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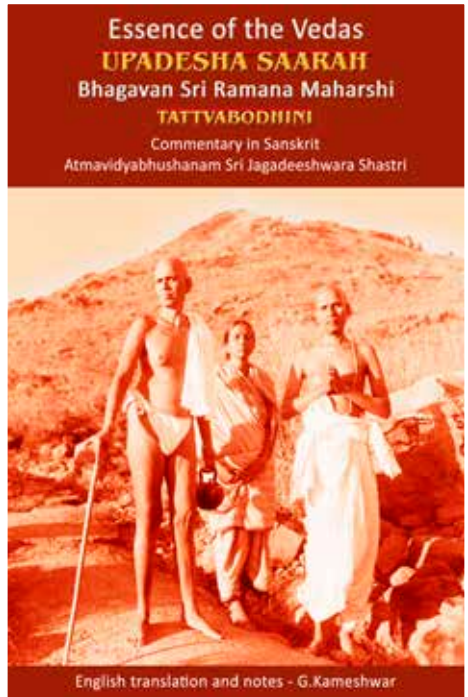
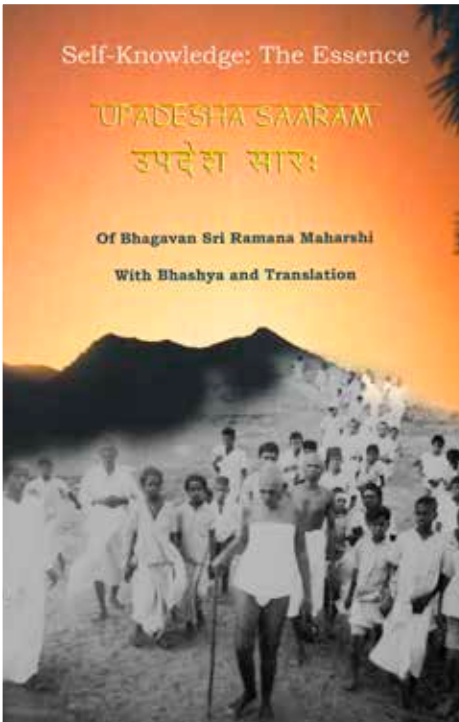
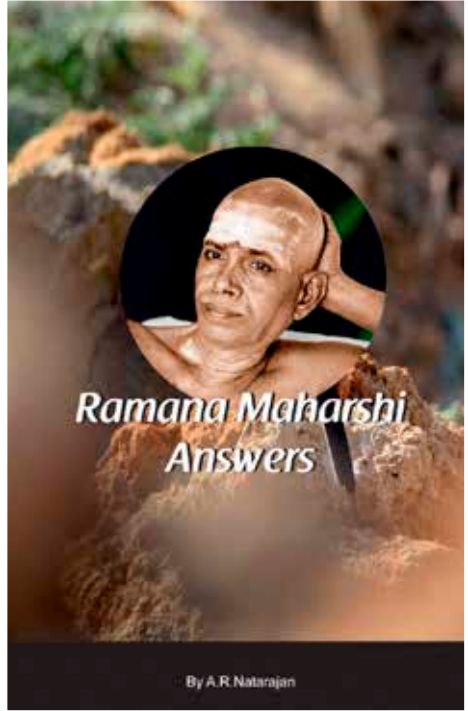
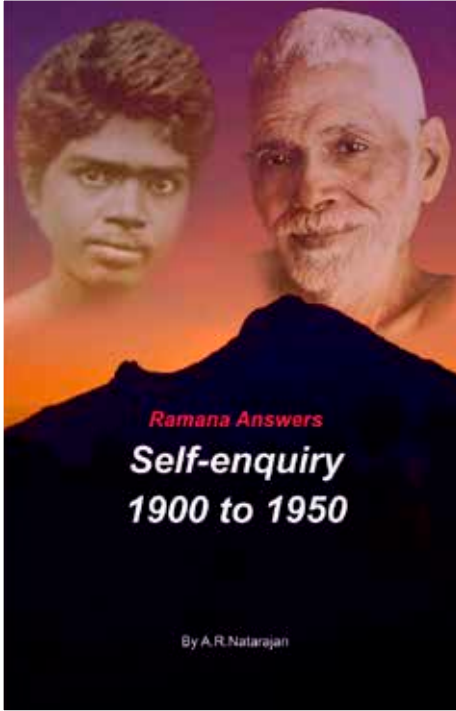
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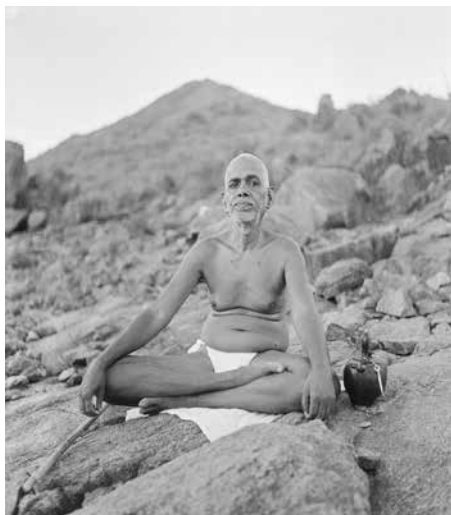
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NEW
Publications



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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We do know that the body is not I, don't we? Surely, we are aware that the Self is not the body. How do we know this?

Is it because we refer to different parts of our body including our internal organs as 'mine' and not as 'I'? If the body were to be seen by us as our very self why would we use expressions such as my hand, my eyes, my stomach, my brain? We may brush this aside as a matter of mere linguistics. But really speaking it's much more than that isn't it? The truth is that everything that's happening to the body is experienced by us, by the I. We would clearly see this if only we choose to pay attention to this fact. And, attention is the key. Any bodily experience is known to us only when we attend to it, when we pay attention to it. Whether it pertains to our senses, whether it is seeing, listening, tasting, smelling, touching or whether it is physiological like the churning of the stomach, hunger, pain.... I feel each of these and I know that I feel all this. Deep within us we know that this I, the I that experiences each and all of these, is not the body. But we may prefer to let this pass.

When someone passes away, we routinely use the expression 'May his/her soul rest in peace'. Why would we do so unless we are aware that there is a 'soul' that continues to exist after the body is buried and left under the earth to decay or is burnt and reduced to ashes? Only thing is that we are least concerned about this 'soul' until it is in the body. We do not wish to know who it is that may continue after death or who has been born in the first place. And from moment to moment in life, who is it that feels as if he or she is one continuous entity despite the numberless changes in the physical being?

What drastic and dramatic changes the body undergoes through life, beginning with the change from being within the womb to coming out of the womb, the changes in size, the changes in the various metabolisms and going on to the decay and waning away into death. If we are accosted with this fact, we will readily say that

these are mere changes in the body. In the event of some part of the body having to be totally sacrificed for the benefit of the whole, though with a deep sense of pain and sorrow, we would allow the sacrifice to be made. Would we do so if it were 'I'?

And, though we may feel a bit deprived or somewhat incomplete at the loss of any part of our body, clearly it is only our image of the body that has received an injury. The 'I' does not become incomplete, it 'feels' incomplete. While we may use these expressions figuratively, can we really say that we have half or three quarters of ourselves left if a part of our body has been surgically removed? Or does the 'I' become a new 'I' on receiving a kidney transplant? Someone declared after a heart transplant, 'I have a new heart', not 'I am the new heart'. The bodily functions may change with the change in an organ but does the 'I' change? Can the body be the 'I'?

