But the mind does not reach the beyond. 'Yatovaco nivartyante Aprapya manasa saha'. But the same Upanisad says 'Manasa Veditavyo'-Self must be known by the mind. The mind does not reach there, but we have

no other alternative than the mind. So mind occupies a peculiar position. It could be an instrument of utility or an instrument of damage. Bhagavan Ramana talks of the mind as what fragments us and limits us. The mind is what projects us into the situations of the world. It is the mind that makes me think of the body as my own, as myself. It is the mind that appropriates the sense organs as my own. It is the sense of 'I' which is the core of the mind. When we are fragmented, when we are broken up into bits, when the individual life is strewn and scattered in a variety of situations where does man get peace? The peace comes when the individual is aware of his fullness.

But the mind is also intimately related to the Self. Maharshi gives a beautiful example of a golden ornament which is not gold but it is not different from gold. The mind in its purity is the Self. Thus it is the link with the whole, with consciousness. Well, Maharshi says: the trouble is that the mind is playing mischief with us; the mind is projecting the world. You just consider for a while. Does the world exist when the mind is not, as in sleep? If I am, the world is. The reality of the world is bound up with my reality. So the reality of the world is a figment of the mind, which projects it... Naturally, the Maharshi says you can't get peace, you can't get tranquility, which is your own birthright, which is the very nature of the Self, as long as you are confined to the frontiers of the mind.

To know the mind, you should go to the source of the mind... Bhagavan Ramana says that the control of the mind becomes a problem when you are with the frontiers of the mind. Within its framework there can be no peace. How is one to question the mind? The mind could be stilled temporarily by a variety of techniques. Bhagavan Ramana speaks of the pranayama as one of the methods. He does not advocate the hatha yoga method, but he says 'regulation of breath by watching it with the mind is useful'. This is because the prana, the vital current, and the mind come from the same source. When you control the prana, the mind is controlled and when you control the mind, the prana is controlled and the two are twin creations of the same power. Therefore pranayama might have a benefit. But it is easier to control the mind than the prana, since we are not in conscious touch with prana. But the mind we are in conscious touch with. Ramana gives a homely example: 'You can't say that the mind is

never divorced from the body consciousness. Consider what you are during sleep. When you are asleep you are not aware of your body. You are not aware of the world. You are not even aware that you are sleeping. You are not even aware that you are. The 'I' has ceased to exist.'

When the man knows that he is sleeping, he is not sleeping at all. We sleep when we don't know that we are sleeping. So in this condition the mind has ceased to play pranks, the mind has ceased to project the world. But this happens at an unconscious level. This happens in the dark, it happens when you are awake that is Samadhi'. What else is samadhi?

This 'jagrat sushupti' is Samadhi. This requires practice, this requires abhyasa. What is the abhyasa he prescribes? There is nothing mysterious about it. You search for what the source of the mind is. Mind is playing the mischief. Well, take hold of the mind. Catch the mind by its tail or its head and say you will not escape me. I have held you now. You show me where you belong to. You show me where you get up from. He calls this enquiry, 'vichara'. Vichara is sometimes translated as 'enquiry', for lack of a better term perhaps, but the Sanskrit term has a deeper meaning. 'Char' is to go. So vichara is to go with a determination, determined moving about. You move within the frontiers of the mind, with a determination, not succumbing to the mind, but riding the mind, getting at its source. So this vichara which he prescribed is a conscious., alert, deliberate, catching hold of the mind to track its source. It is not a mental examination. You are not asking for an answer to your question: 'Who am I?' such as 'I am so and so'. Not an answer like this, nor am I setting one 'I' to pursue the phantom of another 'I' and go on ad infinitum. The mind's attention is focused on its source. So the mind sinks to its very seed form, the seed from which the entire tree of mind rises.

Vichara is the complete self-sufficient method for man to arrive at the mind's source. Beyond it there is no arriving, there is no seeking, there is no going. So this is the beyond which is within us. Bhagavan Ramana says this vichara is what really is independent of the mind, whereas all the other sadhanas make use of the mind, a part of the mind, a fragment of the mind, a dimension of the mind to go beyond. This vichara marga is the

only one that does not make use of the mind as an instrument. It uses the mind not as an instrument to ride on or make use of. It pushes the mind to a corner. When it can't go beyond, the realization is reached. So the beyond is where the mind can't step ahead. Well, all sadhanas therefore, according to him end up in vichara. This vichara is the unique and at the same time simple method available for every man, because he has a mind, he has a beyond. He need not go outside him at all. Even the guru who prompts him is within. Therefore this vichara marga, which helps to extend the frontiers of the mind to the beyond is the only way available to us.

Modern thinking is that it is improper to start with the body and go to mind and individual. It is here that vichara has its use for, it is likely to make man more harmonious, more adjusted, more tranquil and less capable of falling ill. To vichara marga Bhagavan Ramana tags on surrender, for it is the truly enquiring mind that is also a surrendering mind. Where the mind is aware of the beyond, the immensity of the beyond, the unfathomability of the beyond, the mind will cease to throw up pranks, anxieties, tensions and struggles.

This ceasing to struggle is to surrender. Bhagavan Ramana says 'If we don't believe that there is a beyond which is all-powerful, then let God alone, know yourself.' This could be sufficient means. He also gives an alternative. For those of us who believe in God, who are very devout, have a faith which is deep within, God could be our saviour. But if we do not have this firm faith, vichara is the alternative. So it is this vichara and prapatti-the enquiry and surrender, the twin methods that Bhagavan Ramana gave are very appropriate to the modern times to lead us to a sort of viable alternative to the modern medical system. Therefore the two facets of Bhagavan Ramana as a Teacher and as a Healer have come together.

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Kalaimamani Dr. Ambika Kameshwar is a noted danseuse, vocalist, scholar and teacher of international acclaim who has travelled the world sharing her art with all. She is a choreographer who has choreographed over 50 dance dramas and more than 10 complete Bharatanatyam Maargams. As a music composer, she has composed music for over 50 dance dramas and several devotional albums as well. Dr. Ambika is held by all in high regard as the Pioneer of Applying Theatre Arts as a tool of Holistic Development for people with multiple challenges. Dr. Ambika is fortunate and blessed to have imbibed and experienced the richness of spirituality, the joy and strength of which she expresses continually in all spheres of life.