For those of us who have set out on the inward journey in search of our self, the seed of the thought that we cannot be limited to the body has already been planted in our minds and may well have taken root there. We easily use expressions indicating that the body is not the I. Hence, we may be said to know this fact. Yet, do we really 'know'? The irony is that we do know and yet are unable to accept this truth. If there is any discomfort in the body, like hunger, heat, cold or pain, we feel intimately connected to that experience and are unable to differentiate ourselves from it. Not only are we strongly connected to our bodily experiences, we are also deeply attached to our bodily image, whether it is tall or short, thin or fat, dark or fair and so on. We begin to believe that is 'I' and expend a huge amount of energy striving to cultivate and maintain a given image.

What to speak of attachment to our body which we are carrying around with ourselves as our most valued possession in all our waking hours from the moment of birth? That is not very surprising considering our degree of bonding even with objects that we very evidently know are not I. We are desperately attached to several objects that the 'body' possesses or is related to. We often feel that these possessions are extensions of our own self,

like our house, our vehicle, our laptop, our cell phone, our clothes and jewels. Is it a wonder then that our identities are inextricably interwoven with the people in our lives?

Thus it is perhaps, that though we know, we do not know. Though we see, we do not see that the body is not I. We are told that all this is due to wrong knowledge, the illusion of identifying the self with the body and the strength of the habit of doing so for uncountable ages. Therefore, we earnestly begin our practice to get rid of our attachments, to understand and accept that some things are not I. We strive to cajole our minds in numerous ways to come to terms with this fact. Though more often than not we fail, we do keep trying. We drop a little 'this' and move away from a little 'that'. We make small sacrifices. While Ramana, the kind Master, encourages us saying that dropping even a single thought goes a long way in getting back to Self-awareness, the truth remains that we cannot break a lifetime of habit with a moment's effort. Of course, if the degree of intensity of the effort is very high, then it may fructify right away. By and large, however, lower inputs from us would bring smaller and slower changes in our condition. So we plod on, if we are satisfied doing so. Funny part though, is that we also complain about lack of progress, sometimes overtly and often covertly. We worry about the results of self-enquiry not becoming manifest.

Through all the ups and downs in our practice we must surely be accepting the truth that we cannot be the body, is it not? If we were not convinced about this fact, why would we even set out in search of our true nature, why would we make even the least of efforts in that direction? So we know that the I cannot be the body. Hence we ask ourselves, 'Who am I?' At the same time, we do not know that we are not the body. If we knew, knew without the least trace of doubt, knew with the totality of conviction, that the body is not I, then how could even one further thought arise? If I am not the body, can anything that belongs to the body belong to me? If I am not the body can anyone related to the body be related to me? If I am not the body can any of the body's experiences be my experiences? If I am not the body, can any of the emotions connected with those experiences be my emotions? If I am not

the body would it be possible for me to 'do' anything, to act in any manner? If I am not the body what would remain for the mind to think about?

Yet, far more significantly, Ramana asks, 'What is the mind?' He solves this riddle too, explaining that the mind is thoughts. All thoughts are dependent on the 'I'-thought, so the mind is nothing but the 'I'-thought, clarifies Ramana. And then, he gives us the most important clue in answer to the question 'What is the 'I'-thought?' The 'I'-thought is nothing but the thought 'I am a body' 'I am so-and-so'. Hence, using the tool of self-enquiry, putting the searchlight on the 'I' through the question 'Who am I?' is the all-powerful weapon to cut across the apparently alluring delusion of limiting oneself to a body.

By some far chance if the bodily existence has been very good to us and is hence enticing, Ramana gives us the lure to transcend it. In his 'Song of Self-Knowledge' (Anma Viddai Geetham) he declares repeatedly that Self-awareness is bliss, bliss, bliss:

"When this delusion is destroyed
And not a speck remains,
The Sun of Self shines bright and real,
Darkness dies; afflictions end;
And bliss wells up."
"Such Self-awareness is the only Heaven,
This stillness, this abode of bliss."
"Seeing this Self within
As Awareness' lightning flash;
The play of Grace; the ego's death;
The blossoming of bliss."
"The effulgence of the Self within;
The experience of Eternity; absence
Of all fear; the ocean vast of Bliss."¹

1 - 'Self-Knowledge' (Atma Vidya), translation Professor K.Swaminathan, 'Five Hymns to Arunachala and Other Poems of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi', Ramana Kendra, New Delhi, 1977, pp 162-163.

And in his 'Eight Stanzas on Arunachala' (Arunachala Ashtakam) Ramana says that when we reach the Self,

*The Royal-throne of the heart,
(one becomes)
Verily
The Monarch
Under the shade
Of the sole Umbrella-of-State.²*

Sri A.R.Natarajan describes the joy of the journey even as we are nearing abidance in the natural state and finally when the river of individuality has merged into the sea of the Self. He says, "As one progresses one would not 'run with his thoughts'. The mind would always be charged with primal energy. Consciousness would not be splintered or fragmented. Thoughts will come and go when they must and their particular purpose has ended. One would always be in repose, be he engaged in action or free from it. We cannot even imagine the beauty and the power of a fully conscious mind. Joy and power, what a two in one! The wondrous combination will fill our being. Though mortal we would have discovered our immortality and timelessness."

Sarada Natarajan

2 – Translation G. Kameshwar, 'Shri Arunachala Ashtakam', Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, The Ramana Way, October 2021, p 33.

From the Editor's Desk 1995 to 2000

FOCUS? HOW?

The time for waking is here. Why do we dream on still? Why carry into the waking now the dreams of yesterday and the day before and a hundred thousand days before the day before? Yes, we go on dreaming while awake and dreaming while asleep with only a short break of deep oblivion. But the time for waking is here and we can wait no longer. If sleep draws our heavy lids together singing the lullabies of habit, we must switch over to other channels and hear the dawn hymn resounding from within. For the time to awake is here.

Enough of riding the crest of illusion, let us dive deep into the ocean of reality and grasp our infinite treasure. Enough of escaping the all revealing rays of the sun behind shrouds of apparent importance, duties to be done, tasks to be completed, revolutions, reforms, achievements. Enough of lying lazily waiting to be woken up, covering oneself in sheets of seeming inability, oh! our sinful nature, our vagrant minds, our impossible tendencies, our pestering habits. None of these excuses will hold water any more. For the time to awake is here.

We are not asleep all the time. We do wake up from time to time. Magic memories of waking clarity light our dreams all of a sudden and make us wonder why we dream on still. And then we tell ourselves as we have done ever so often, enough of this sloth, the time to awake is here.

Why do we stop with telling? Why are we content with the passing fragrance, the rare fresh breath of waking? Why are we so accustomed to the stale air of closed rooms, to the dingy confines of perennial identification that we are afraid, almost, of the vast expanse, the cloudless sky of awareness? No longer now the fleeting moments of waking, no longer the return to slavery, no more the curse of having to serve dream masters eternally. The moment of waking is here.

We must hold on for dear life, hold on to the waking because it is the only thing that matters. We have already decided,

have we not, that awareness is our focus, Self-awareness, steady, unbroken Self-awareness. No more can we afford to waste time in proving this to ourselves. Time is running out, the alarm has been ringing long, too long. The time to wake up is now.

Let's do away with all paltry excuses, dismiss them summarily. For, there is no doubt that anything that keeps us from our own, our very own nature cannot be anything other than an excuse. And in the nature of all excuses, every one of the reasons we profess is bound to be paltry too. In order to do so we may indulge in examining the various excuses, or at least a majority of the types of excuses, that we are capable of cooking up in order to postpone our own bliss. Since we are ever on the look out for new ways and means to lock ourselves in, an analysis of the existing technology would stand us in good stead. For one thing we would get to know how sturdy these time honoured excuses are. In case we find any of them wearing out we can get them re-soled or retreated or restored in any suitable manner. If we discover that they will not do or are simply getting outdated or are just downright boring, we could plan new, exciting excuses!

Excuse number one. We are not able to keep attention fixed on the Self because we do not know what the Self is. Could there be a more absurd proposition? The very fact that we say 'I do not know' confesses not only the existence of an 'I' but also knowledge about that I. There is an 'I' which I know, who knows further that there is no knowledge of the Self which indeed is 'I'. Oh! But this is the false 'I'. What is 'this'? If, instead of hiding behind labels of 'false I' and 'true I', one would examine this very 'I' with which one is so familiar, if one would just turn attention back to it, if one would remain with it, then one would know at once. What? That the Self can never be 'unknown' for it alone is the basis of all knowledge, it is knowledge. To say that one does not know the Self is like saying that one cannot see the sun because the lights have gone out and one does not have a torch either. One cannot see the sun if one does not wish to and closes one's eyes. One cannot know the Self so long as one prefers the pretence of ignorance.

Excuse number two. One has not experienced the bliss of the Self and so the known joys exert greater attraction.

Thus, though the Self is awareness and there can, in fact, be no ignorance of it, one keeps one's attention away from it and on objects because these are obviously enjoyable. Wow! This is a whopper if there ever was one. The Self is bliss and the Self alone is bliss. The laughter of stars, the twinkle of infant eyes, the gurgle of steams, the gushing of sweet voices, vast vistas, tiny beauties, song and dance, strokes of a brush, the tap of a chisel, the dance of flowers, the stillness of clouds, the wonder of love, the softness of silence, every joy, every upsurge of bliss is the Self.

Where can one find joy away from the Self? Every true joy of ours is only an infinitely tiny glimpse of the Self. Of course there are the thousand pretended pleasures that we may console ourselves with in our misguided search for this, the only bliss. And do we really believe that all happiness lies in them? Are we seriously content to go through the same grind again and again? Getting and spending, buying goods, selling goods, making relationships, breaking relationships, winning posts, losing posts, round and round and round in the same meaningless cycle of hypothetical self-importance. Is this the 'happiness' for which we would stake our all?

Excuse number three. Self-knowledge is here and now. It is the fullness of bliss, there is no doubt. Yet, we cannot turn attention to it ignoring the call of duty. Our wives or husbands, our children, our parents, our friends, our colleagues, our jobs, our art, why, the society itself, is dependent on us. Can we forget all this? My, my! How repetitive can we get? The world existed before us and will continue to do so without much assistance from us. We cannot stop it if we wish to, we cannot move it for all our striving if it stopped. We have not come with term guarantees. We cannot assure how long we will be around to perform these very same profound duties. In our absence others will live and die, others will thrive and decay as they have done in our presence.

We have not created the world, we do not sustain it either much through we would like to believe to the contrary. The best part of the joke is that everything gets done only by the power of the Self in any case. The mind, the magical, all-powerful mind, which can create universes in a split second, is a mere reflection of the Self. And we would have ourselves believe that this supremely

partial reflection (which it is at present) would carry out tasks with far greater efficiency than the unlimited energy of the Self! Has not our Sadguru Ramana assured us with great love that if we look to the paramount duty of remaining Self-aware all other duties would be automatically taken care of? All this, of course, only if we insist on clinging to the illusion of the 'other'. When the Self alone dances, undivided, as every atom, 'duty'? By 'me'? To 'someone else'?

Excuse of excuses – yes, numbers four, five, six etc. Self knowledge is. Agreed. It is bliss, the fullness of bliss. Accepted. To remain steadily aware of it is the paramount duty, it is the source of greatest good to all. Convinced. Still..... yet.... but..... you see..... There are these tendencies, this habit, this incapacity to practice, to put into action, call it what you will. One is not clear what exactly one has to do..... After all the 'thirty thousand' patient potent answers which our Sadguru Ramana has given to as many similar questions? Sigh. Never mind. The examination fever begins well in advance though it reaches its pitch only around March or April. Before one academic year is over, preparation is on for the next. So here starts our 'revision' too.

How to wake up? (Since we are only pretending to be asleep, we are ignoring the excuse which says 'Nothing in the dream can serve to bring one into the altered state of waking'. Since we are only pretending to be asleep we are setting out to seriously examine the counter-pretences that will convince us that we are in fact awake or will render our current pretences hopeless forcing us to drop them). Or, how to keep awake? For, as we noted at the very outset, all of us are awake from time to time. It is only that we tend to fall sleep again and our periods of slumber out distance those of waking. So, how do we keep clarity?

Savour the moment of waking. From that which happens in the horizon between sleep and waking to that which happens at all times of intensity. Whenever the awareness surges up naturally, stay with it. Be on the look out for such moments. Keep constant vigil. And do not allow them to slip away unnoticed. Yes. Bhagavan Ramana has given us a clue that everyone experiences this truth at the moment of waking, before one jumps to other associations. He has asked us to remain attentive to this moment.

It has passed. One was aware, but has lost it in the return of habit. Or, worse still, it has passed without one's noticing it. Well, it has passed, has it not? Never mind. One is aware now of its passing, is it not? Marvelous. Get back to the awareness. No time to waste on wondering why it passed. No, not a moment to waste. Every moment must be given to vigilance. Vigilance to what? Vigilance to the dance of the 'I'-I' as the heart. For it is merely inattention which keeps us from the truth. Vigilance also, secondarily, to the rising of identification. As Bhagavan clarifies in his 'Arunachala Ashtakam', in the absence of the 'I' – thought, in the absence of identification, no other thought exists. If the 'I' sense should arise, question it. Seek the source from which it rises and merge there, abide there.

So the question 'How to keep awake?' has the simple answer, 'By not falling asleep.' By never letting attention move away from the Self. Since there is a tendency towards forgetfulness, however, we must build up a pattern of constant remembrance. There are so many tasks happening through the day which are obviously mechanical. Whenever one is engaged in work that does not demand attention, attention may immediately be turned back to the source of the 'I'. More importantly, attention must be reverted to the Self whenever non-functional thoughts arise, 'If this happens, then.....,' 'What would they be thinking about this.....?' 'Should I have behaved differently?' and so on and so forth. Bhagavan categorically states that even pondering much about a course of action is a waste of time. He specifically asks us not to think 'Will this be right or will that be right?' 'Is this good or this bad?'

The point is to act always with maximum attention and minimum effort. Effort implies the 'I', 'I must do this', 'I must perform well', 'I must get things done perfectly', 'I must give my entire attention to the tasks', 'I must not falter' 'I must not get distracted.....'. The list is endless. In attention on the other hand, only the task is and one is completely focused on that. Simple, there is nothing to undermine attention, not even thoughts of oneself. When there is no task on hand, attention naturally would rest in the Self. There would be no seeking, no moving away because nothing else would matter. Attention would turn to the next task as and when required.