She is a PhD. in Natyabhinaya (Indian Theatre) from the Dept. of Sanskrit, University of Madras (1998), which covers in its scope, dance, music & drama in their experiential & performance aspects. Her Post-Doctoral Fellowship (2004) was on the application of Theatre Arts as a Holistic tool of development as a Senior Fellow of The Ministry of Culture- Govt. of India. She guides PhD Scholars as a registered Guide of scholars pursuing their Doctorate degree at Vel's University, Pallavaram, Chennai.

Dr. Ambika Kameshwar, has had intensive training in Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and creative dance, under Guru Kumari Meenakshi (from Bangalore), Dr. Narendra Sharma and several other Dancers and Choreographers in New Delhi. She started giving public performances at the age of seven, and is now recognized as a leading exponent of Indian Classical Dance.

Dr. Ambika's skills have found fruition as an Artiste of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bengaluru and as the Founder – Director of Rasa, Chennai. RASA - Ramana Sunritya Aalaya is the organization through which she fosters the holistic empowerment of one and all - with the inclusion of people with different abilities - by the structured application of Theatre Arts and its tools.

Ujwal: How did Ramana and Dance enter your life?

Ambika Akka: There is beautiful song written by Sarada Akka and tuned by Raghu Sir (Sri K S Raghunathan) which I could render for one of the recordings "I cannot remember the day we first met for I have known you beloved Ramana ever since I have been." That's how Ramana has entered my life. I do not consider it anything apart from being in his divine scheme to allow dance to enter my life. So it is in His plan that this "Ambika" is there and dance is part of "Ambika's" life.



Everything in this universe is the manifestation of the Supreme Force, and every manifestation has a very special purpose. All these years in my journey of being "Ambika" it has been a journey of understanding the purpose of being "Ambika" and share that purpose with everybody – the world at large.

So, it was always there, it was in His divine plan to allow the expression of dance to happen through this individual. Therefore, once it is part of His intention, His will, His plan, then everything falls in place. I was sharing in a recent Bhagavad Geetha class, when the Supreme decides on something He equips that person to execute His task. That equipping also happens by the same grace, which allows the manifest role play to happen. So everything was planned by Him.

So it was His grace which allowed me to start an organized learning of the music and dance. I was trained in music at the tender age of 5 under my mother Smt. Sulochana Natarajan as my first Guru. I was later trained under the great Vidwans, Sangeetha Kalanidhi Professor Ramanathan, Sangeetha Kalanidhi D. K. Pattammal and Smt. Rukmini Rajagopalan.



My early initiation to the world of Bharatanatyam was by our friend Kalarani in the Vazhavoor style. Kala herself enjoyed dance and our being such close friends and soul mates allowed us to have the experience of dance through her.

I was given abundant exposure to music and dance in my school, Modern School, Delhi. I learnt to play the Sitar, Veena, some approach to music in Hindustani style and also the general music styles. Later I was trained in dance under B. K. Sharma and Narendra Sharma and other great stalwarts in the bani (style) of revered Anand Shankar, which is Creative Dance.



Then Guru Meenakshi of Bangalore further honed my skills in Bharatanatyam. Meenakshi Akka's engulfing of the Bharatanatyam aspect of my dance in the initial years happened because of Visalakshi Mami, who was Meenakshi Akka's Attai (paternal aunt). She somehow felt that I must dance in one of the expressions of dance choreography that Meenakshi Akka had put together for Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning Bangalore in January 1981 at the Chowdiah Memorial Hall. Dr. Balasundaram, the spouse of Visalakshi Mami was a founder member of RMCL, Bangalore. Appa (Sri A R Natarajan) and Dr. Balasundaram were very dear friends. It was a kind of a togetherness that the families felt. Visalakshmi Mami



felt that I had not sufficiently paid attention to the wonderful dance aspect that was so much a part of me and it must be honed in a proper manner. So she pulled me into the first full-fledged Ramana dance program choreographed by Meenakshi Akka presented by her students. In this way structured inputs became a very integral part of my next few years of dance learning.

Ujwal: I know that Delhi Ramana Kendra had a benefit performance by Yamini Krishnamurthi around 1973. You must have watched that performance. Being at Delhi you might have watched performances by several other senior dancers as well. Can you share your experiences of watching senior dancers like Yamini Krishnamurthy and others.

Ambika Akka: Appa used to make it a point to take us regularly for classical dance and music concerts at Delhi. So the imbibing of the experience and expression of senior dancers was always there and it was very beautiful. I would never say it was like something that was so impactful or inspiring, instead I would simply say it was just so natural. It was so much a part of the sahrudaya connect and it was so much a part of me. Just watching, imbibing

and being a part of it were aspects of that natural state of being that this manifest “Ambika” was experiencing at that time.

Ujwal: When did you start choreography and what were your experiences in your early days of performing and choreographing dance?



Ambika Akka: Whenever there was a need for a choreographic expression of any dance, any interpretation of any music it was always very natural and easy for me. That is an aspect of great Grace within the manifestation of the dance aspect that Bhagavan wanted me to fulfill and take forward. So it was never an effortful thing. The composing of music and choreography of Dance would just flow very beautifully. It was an effortless beautiful flow and that I am very

grateful for. Because it allows one to revel in the experience when it is effortless. Otherwise attention will have to go the effort. Not that it is wrong at all. Then the effort itself should become that kind of a sahaja (natural and continuous). But for me it has been effortless, starting from my earlier choreographies to later choreography till choreographies today. It is just a natural outflow of a very beautiful movement from the heart that becomes a manifest choreography.



As I was flowering as an artiste, Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, started by Appa (Sri A.R. Natarajan) gave me ample opportunities to be a part of many musical and dance performances. In the Ramananjali world tour during 1980, a few dances were included in the music programs.