End of story. End of all excuses. For, as and when any excuse arises the best remedy is to laugh at the reason. No reason is good enough to keep us from Self-awareness. And as Bhagavan says, the surest way to become steady in practise is by more practise. When Self-awareness becomes the most important thing for us, then the slightest wavering of attention will not be countenanced by us. As and when the mind moves to objects which are not of relevance, automatically one will become aware. This very awareness will get the mind back to its source. 'What is happening to her? Why is she taking so long' will be answered with 'I will know when she comes. Why expend thought on it?' 'Why did this happen?' would be countered with 'It's over, why give it more attention?' Gradually there will be no need even to pose the posers 'For whom are these thoughts? Who am I?' As and when attention moves away one will become alert to it and attention will return spontaneously to the Self. Thoughts about the past and future will dwindle and vanish.

At the moment, having looked at all our excuses and finding that they do not hold water, having also exhausted the excuse of looking at excuses, we are left with no escape routes. The time to awake is here. Well then, let buses be missed or milk be spilt, let the sun and the moon rise and set alternately, let dogs howl or cats screech, let people cry and laugh and work and work. Let life go on and on and on as it ever has. But let our mind cry a halt to its drudgery, to its slavery to objects and turn attention back to itself. Then the layers of dusty habit that cover all that we know will be wiped clean. And life will shine forth in its crystal clear, transparent beauty. The time for waking is now, is it not? What then is one waiting for?

The light is everywhere. We can no more run away from it. We can no more hide from it. It has pierced through all our pretences and gathered us in its cool brilliance. For the time to awake is here. It is no longer a long way to here, a long time for now.

THE ELEPHANT'S CHANCE

When the body lies prone after the last breath has parted what matters if uncooked rice be heaped into the mouth? Would the tastiest morsel then be known as any different? Could the

delicate aromas of sumptuous cooking make the mouth water? Would the excess of chili or biting bitterness bring tears to the eyes? Can it then be the body that craves for a variety of tastes even while alive?

When the body lies cold after the last breath has parted is it hurt by the ropes that bind and keep the limbs in place? Is it warmed by the fire that is carried beside it? Or yet scorched by the flames that lick it on the funeral pyre? Can it then be the body that pursues great comfort even while alive? Is it the body that longs for Air-Conditioners or Central-Heating, dunlop mattresses and sand-washed silks?

When the body lies stiff after the last breath has parted can the tears around it moisten the eyes? Can the sight of loved ones make the heart beat faster? Or the presence of old enemies make the blood – pressure rise? Surely it is not the body that ever loved or hated, that seeks and spurns relationships at every turn.

When the body lies unmoving after the last breath has parted does it spring up into action at the mention of an unfinished task? Does it remember all the unsigned papers? Will it complain about the pending correspondence or add a detail to a forthcoming book? Change a tone in a song just recorded or correct a step that is inadequately danced? The body has not been rushing headlong into one activity after another. The body did not care for work or, for that matter the absence of it.

It is the mind. The mind that tastes, the mind that accepts and rejects, enjoys and suffers, the mind that loves, the mind that hates, the mind that couldn't care less. It is the mind that pursues unending activity and seeks occasional rest. It is the mind that sees and smells, touches and listens. It is the mind that possesses and the mind that may renounce as well. It is undoubtedly the mind that laughs and cries, that is gentle and harsh, irritable or patient, compassionate or indifferent. Surely it is the mind, the mind alone that lives.

The body is inert, always. This is clearly explained by Bhagavan. It is not a thing alive at birth that becomes insentient in death. It is always inert. Only, when it is known to be alive it is animated, moved about, made to act and react by the

presence in it, by the association with the mind. Or, to put it more accurately, by the mind having linked itself with the body. Even in this identification there is no volition on the part of the body, no active participation. There cannot be, it is inert, at best the passive partner, the instrument through which the mind works and lives. Neither is the mind's dependence on this body total. It can easily assume other bodies even during this life-span as it often does in dreams – be they during the waking day-dreams or the nightly sojourns both terrifying and sweet. There is no doubt that the body is inert.

We do not have to look so far as death to know this. Our daily experiences of dream and deep sleep do well enough to turn our attention to this fact. It is to these that Bhagavan often points to establish the primacy of the mind in experience and then the absence of that also in the awareness that is the Self. However, Bhagavan also sites the instance of death to explain that the body has no life of its own. And we dwell on death because its finality adds fire to the search for truth. Its finality lends credence, as nothing else can, to the fact that mind is the source of all experience. The mind is the individual and the mind is the world. Hence, tackling the mind, Bhagavan declares, is the way to victory over everything – “Sarvajayaya Marga”.

If after being aware of this, and well aware too, one still beats about the bush, one stands exposed to the vagaries of the mind. It is but weakness of mind, Bhagavan admonishes strongly, to merely discuss or give oneself to various mental pursuits after having heard the truth from the Sadguru. No compassion at all must be shown for the mind and its innumerable tricks. If one falls for its apparent goodness and allows it to survive, or is frightened by its seemingly insurmountable resources of negativity and hence fails to deal with it, one is done for. In any manner, for whatever reason, if it is allowed to submit, at some point it is bound to overcome by surprise and emerge triumphant. Hence, Bhagavan does not stop with admonishing us about the weakness of our minds, about the cowardice camouflaged even in our seeming attacks to oust it from sovereignty. He adds a warning by narrating a story from ‘Yoga Vasista’ as to how indulgence in such weakness may well be fatal.

There was once a mahout (an elephant keeper) who ill treated his elephant. He not only did not feed it well, but often teased it, hurt it and on the whole made the elephant miserable. On one occasion the mahout slipped and fell at the very feet of the elephant. In a moment it could have trampled him and killed him, but at the last instant it held back and ran away into the forest. The mahout, however, was in no way grateful that the elephant had spared his life. Rather, he bore a grudge against it for having got the better of him. As he recognised the elephant well, he tracked it, dug a huge pit and laid a trap for it in the jungle. The poor elephant was quite happy in being rid of the mahout. It naively believed that the mahout would have learnt his lesson and no longer interfere with its life. In this confidence it freely roamed the jungle and fell into the mahout's trap. The mahout, of course, was triumphant and allowed the elephant to die in the pit.

Sometime it may seem that the mind is behaving itself. It may be in a wonderfully pure mood. However, so long as this is also only a mood, only within the relative mental frame of good and bad, pure may soon change to impure. Detachment may be replaced by over-riding attachments. Hence Bhagavan clearly states that it must be given no chance to escape. The mind must be totally rooted out, destroyed without a vestige so that the Self shines forth.



From the Founder's Pen: 1990-1995

The Hidden Power

By A.R. Natarajan

INTRODUCTION

When we say something is 'hidden' it means it is available but not at present for us. We have to search for it as one would if he knows that a family treasure is buried somewhere in one's paddy field or one's ancestral home. But unlike personal treasures, the power for which we are now looking is a universally available one, to you, to me and to everyone. This makes a lot of difference for it means that it is open to one and all to find this power and to make it one's own.

The power we are referring to is also of a different kind. Usually we associate power with position, political or hierarchical, or that flowing from wealth or learning or excellence in particular fields. Such power is in the hands of a few thousands only. It also has its ebbs and flows. But the power now written about can be harnessed by everyone who is earnest, vigilant, and steadfast in the effort to discover the hidden power.

What is the nature of this power? It is the power of a silent mind, a mind which is alert, alive and yet passive. It is a mind whose calmness, whose repose, whose peace is undisturbed by relationships, by ideas, by the inevitable successes and failures of life. It is a mind which functions without loss of any logic or reason. It is the mind which we have lost and which we have to find.

In any treasure hunt, success depends on the leading clues by following which one can unearth the lost treasure. Otherwise, it would be a wild goose chase. Would it not? It is precisely here that Sadguru Ramana steps in with his various guidelines and his weapon of self-enquiry which is based on his own experience. The advantage of his method is that the path avoids detours, by-lanes, and diversions and takes one straight to the goal.