After the program at Chowdiah there were group dance events presented by Meenakshi Akka from time to time, couple of time at Ravindra Kalakshetra and once during the opening of the Ramana Shrine at Bangalore, in which I participated.



In 1985, Sarada Akka and I presented the first full Bharatanatyam margam based on Ramananjali songs under the choreography of Meenakshi Akka at Ravindra Kalakshetra.





Then the solo performances actually took off in a large way in 1986. I got married in 1985 and moved with Kameshwar to Madras. In those days there was no facility like the online possibility to learn at Chennai from Meenakshi Akka who was in Bangalore. So I just nurtured the inputs that she had given and used the innate knowledge that was a part of my being and started choreography



for my solo performances. In fact this happened from 1985 onwards because from 1984 Sarada akka and I shifted for about a year to Delhi to be with appa who was posted there. In 1985 I had started exploring independent solo choreography and presented it as a lecture demonstration on the 'Nava Rasas in relation to Bhagavan's songs' in 1985 in Himachal Bhavan for the RMCL seminar.

Then later in 1986 in Himachal Bhavan, Delhi, as part of the National Seminar and Cultural Event of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning I performed my first solo performance of a complete Bharatanatyam margam fully choreographed by me.

The song which I chose for the Varnam which was to be presented had Sadhu Om Swami's words which I had adapted to Todi Raga similar to the popular Varnam '*Roopamu Choochi*' in the



same raga. As I had just begun composing the Ramananjali Music for dance, the varnam started with the similar tune and later moved on to different explorations of the Raga Todi. The beauty was I did not choose the song because very clearly I was young. I would not have had the clarity of vision to choose that as an ideal song. I didn't have so much of knowledge of all songs in the huge repertoire of Sadhu Om or Muruganar. Even now the magnitude of the works written on our great '*padal petra Peruman*' Bhagavan is definitely much much larger than what it was at that time. But still the bang on choice of the words which Bhagavan gave me for the Charanam was "*ADaga mEniyanAy enai AnDa aruNAchala ramaNa*" (Arunachala Ramana who has governed in his moving

or dancing form). This *ADaga mEniyan* is the *achala tatva* which became the manifest Nataraja tatva which is our view of Universe, the Movement itself, every single atom dancing as Nataraja with the silence of Arunachala. '*ADaga mEniyanAy enai AnDa*' (he governed me as Lord of Dance) so that's what really happened. After the first solo performances there were many many more to follow and many explorations till date.

It has been my complete experience that whenever Bhagavan wanted me to present anything, that force would make everything about the presentation be the Ramana tatva. It has been pure joy in every aspect of the learning, immersing in the music and dance aspects of Bhagavan's manifestation.

On Nataraja, Lord of Dance, a Song composed by
PAPANASAM SIVAN
in Raga Kamas set to Adi Tal, rendered by
Smt. Sulochana Natarajan, accompanied by Ramnad
Iyer on Mridangam.

Adore, my heart, the Feet of the Lord of Dance who dance
With His left foot uplifted.

As He in Thillai dances,

The hooded serpent sways

And the tiger-skin too sways;

Devotees cry out 'Jai', 'Jai'

And Sage Patanjali's eyes, grow moist with joy.

The anklets on the sacred Feet gaily tinkle, tinkle.

From His crown the infant moon's Beams, gleam, gleam.

"Dimidaga, Dadingana, Dom",

Come throbbing out from Vishnu's drum,

As Sivakami's (Parvathi's) husband dances

Smiling in the sacred Hall

of Wisdom, in Chidambaram.

(Translated by Sri K.Swaminathan).

Note: Professor K.Swaminathan translated the famous song 'IDadu padam' for my performance at school in . I would like to share a photo of the typed copy of the translation that my father gave to all the members of the audience.

Geetha Nair or 'K.Geetha' as she was called in Ramana Bala Kendra, as we had another Geetha in the batch, was chosen as 'Ramana Bala Senior' – the best student of the year for the first year of the first batch. She participated joyously in the dramas and dances, as she goes on to report here that this was what drew her to the Bala Kendra in the first place. Before we walk with her through her journey in Ramana, a little glimpse into those early years...





Namo Ramana!

As a young girl of twelve, all I wanted was to learn to dance, dress up and perform on stage. This dream came true when I got the opportunity to join Ramana Bala Kendra (RBK).

Little did I know at that time, that 'Ramana Siva' Himself would dance into my heart and bless me to rejoice in the dance of Joy perennially.

'Om Rachithachala Tandavaya namah' – Salutations to Ramana who dances the dance of Stillness.

Before I share the wonderful experiences, I have had since the time I joined RBK, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the family of Natarajan mama, Sulochana mami, Sarada akka and Ambika akka along with Sudarshan mama for their greatest service in guiding and leading me into the only way of Life I know of- 'The Ramana Way'.

In the last few articles in the magazine 'Ramana Way', my fellow Bala Kendraites have beautifully detailed the inception and activities at RBK.

I wish to dwell on little incidents since Bhagavan Ramana entered my life.

When I look back it appears that every chapter of my life has had a prominent 'Ramana stamp' –

During my second year pre-university studies, as it happens with many youngsters, I was confused as to what to pursue for a bachelor's degree; it was a trend then to take up either engineering or medicine. My father believed I ought to pursue architecture. I was not sure and was seeking Bhagavan's blessings for clarity.

It so happened one evening after classes at RBK at 40/41 Lower Palace Orchards, Bangalore, while seeing off each other, Sarada akka (my friend, philosopher and guide !) casually enquired about what each of us were planning as our next step in college; and she remarked "K Geetha can pursue architecture, you have a natural flair for the subject" – lo behold, Ramana had just marked His stamp, no more confusion – I went on to become an Architect!

'Om Dheerga darshine namah' – Salutations to Ramana who can see the future

Completing my course in architecture appeared difficult as my father fell ill just during my final exams; and in order to take care of him, I had planned to appear for the exams six months

later. At one point my father did show signs of recuperating well, but unfortunately his condition soon deteriorated once more, and he passed away just the night before the day I had to appear for my last and final exam.