*These articles have been published in the book 'The Hidden Power'.

The first clue which Ramana gives is that one should somehow manage to squeeze in at least a little time for questing, for trying to find out what life is all about. Is there nothing more to life than its daily routines, its hectic holiday schedules, its endless seeking of money, position, and constant effort at pushing ahead, at doing one better than the other person? If this idea is instilled into your mind, then, you may take a good look at your topsy-turvy values.

Of what use is it if you conquer the whole world, if your mind is in chaos, if your heart is shriveled and you cannot even sleep without tranquilizers? If you do not put a brake to the hectic pace of life you have set for yourself, it might lead to an overall imbalance in your life. You may have the pride of your bank balance overflowing with funds, of watching the upward graph of the business group and so on. But you might be neglecting your wife, losing touch with your children, becoming friendless and lonely. What indeed is the net gain if as a result of your warped, sectional view you have elbowed happiness out of your life? Hence, Ramana's emphasis on taking things in their stride, on being conscious whether you have purchased anxiety and fear while grasping more than you can handle. This contemplation of fundamental values, of course, should be in the backdrop of remembering the fact that all effort is in the last analysis only for power, peace and happiness.

The next basic clue of Ramana is to warn against the danger of identifications and excessive attachments. Ramana would say, "Why don't you act as an actor on the stage or the cashier in the bank? Does either of them identify himself with the role he plays or with the cash he is handling?" After all, life is not made to order. It is a dynamic flow, a divine drama in which you have the option of playing your role well or ill. Each one has a multi-role to play each day, as a boss, as a son or daughter, husband, wife father, mother, friend and so on. For instance, you cannot dote on your children at the cost of ignoring your parents. A certain degree of detached-attachment needs to be cultivated, being conscious of where to draw the line, to be free from the binding aspects of identifications.

Yet another vital clue Ramana gives is that thought addiction is just as bad as drug-addiction. What does one mean by thought-addiction? One can understand this by posing the question, how would we feel if we do not have thoughts, if we are thought-free?

Scared stiff? Wouldn't we be? This is natural for we associate the power of the mind with its capacity to think fast, and in an orderly manner. To us the mind is the only energy source from which one derives his vitality, and zest for life. For we foist on the mind, the power to reason, infer, discriminate and remember. This universal assumption needs examination if we are to break new ground. One has to go into the question as to whether thinking is possible without the mind. Is there 'thinking without the mind'? Yes, says Ramana. For, the mind is not the primary energy source. We have wrongly located it there by habit. But the primary energy source is the fullness of consciousness, the spiritual heart, from which the mind itself derives its energy. It is therefore only a secondary energy source and now it is emaciated, anaemic due to constant loss of energy in the form of a million thoughts.

One should, therefore, search for the primary energy source, which is now hidden and untapped. If only one discovers it, one would be suffused with boundless energy and pulsating joy. How does one quest, search, go about to discover the hidden power? Quite obviously one has to get away from the mind loaded and polluted with an overcrowding of thoughts. The task is not easy for the only instrument which one has is the mind itself. Ramana tells us that if you try to deal with the content of the mind you will go under its numerical weight. Hence, he gives a technique, a method which enables one to bypass the world of thoughts by paying attention to the subject, the individual to whom this entire thought world relates. One might ask, what is the advantage in doing so? The advantage is fairly obvious for attention can be single focused instead of being multi-focused as at present. The single focus makes the mind integral, unitary and its energy is gathered together.

Ramana has explained this clearly as early as in 1900 to one of his earliest disciples Gambiram Seshier (called as Seshayya also). Ramana explained to him that "the enquiry, 'Who am I?' is the primal means. When thoughts arise due to residual impressions one should restrict the mind from flowing that way and endeavour to retain it in the Self-state. One should be vigilant before thoughts arise. If any room is given, such a disturbed mind will do us great harm. While posing as a friend, like a foe pretending to be a friend it will topple us down."

The great advantage in questioning the true identity of the thinker, is that one is alert to the rising thoughts and their movement in a thousand ramifications. Caught in the mainstream of thought we are unable to stay with the wanted thought, the required thought. This questioning straightaway stills the mind and the thought momentum is dammed. The mind would cease to play its tricks, its games. Hence Ramana's emphasis on self-enquiry. He told Kunjuswami, who was his attendant for many years, "It is no use saying 'I am serving Bhagavan, I am dusting his bed, I am looking after his needs for so long'. There is no greater service than to be engaged in self-enquiry in all sincerity".

We are used to dividing time into meditation time, office time, leisure time and so on. If only one is able to build into these divisions some effective substratum mechanism which prevents the seepage of mental energy, the ups and downs of the energy levels would not be there. Ramana would sometimes cajole people to practise self-enquiry by emphasising that this is precisely what it does. Once, in 1934 a businessman came from Punjab seeking counsel from Ramana for mental quietude. He wanted to be initiated into some sacred mantra, or form of worship. Ramana advised "Please give only as much time for enquiry as you would for pooja and japa. It would amply repay your efforts. With practice it would operate in the busiest hours". Ramana would also warn that the alternative to "atma-vichara", self enquiry, is 'Loka-vichara' or worldly involvement. The choice should be obvious.

Though constant vigilance is needed for an uncluttered and free mind, this by itself would not be sufficient. Awareness of the grace of Sadguru Ramana, who is the constant inner guide on this path, is necessary. One is clearly indebted to him for being the path-finder and helmsman on the way though his 'extravagance of grace' would make it appear that it is he who is indebted to us. The path would be a bed of roses if there is constant remembrance of his unfailing support. As we move along and advance on the path we have to say with Cardinal Newman, 'Lead kindly light'.

As one progresses one would not "run with his thoughts". The mind would always be charged with primal energy. Consciousness would not be splintered or fragmented. Thoughts will come and go when they must and their particular purpose has

ended. One would always be in repose, be he engaged in action or free from it. We cannot even imagine the beauty and the power of a fully conscious mind. Joy and power, what a two in one! The wondrous combination will fill our being. Though mortal we would have discovered our immortality and timelessness.

Bangalore

27th February, '95

Maha Sivarathri Day

THINKING WITHOUT THE MIND

Ramamurthy: Swamiji, I have read Paul Brunton's book, 'A Search in Secret India'. I was much impressed by the last chapter where it is said it is possible to be conscious without thinking. Can one think without the mind? Is it possible to gain that consciousness which is beyond thoughts?

Maharshi: Yes. There is only one consciousness which subsists in the waking, dream and sleep states. If it is known you will see that it is beyond thoughts.

R: Can one think without the mind?

M: Thoughts are only like other activities, not disturbing the Supreme consciousness.

- Talks 143, pp.49,50

We identify consciousness with thinking, with the mind. Intellectually therefore we find it impossible to accept the state in which there is consciousness but there are no thoughts. Or we find it hard to accept a conscious state which is free of thoughts. Therefore, we wrongly assume that the process of thinking - memory, reasoning, discrimination, determination can relate only to the mind. Hence the crucial question of vital import, 'Can we think without the mind?' Also, what is that consciousness which is beyond thoughts, which enables thinking without the mind? Putting it another way, what is it that vivifies the mind itself? Does intuition take over where thought ceases? In the answer to these

questions lies the solution to the fear of that which is beyond the mind, the fear of the state when the mind is dead, when the mind is submerged in its source. It is necessary to tackle this fear to be free from its grip. Else, all effort at freedom from the mental world would come to a grinding halt after a particular stage. Effort would taper off because of the unconscious but deep-rooted idea that we would be reduced to mere idiots, reduced to morons, reduced to indolence, be dead to all feelings. We fear that everything would be totally meaningless. All the affirmations about the wonder of that state, about its fullness, about its overflowing bliss would fall flat against this Frankenstein. One has to travel step by step uncovering certain basic facts, certain fundamentals on which Ramana has thrown such clear light.