Needless to say my mother, sister and I were devastated. At that time, my mind was a total blank – it was Sarada akka who suggested, if I wanted to present my thesis work to the jury as it certainly would have been my father's wish. And so yes, I did present my works and reported to my father before his body was cremated.



It was indeed Bhagavan Ramana's Kindness and Grace that saw me through.

'Om Krupa Purnaya namah' – Salutations to Ramana who is full of Kindness.

For me, my beloved Ramana Bala Kendraites including Srinivasan mama, Nikki mama, Kumar anna & Murali mama have always been like an extended family, and they have been with me and my family through the





good and bad times and I am ever grateful to each and every one of them – Ramana manifests in each of them as a ‘dear friend’. In fact, most memorable and joyful times of my life are the innumerable circumambulations of the sacred Arunachala hill with them which continues...

‘Om Aphthaya namah’ – Salutations to Ramana who is a close friend.

Not so long ago, I had to have myopia corrected through Lasik surgery; though a simple treatment I was in two minds whether to go ahead or not as there were conflicting inputs about its efficacy.

I finally decided to consult the doctor and lo behold on his table was the picture of ‘Arunachaleshwara’ – I thought to myself, do I really need any more assurance? Arunachala Ramana marked His stamp there too!

‘Om Abhayapradhaya namah’ - Salutations to Ramana who grants protection.

Years ago, when my then boss Sri J Sriraman for whom I had a great deal of respect as well as a great working relationship decided to move to another organisation for good, our Chairman took the decision that I would take over from him.

At that time I was quite young and still gaining in experience, so I asked Sriraman Sir if I would be able to assume this huge responsibility; he simply said – **“Be as you are”** – and



lo behold Bhagavan had decided that I would play a pivotal role in my organisation thus!

For those spiritually inclined it can sometimes be a challenge finding a Life partner who also shares a similar interest – here too, Bhagavan has blessed me with a partner who first came across Ramana Maharshi during his teens in the writings of Paul Brunton and is an ardent devotee.



Just before we got married, I happened to meet Shyam's grandmother at her residence in Palakkad; and her very first gift to me was David Godman's "**Be as You Are**".

Well, Bhagavan's message to me has persistently been – to **Just Be!**

**Tē-dā-dut-ranal
Tiru-varul-nidhi-yahat
Tiyak-kam-dīrt-tarul
Arunā-chalā.**

Treasure of benign and holy Grace found without seeking, steady my wandering mind, Oh Arunachala!

How Bhagavan Captured Us

Smt.Sulochana Natarajan

I had mentioned that ARN being influenced by Krishnaji's teachings convinced him that the best place for Sarada to be was in Krishnaji's school, Rishi Valley, a residential school situated near Madanapalle in Andhra Pradesh.

I was very heart-broken to part with her and send her away to a hostel. I do not know how ARN himself was able to bring himself to make this decision as he was deeply attached to her and he would not allow the children to go away from home even for a night at their friends' homes. So Sarada had never been away from the family even for a single night, where to think of her staying away permanently? She perhaps did not understand the implications of it. She later expressed that she wanted to do whatever her father wanted because she had total faith in him and his love. This faith, of course, continued all her life and was one of the greatest blessings for her too. At that juncture, though she was a bit confused, she just kept telling herself, unknown to us, that she would do as appa wanted. In her early childhood she would loudly repeat to herself the instructions that were given to her before she internalized them, such as 'this is not good for papa' or 'papa should be like this'. Later, I think she began to internalize by mentally meditating on the course of action and that is what she did at this juncture at well.

It is possible she was confused because I would cry throughout the time we were preparing to send her, getting her the new clothes that were required, stitching her initials to each of these clothes, packing all the stuff that she would need and so on. She just asked for a new doll that she could take with her and we took a family photo at a studio, all the four of us and also her new doll. Prior to that too Sarada had a favorite doll but somehow she wanted a new one then. She was very conscious of not asking for anything as she was sensitive to the fact that we worked on a very tight financial budget for the family. This she had gathered by overhearing my conversations with ARN at night as her bed was right next to our bedroom door. We never realized this until years later when she revealed this in the course of some of our discussions.

I do not remember praying to Bhagavan to change ARN's decision because I always completely followed what he said. There were times when I would be sad but would still go with his decision. At that time, none of us knew what Bhagavan had planned for us. In the December of 1969 we were all packed to leave from Delhi. We travelled to Madras by train and from there by taxi to Chittoor and Madanapally, where Rishi Valley is situated. The plan was to drop Sarada at the hostel there, spend a day and return the next day. My uncle, Seshadri Mama, also travelled with us. All through the journey to Madras and the days there and in the car, I was crying at the thought of being separated from Sarada. In retrospect I am surprised that ARN did not change his mind at all through all this. Ambika would cry whenever I cried, so it was not very easy for ARN. But Sarada did not cry though she was more silent than usual. She was maintaining a brave front out of her deep love for her father. We reached Rishi Valley and met Dr.Balasundaram, the Principal. We did not know that this was to be the foundation that Bhagavan actually laid for a wonderful friendship with Dr.Balasundaram and through him with his wife, Veena Visalakshi, a friendship that was to play a key role in the formation of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning several years later.

We spent the day there as planned. Sarada was in the school attending the classes and we were in the Guest House. She was very uncomfortable without us but managed through the day but the night she could not manage and she too wept through the night and asked to be taken to us. Of course, they did not bring her to us but when we met her in the morning she wept clinging to ARN and begged of him to take her back with us. This probably confused ARN. He met Dr.Balasundaram and spoke with him about Sarada's reaction. Dr. Balasundaram was a deeply spiritual person, having spent several years of his life with Krishnaji. He told ARN, 'I can tell you that the child will get adjusted. She will grow to be happy here. But about the mother I cannot say.' He had obviously noticed my deep sorrow. 'I do not know whether it will be at all possible for her to reconcile herself to being away from the child.' My uncle also reiterated this. By implication, Dr.Balasundaram asked us to bring Sarada back with us. I will ever remain grateful to him for that. ARN always lived in the moment and Krishnaji's teachings made him even more fine-tuned to this. So he never looked back to think or speak about

how historic this moment was. I am a person who keeps track of history. In fact, ARN would call me the 'historian of the Ramana Movement' as I have maintained a meticulous record of the events, including having photographs wherever possible.