What is this thing called the mind? Do we know it? Not really. Because there are thoughts, we assume that they have emanated from a source which we call the mind. But if we question, we must find out that since mind and thoughts co-exist, that which we call the mind can relate only to waking and dream states. Thoughts are absent in deep sleep though we continue to exist. Consciousness continues in sleep. Otherwise we would not be able to recall the joy or repose of it on waking.

One may refer to Ramana's assurance to a French visitor, Mon. Georges Le Bot, "People are afraid that when the ego or mind is killed the result may be a mere blank and not happiness. What really happens is that the thinker, the object of thought and thinking, all merge in one source, which is consciousness, and this state is neither inert nor blank."

By questioning the break in the mind's functioning in sleep one would be sowing seeds of doubt about the validity of identifying consciousness with thoughts, with thinking, with the mind. Doubts as to whether there is a state beyond the mind, about a state of consciousness which includes sleep as well, would begin. One would start investigating whether Self-consciousness is different from mind-consciousness.

If there be a state beyond the mind, how can one discover it? If mind is only fragmented consciousness, because it is non-existent in deep sleep, what is the fullness of consciousness? What

is that consciousness which is comprehensive, covering deep sleep as well? For the replies to these queries, one has to look once again at the mind itself and be aware of its scope and limitation.

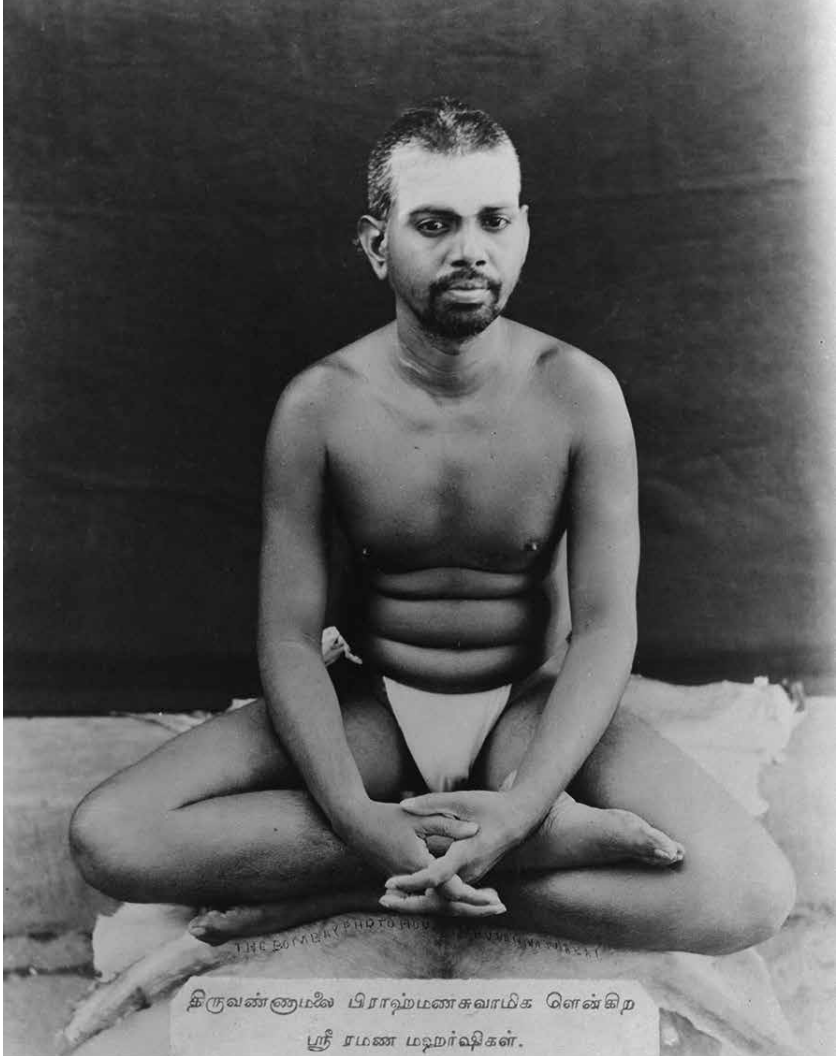
Hence, lest one should lose one's way, Ramana himself guides and shares his experience. Arising from the fact that the mind disappears in sleep and reappears on waking he points out that one should search for the source of its origin. Such a search would take one to the spiritual heart which is at once the fullness of consciousness and the place from which the mind springs forth and into which it subsides. If attention is given to the feeling of individuality, to the core of the mind, and not to other thoughts then the mind consciously merges in its source. Then the mind gradually 'dies' to use Ramana's terminology.

Pausing here one has to be careful in understanding this concept, for it raises the bogey that all mental faculties, creativity and activity may end. All that it means is that the mind is restored to its pristine purity. That the mind is rid of its habitual accretions of debilitating, weak, negative and bad thoughts.

As Ramana clarified in 1900 itself to one of his earliest devotees Gambhiram Seshier, "As without mind, there can be no experience, it is possible for the purified mind endowed with the extremely subtle mode to experience Self bliss". Ramana also makes it clear that in the thought free state "intuition, automatic action will develop".

When the river merges in the ocean it may no longer have its form or name but it is the vast ocean. Therefore, whenever limited consciousness, the mind, merges in the fullness of consciousness, the heart, it acquires greater strength of an uncontaminated, limitless consciousness. However, since we are too far gone in our false notion that thinking without a thinker is not possible, Ramana keeps injecting this truth time and again in his replies to the seekers. The point which he would keep hammering in is that the mind we take pride in, the ego ridden mind, is a weak one, its strength having been sapped by its inability to resist the intruding or torturing thoughts. In contrast, a pure mind, with which one functions when the mind is merged in its source, is perfect and undistracted. Another point he would emphasize is that what we call the mind is an impure reflection of the consciousness, and its

power can be compared to the reflected light of the moon. Who would choose it? Who would opt for it when one can make full use of the sunlight? The pure mind uses the blazing light of the Self. Hence where does any question of losing oneself in a maze of inaction, indolence or lazy dalliance arise if the present divided mind gives place to a unitary pure mind? It is time indeed that we de-hypnotize ourselves from the false thoughts and premises on which we have built the edifice of fears.



Talk 104 (Excerpt)

Mr. Kishorilal, an officer of the Railway Board, Government of India, hails from Delhi. He looks simple, gentle and dignified in behaviour. He has gastric ulcer and has arranged for his board and lodging in the town. Five years ago he took up the study of devotional literature. He is a bhakta of Sri Krishna. He could feel Krishna in all that he saw. Krishna often appeared to him and made him happy. His work was going on without any effort on his part. Everything seemed to be done for him by Krishna himself. Later he came in contact with a Mahatma who advised him to study Vedanta and take to nirakara upasana, i.e., devotion to formless Being. He has since read about seven hundred books of philosophy and Vedanta, including the Upanishads, Ashtavakra, Avadhuta and Srimad Bhagavad Gita. He has also studied Sri Bhagavan's works in English and is much impressed by them.