In retrospect, it is very clear to me that Bhagavan had claimed Sarada as His from that very moment. It is not to say that she would not have been devoted to Bhagavan had she studied at Rishi Valley but in the years that followed all of us became more and more deeply involved in the Ramana Movement and she was to be an integral part of that. Bhagavan had also allowed ARN and me to play major roles in directly shaping her life. She has felt it to be of great value and she has expressed her gratitude to Bhagavan and to us in later life which is indeed an invaluable blessing to us. At that time, she, on her part, deeply apologized to her father for not being able to fulfil his wish and for putting him to so much wasteful expenditure. She also promised that she would be a 'good girl' and would do whatever he wanted her to do other than staying back and studying at Rishi Valley.

During that one day stay at Rishi Valley, the only thing that she had enjoyed greatly was the watching of the sunset from a special place. This was for some reason called 'asthachal' 'the unmoving sunset'. She readily accepted ARN's suggestion that she should be more connected to Nature henceforth. Watching the sunset became a deep spiritual experience for her thereafter, a practice which she continued until the last few years of ARN's life at which point she became completely wedded to the studio all day long for a major television serial on Bhagavan. Prior to that both father and daughter would go up on the terrace for their evening walk, especially after the building of the Ramana Maharshi Heritage Campus came up, she at sunset time and he a little later. Their timing would overlap a bit and then she would come down. On the day before his passing, just before he had his stroke also, ARN had completed his walk on the terrace and he often advised Sarada not to give up her time with the sun.

She grew to benefit with an intimate love for Nature as a whole and with her imaginative temperament, this played an important part in her writings as well. ARN was deeply upset with me for quite some time after that. Though he did not show it, I could

sense it. I accepted it as the joy of having Sarada with us was unparalleled for me. Although my friends and later, even relatives would accuse me of having a greater soft corner for Ambika, and say that Sarada was ARN's favourite, I can very truthfully say that for me both my children have always been equally dear to me and I am certain this was the case with ARN as well. The bonding that Bhagavan gave to the four of us was indeed His singular blessing and a marvelous expression of His Grace.

When Krishnaji visited Delhi the following year, ARN took Sarada also to his talks. She went with him happily and would come back and hold discussions with him about the teachings as well. She did feel that she was understanding what Krishnaji spoke and she had the benefit of imbibing his teachings in the light of Bhagavan's teachings with which she was already familiar. She had not yet begun to practice Bhagavan's teachings in a conscious manner. That was to happen not much later. Another change which the Rishi Valley episode brought to our lives was ARN's decision to shift the children to a better school, what he felt was the best school he could then find in Delhi. This too was not an easy decision for us financially, but ARN decided, if not Rishi Valley, then the best I can give them at Delhi. Sarada and Ambika shifted to Modern School that summer. Another move made surely by Bhagavan as the school was undoubtedly to play a very important part in shaping their lives and giving them the necessary inputs for their work in the Ramana Movement later.

Sri Ramana Sahasranama Stuti

387. NIRNAMASKARAH

One who bowed to none.

Ramana had no sense of 'I' and 'Mine'. He had no needs. So he did not have to bow to anyone. He did not have to seek favours. It is desires and expectations which make one offer obeisance or prostrations to others. This does not mean that Ramana was haughty. On the contrary he was humility personified.

Om nirnamaskArAya namaha

388. NISTUTIH

One who does not praise any human.

Ramana reserved his praise for Arunachala. To him Arunachala was not an insentient hill but God embodied. It was the inner guru. His 'Five Hymns of Arunachala' is a devotional outpouring replete with praise of Arunachala. To all creation he paid respect as embodiments of the divine. The question of his praising individuals did not arise for there were no 'others' for him. Self alone existed.

Om nistutaye namaha

389. NIRAYAPAHAH

Protects one from hell.

It is the mind which makes hell of heaven and heaven of hell. What matters is the mind. It is precisely in this field that Ramana's contribution is most significant. His method of self-enquiry helps one to be restored to one's own purity of mind, to be able to deal with life situations with equanimity and poise.

Om nirayApahAya namaha

390. NIRVASANAH

Free of tendencies.