Once when he was in the jaws of death, no other thought haunted him but that he had not yet visited Sri Bhagavan in his life. So he has come here on a short visit. He prays only for Sri Bhagavan's touch and His Grace.

The Master said to him: atmaivaham gudakesa, i.e., I am Atman; Atman is the Guru; and Atman is Grace also. No one remains without the Atman. He is always in contact. No external touch is necessary.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: Even the Mouna Diksha, Nayana Diksha, Sankalpa Diksha or Vaag Diksha - stilling of the ego of the seeker through Mouna Sannidhi – Presence of Silence, Directed Sight, Directed Thought, or Directed Speech - all these are only from the perspective of the seeker. The Guru has no doership even in the liberating work of Ishwara. To the Guru, Atma alone IS.

Q: I am a psychiatrist with interest in Vedanta. I can't believe that the Self or consciousness or life is fully present in a desk or stone.

A: As a psychiatrist you must know that unless thought energy permeates the brain, nervous system and skeletal system, the body cannot function. Thought energy is outward turned consciousness. So, consciousness permeates thought and bones in your body.

Bhakta can feel bone-melting Nama-Smarana. If bones are permeated by thought, mantra and consciousness, why not stones. Turn inward. For whom is the thought, 'I am a psychiatrist'? In the Self, such doubts do not arise.

Q: When the throb of the "I-I" is strong, I feel the consciousness permeates the whole body including bones. However, when the "I-I" is weak, I try to make it throb again.

A: Silence beyond the "I-I" is not "weak". It is subtle. It permeates all. In fact, it has nothing 'other' to permeate. Be.

Talk 104 (Excerpt)

The Master said to him: atmaivaham gudakesa, i.e., I am Atman; Atman is the Guru; and Atman is Grace also. No one remains without the Atman. He is always in contact. No external touch is necessary.

D: I understand. I do not mean external touch.

M: Nothing is more intimate than the Atman.

D: Again Sri Krishna appeared to me three months back and said, "Why do you ask me for nirakara upasana? It is only sarva bhutesu cha atmanam sarva bhutani cha atmani. (The Self in all and all in the Self.)

M: That contains the whole truth. Even this is *oupacharika* (indirect). There is in fact nothing but the Atman. The world is only a projection of the mind. The mind originates from the Atman. So Atman alone is the One Being.

*****GUIDANCE RECEIVED:***** *This is why Bhagavan says that God and Guru can show the way but one has to realise the Self oneself. In one sense, Sri Krishna has brought his devotee to the Guru who can guide to the nirakara Self. He himself points out that this step cannot be "given" by asking the devotee to hold Sri Krishna by the Mantra, "the Self in all and all in the Self". Bhagavan points out that in the Self there is no "all" as the opposite of "one", "few" or "many". There is only the Self. This Self consumes the spiritual journey too. It reveals itself as always present - before the ego and its problems arose, during the quest for the Self, and after. By revealing itself as "the ever-present limitless Self", it absorbs the whole creation. The Self alone IS.*

Q: You mean to say that the fact that Sri Krishna has guided the devotee and that Sri Ramana has guided the devotee too are illusions?

A: From the state of peace and empowerment of "the Self alone IS", these highest supports too stand absorbed.

Q: Without a "help" the "nirakara" might as well be "not present".

A: No. It prevents the mind from taking the excuse of blaming others and God. It is the Sat - the Truth.

Q: How is it that Mastan Sahib, a disciple of Bhagavan, who followed the "nirakara vichara" was taken by Apitakuchamba at the time of death of the body (narrated by Akilandammal and approved by Bhagavan!)?

A: It is told by Bhagavan that even in Kailasa someone will be sitting and teaching Self Enquiry!

Q: Do you mean to say that he was going to a Mukti Loka as a teacher of the "nirakara" Brahman?

A: How to know? He could be going to continue learning from Bhagavan. Either as a teacher or as a student, aim for the Sat.

Talk 104 (Excerpt)

D: Yet it (that there is in fact nothing but the Atman) is difficult to realise.

M: There is nothing to realise. It is nitya suddha buddha mukta (the Eternal, pure, aware and liberated) state. It is natural and eternal. There is nothing new to gain. On the other hand, a man must lose his ignorance. That is all.

This ignorance must be traced to its origin. To whom is this ignorance? Of what is one ignorant? There are the subject and the object. Such duality is characteristic of the mind. The mind is from the Atman.

D: Yes. Ignorance itself cannot exist. (He finally surrendered saying, "Just as a doctor learns what is wrong with the patient and treats him accordingly, so may Sri Bhagavan do with me". He also said that he had lost all inclination to study books and learn from them.)

*****GUIDANCE RECEIVED:***** *The enquiry, “Who am I?” takes one into that consciousness that is beyond all ignorance and Maya, finally burning itself out in the Self. Bhagavan says in Ekanma Panchakam that if one enquires “who am I?” or “from where do I arise?” it is like the laughable act of a drunken man enquiring “who am I?” and “where am I?”. The Self alone IS. The imaginary ego, all its outward journeys in ignorance and inward journey of enquiry stand consumed in the Self. No mistake, no correction, no goal, no path, no seeker, no bondage, no liberation, no jeeva-jagat-Ishwara; the Atman alone IS*

Q: It is said that Ishwara is that “I” which knows that this entire creation is my body permeated by me. Is there no use reaching this stage in enquiry? Can’t I bring relief to the suffering to some part of my body?

A: In Upadesa Undiyar, verse 8, Bhagavan points out that in the Ishwara’s self there is only abeda bhava of “I-I”. The moment there is beda bhava or particular attention to something, one fragments oneself as the powerless, bound ego. Stay empowered as the “I-I” irrespective of the circumstances. Here the difference between helping oneself and helping others vanishes. BE.

Talk 105

M: Yena asrutam srutam bhavati (Chandogya Upanishad). (By knowing which, all the unknown becomes known.)

Madhavaswami, Bhagavan’s attendant: Are there nine methods of teaching the Mahavakya ‘Tattvamasi’ in the Chandogya Upanishad?

M: No. Not so. The method is only one. Uddalaka started teaching Sat eva Somya (There is only Being) illustrating it with Svetaketu’s fast.

(1) Sat, the Being in the individual, is made obvious by the fast.

(2) This (Sat) Being is similar in all, as honey gathered from different flowers.

(3) There is no difference in the Sat of individuals as illustrated by the state of deep sleep. The question arises - if so, why does not each know it in sleep?

(4) Because the individuality is lost. There is only Sat left. Illustration: rivers lost in the ocean. If lost, is there Sat?

(5) Surely - as when a tree is pruned it grows again. That is a sure sign of its life. But is it there even in that dormant condition?

(6) Yes, take the instance of salt and water. The presence of the salt in water is subtle. Though invisible to the eye it is recognised by other senses. How is one to know it? What is the other means?

(7) By enquiry, as the man left in the Gandhara forest regained his home.

(8) In evolution and involution, in manifestation and resolution, Sat alone exists. Tejah parasyam, devatayam (the light merges in the Supreme).

(9) An insincere man is hurt by the touch of fire test. His insincerity is brought out by fire. Sincerity is Self-evident. A true man or a Self realised man remains happy, without being affected by the false appearances (namely the world, birth and death, etc.), whereas the false or ignorant man is miserable.