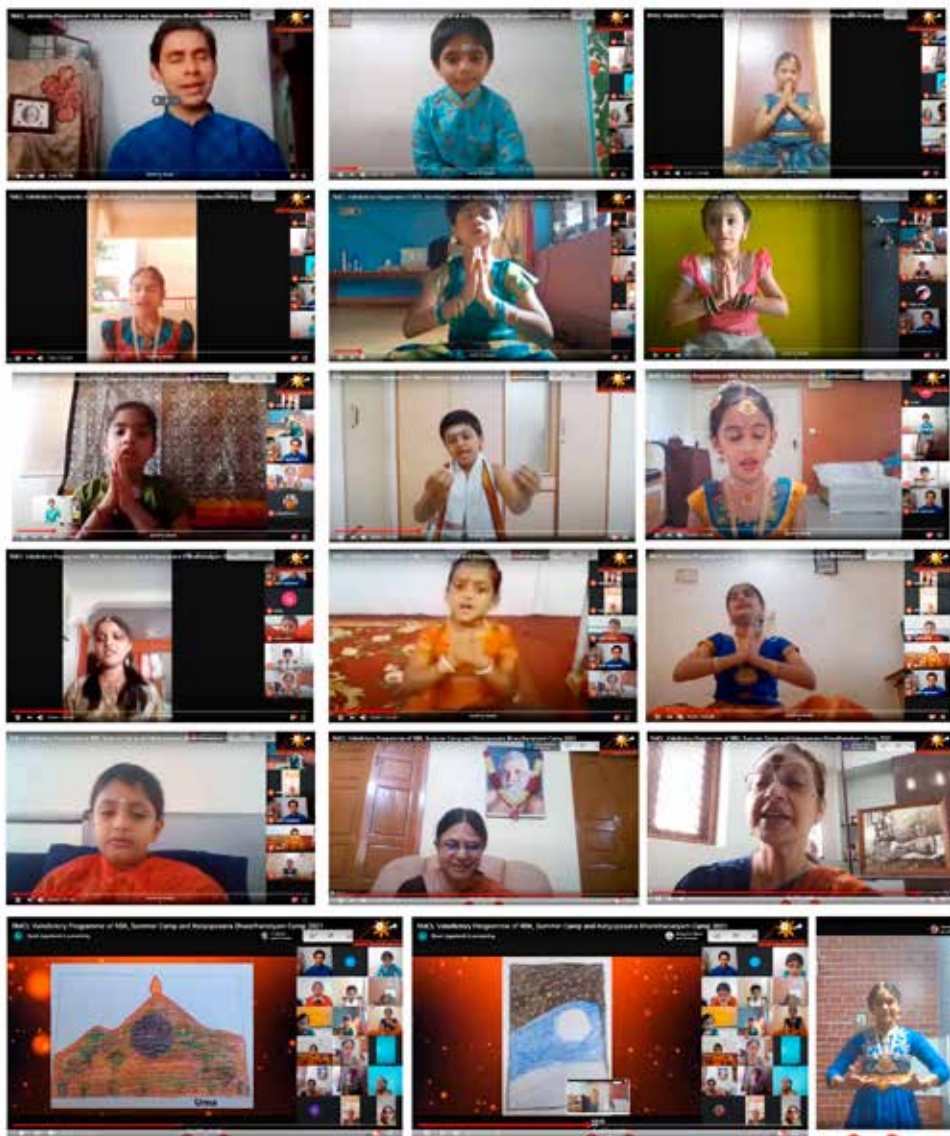
All incomplete actions leave a residue of experimental memories which lead to innate pulls of the mind in different directions. When the mind is turned inward and is abiding in its source one is free of the pull of innate tendencies. After some time tendencies will externalize the mind again but this would gradually wane. Ramana's mind was steadily merged in its source. Hence the tendencies were erased.

Om nirvasanAya namaha

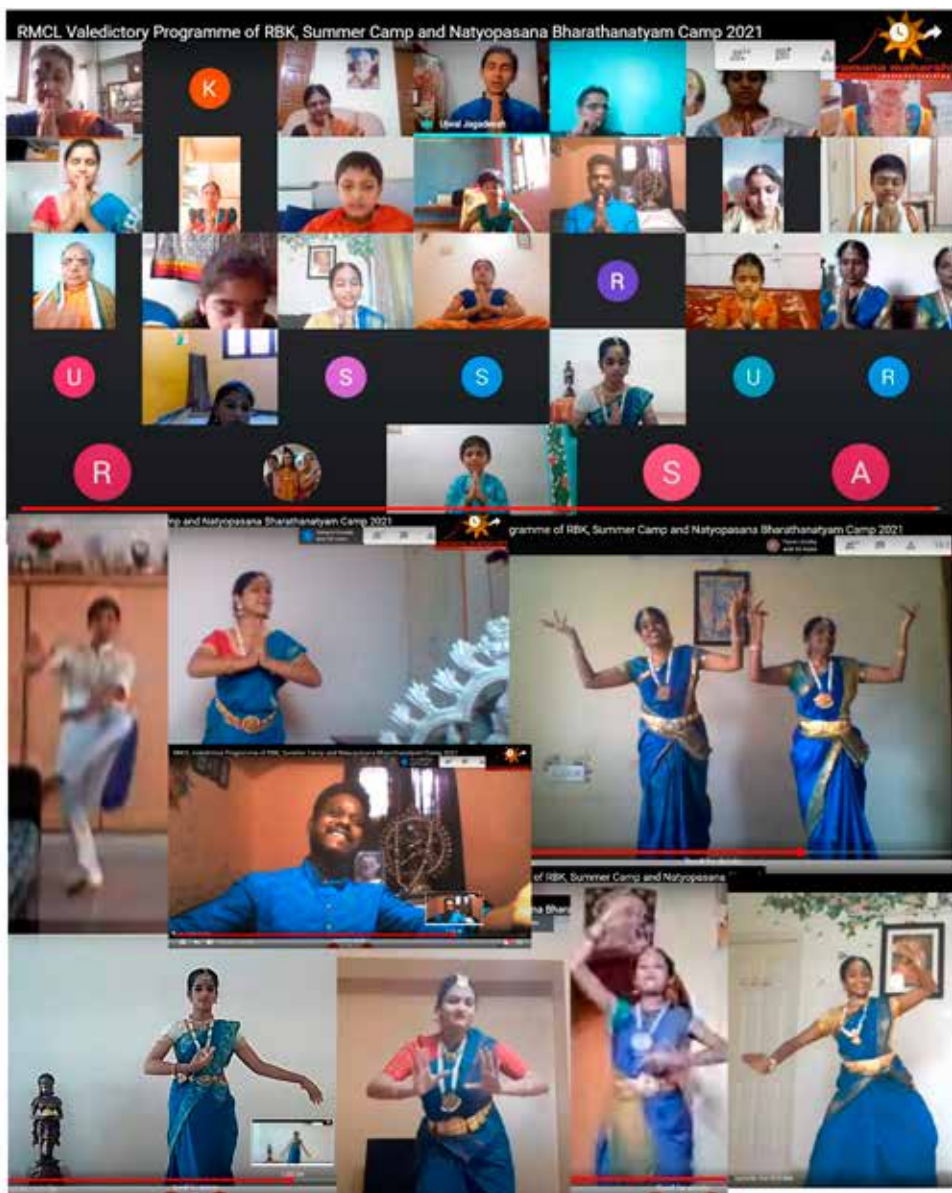
News & Events

Revathi Sankar

Several Online Summer Camps were held for children this year. The first was Ramana Bala Kendra Camp 1 along with the Natyopasana Camp. The Chief Guest for the Online Valedictory was Dr.Kalarani Rengasamy.



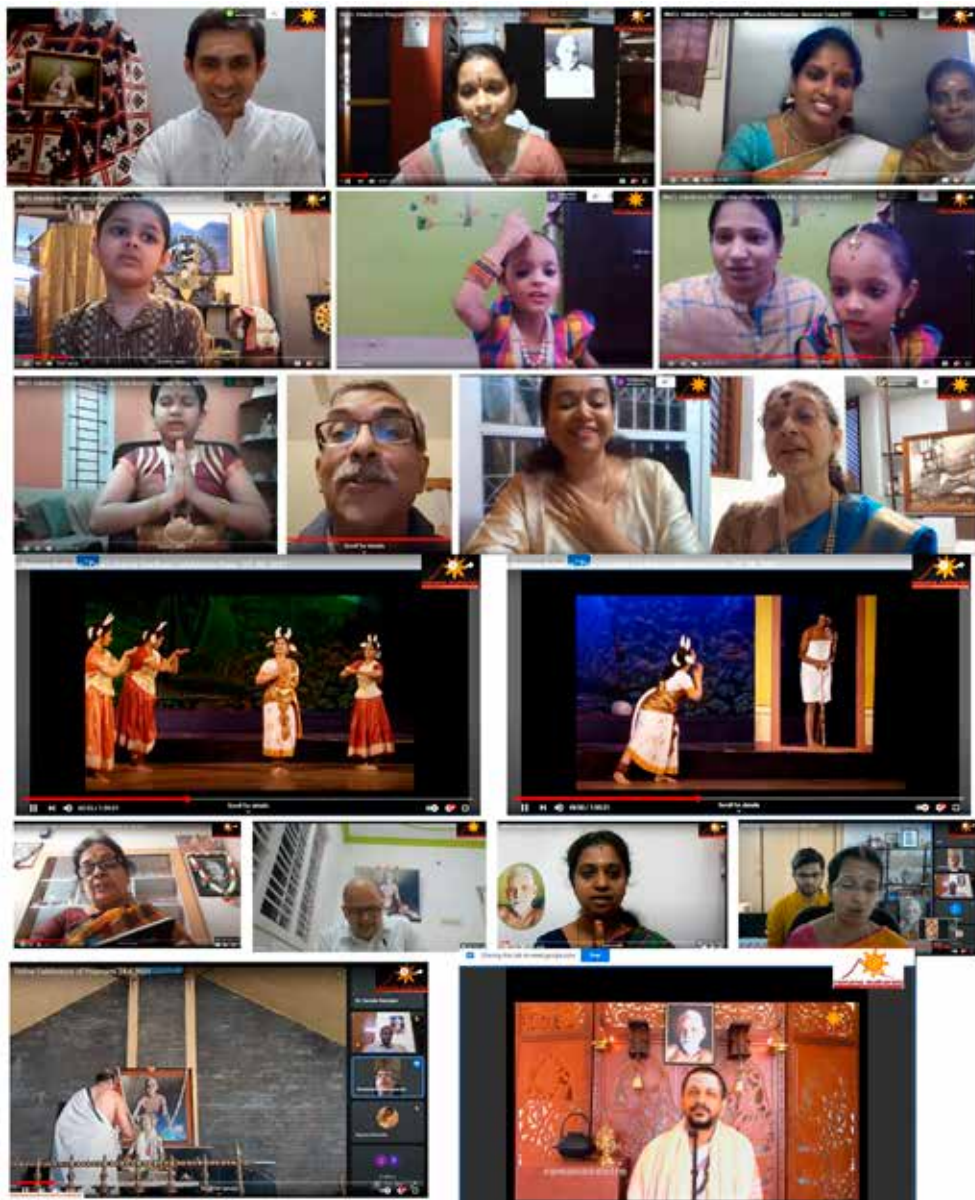
Smt. Leelavathi and Sri Upadhyaya of Leela Natya Kala Ranga blessed the event with their presence.



The Online events continued in July with Ramana Bala Kendra Camp 2. Guru Smt. Rupa Hemanth was the Chief Guest.

Prani Mitra Day, a tribute to Cow Lakshmi, was celebrated.

Guru Poornima was observed with puja at the Ramana Shrine and a benedictory address by Ramanacharana Tirtha Sri Nochur Venkataraman.



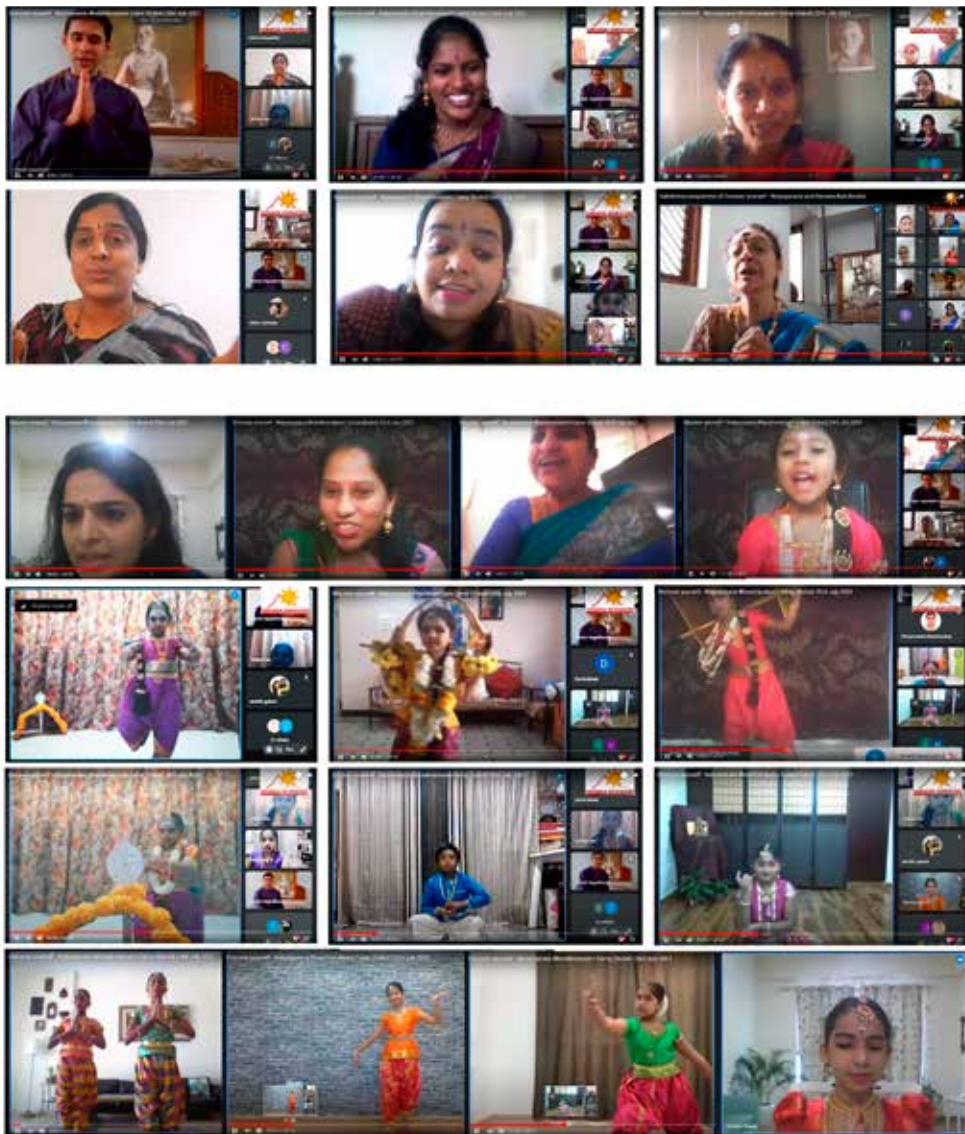
The third Online Summer Camp was conducted both in Bala Kendra and Natyopasana with students from Melbourne, Australia.

Smt. Raajalakshmie, Headmistress, Srimalithri English School and Gurus Smt. Aruna Anand and Smt. Shanthi Ramakrishnan from Melbourne graced the occasion as Chief Guests. Parents expressed their joy regarding the camp.



A Ramana Natyopasana workshop was conducted with students from Dubai. Ujwal Jagadeesh, Uma Sripathy and Revathi Sankar were the dance gurus training the students in both classical and folk numbers. Dr.Shraddha, Principal, DAV School, Smt.Deepa Rajeev and Dr.Sarada were the chief guests.

The online event had several joyous sharings by the parents and grandparents and lively, lovely numbers by the enthusiastic students.



Special Dates in July and August

- » **17th July – Enlightenment Day Celebrations**
- » **24th July – Guru Pournami Celebrations**
- » **15th August – Independence Day Celebrations**
- » **29th August to 1st September – Aruna Vijaya Celebrations**

Special Online Dates

Below are the forthcoming online programs in the coming two months. To know the exact dates and timing of the programs please subscribe to Ramanacentre Bengaluru YouTube channel.

Ramanacentre Bengaluru – YouTube Channel (*Subscribe for program details*)

44th National Seminar and Global Online Festival – Ramananjali 40+

Features:

- » Ramananjali Cultural Programs
- » Down Memory Lane - The History of Ramananjali

Special Talks and Interviews:

- » Sri K.V.Subramonyam on Ramana Kritis
- » David Godman on Bhagavan and Muruganar
- » Dr.T.N.Pranatharthiharan on Muruganar's Ramana Puranam
- » Robert Butler on Muruganar's Sri Ramana Guru 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

To register for Online sessions contact

Uma 9538472026 or join on <https://meet.google.com/kwx-bdoa-gtf>

Online Self Enquiry sessions

Thursday: 7:00 pm to 8.00 pm at RSCS

By Sri Nandakumar ji

Friday: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm at RMHC

By Dileep Simha and Dr. Sarada

Everyday: 5:30 am to 5.45 am, 9:30pm to 10:00pm (online)

By Sri Nandakumar ji & others

(Chanting and Self-enquiry)

Online Satsang

Chanting, Reading, Music, Talks, Puja

Saturday: 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at RSCS

Every Sunday 7.00 pm to 8.40 pm Kannada Satsang

Every first Sunday 11.00 am to 12.30 pm Tamil Satsang

Online Music and Dance classes

[Contact - Uma (9538472026)] at RMHC

On site Talks, Parayana and Puja

By Sri Chandrashekar (9448839594)

Thursday 6:30 pm at RSCR

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40 years of The Ramana Way

Coming to us every month for four decades, 'The Ramana Way' has become an integral and beautiful part of all our lives.

The magazine 'comes to us' even at the Centre. The concepts come to our thoughts through grace. One of the early editorials was being discussed threadbare with the editor by Sri A.R.Natarajan. 'Why did you write this sentence?' 'It is in answer to a point of discussion raised by a devotee'. 'Don't write in order to convince anyone about anything. Write only about the experience that Ramana blesses you with at that time. The words should come from within you,' he said emphatically. A very important lesson was learnt.



Professor K.Swaminathan, one of the founding fathers of the Ramana Movement, then Vice President of Ramana Kendra Delhi, wrote, "I extend my blessings whole heartedly to 'RAMANA'. When people work together it is essential to keep alive the unifying bonds."

Guru Vachaka Kovai in English

Original : Muruganar

Translation: David Godman

Investigation into Truth

128. Without realising that the world that appears in front of them [ultimately] brings about their ruin, those who cling to it, believing it to be real and beneficial, will drown and be ruined in the sea of samsara, like someone who climbs onto a floating bear, taking it to be a raft.