GUIDANCE RECEIVED: Self-Enquiry makes one fast all thoughts. That thought-free state is not "mine" like the honey gathered from different flowers is one. In deep sleep is individuality present? Is deep-sleep final experience of Sat? No. Like a tree pruned, life grows again. Is there Sat in deep-sleep? Yes, like salt in water. How to know it as individuality is not present? Self-Enquiry takes one to the Sat of deep-sleep in the waking state by removing the ego and revealing the Self. What is the acid-test that such Sat has become Sahaja Samadhi - natural? Even when world and its challenges are faced, the peace and empowerment of the Sat is not lost.

We are blessed to continue the new series of excerpts from Master Nome's book of the above name, generously shared by him and SAT (Society for Abidance in Truth) for the benefit of readers of 'The Ramana Way'.

- Editor

[Here is a letter to Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj. Maurice Frydman kindly served as the translator of it into Marathi and for the response given by Maharaj. The reference in the opening paragraph to the book, I Am That, is to the original Indian edition that consisted of 75 dialogues.]

October 19, 1975

ॐ नमः शिवाय ॐ Dear Maharaj,

Recently, I had the good fortune of reading a copy of *I Am That*, and I am overjoyed with the constant expression of Truth conveyed by Your words. I bow and prostrate before You, You who are Truth, itself, and the perfect exemplar of Realization. Reality cannot be expressed, described, or conceived, and there are not two of us between which a communication can take place. Still, I trust that this letter will indicate, as well as words can, a sharing or communion in Absolute Truth.

I alone am. Indivisible, I do not admit of any dualism. Not confined within space and time, I can never be experienced. Not a thing or entity, I am never the object of perception or conception. When the experiencer, perceiver, or conceiver are deeply inquired into, I stand self-revealed.

I am transparent Awareness, devoid of the dualism of life and death, subject and object, self and other, and within and without. Even the term "transparent Awareness" is not meant to indicate anything objectifiable, experienceable, or conceivable. When sought as an object or entity, I am found to be utterly absent. Yet this absolute absence reveals the absolute presence that I am.

Self-Realization is Being; not being this or that, just Being. Realization is not to be attained, for it is my very Being. There is no

entity, no “me” to attain, and no thing to be attained. Being is not a state or experience that can be reached or attained by methods, stages, or practices. Realization is the simple non-conceptual understanding of who I am. This understanding, or knowing, is inseparable from and identical with Being. Self-Realization, or Enlightenment, is not an event. I, myself, am Realization, and I am intemporal or what is sometimes termed eternal. Actually, I have neither the attribute of time nor that of timelessness, for, being absolutely nonobjective, in the sense of an entity or object, I remain always undefined. Being is neither existent nor nonexistent, neither this nor that. Not a single attribute can be associated with the unqualified Awareness that I am. Being and Awareness are one and the same. Awareness cannot be cultivated or attained, being what we are, and I am that Awareness.

I have never been born, and so I shall never die. I am not an entity dwelling within the confines of time and space. There is no “me,” no individual entity that I can call myself, and there is no world in which this supposed entity could be born, live, and die. I am not now young, nor shall I ever be old, for I am neither the body nor the mind nor a thing or person of any sort. I am, and there is no “me.”

All is within. Although I am no thing, I am everything. Absolutely, I alone am, and there is no within to have a without and no without to have a within. I cannot be said to exist, nor can I be said to not exist; nor both exist and not exist, nor neither exist nor not exist. Although the perceiver can never be perceived, all that is perceived is actually the perceiver. If the perceiver be deeply examined, the nature of all things proves to be the same as the absolute inconceivable quiescence that I am.

As Realization is not a state to be attained or maintained, it is quite effortless. It is the ever-present, natural state, which is not a state at all but, rather, the Being- Awareness-Bliss that I am. Realization is none other than who I am, and so I can never be separate, different, or other than what the words “Realization,” “Self,” and “Jnana” signify. There are not two selves, one to “realize,” attain, or come into union with the other. There is not even one self, in terms of an individual entity. I am as I am: ungraspable for I am not a thing, unattainable for I am the ever-present, nondual Reality, and not even in “union,” for there was never any division.

Standing naked in the Truth, I speak to You totally honestly. I know who I am, and this clear Knowledge, which is identical with my very Being, has set me free of all imagined bondage and liberation, hopes and fear, desires and desire-lessness, ignorance and knowledge, happiness and suffering. By understanding the absolute absence of any “me” to be defined or confined by any of these, I have awakened to the absolute presence of I.

Sri Ramana Maharshi is my Guru, and He has bestowed spiritual instruction through silent Grace and the written recordings of what He said. Also, I have taken great joy in reading the words of Sri Atmananda of Trivandrum and the *Avadhuta Gita* of Dattatreya. In You, I find the perfect Realization of what is indicated in the teaching of the above mentioned sages. I consider You to be identical with my Guru and Your wisdom to be unsurpassed. All praise falls short of describing You, and words cannot adequately express how profound a sage I feel You are. It can only be said that I know You as I, as my very Self.

If You wish, and if it is possible for You to do so, I would greatly enjoy and appreciate hearing from You. I speak, write, and read only English, so any response would have to be in this language. Such a correspondence with You would be greatly treasured, and I would be deeply thankful for any reply that You would care to offer.

It is this Self-Knowledge that I have to share and upon which the relationship between us stands. This Self-Knowledge is the deepest, earnest love. The absence of “you” and “me” is the perfect at-one-ment or presence called love. Even though we may appear to live a great distance away from each other, this love is as intense as if I were sitting right before You.

Whether you decide to write or not, we are in eternal Love, in the silent absolute communion of I.

With tears of joy as well as a hearty laugh,

Nome

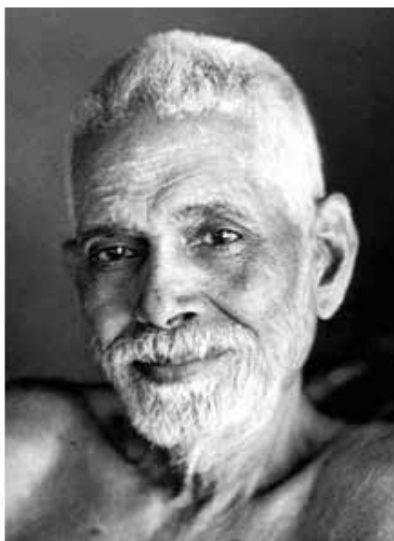
[This is the letter written by Maurice Frydman, the translator of the book, I am That, to convey the response of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj.]

January 7, 1976 Dear Nome,

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj has received your letter, and it was translated for him into Marathi. He gave it to me and asked me to convey his thanks and brotherly greetings. As the letter was for Sri Maharaj only, I shall only add my best regards and sincere wishes for a long and fruitful life.

Yours sincerely,

M. Frydman (translator)



Shri Arunachala Ashtakam

G Kameshwar

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

(Verse-7 Continued... Part 2)¹**Verse-7**

*inRaka menuninai veniRpiRa vonRu
 minRatu varaipiRa ninaivezhi lArkkeR
 konRaka mutitala metuvena vuLLAzhn
 tuLattavi cuRinoru kuTainizhaR kOvE
 yinRakam puRamiru vinaiyiRal canma
 minputun piruLoLi yenunkana vitaya
 manRaka macalama naTamiTu maruNa
 malai-yenu melai-yaRu maruLoLikaTale*

Verse rendering:

*If the 'I' thought**(Awareness of 'I')**Were not there**Nothing else exists;**Until that time**(as that 'I' thought does not cease)**If other thoughts arise,**Then, for whom?**(the answer would be)**'To me!'*

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

Now,

*If one were to seek
From where does this 'I' rise
And merge there
Drowning within
Reach
The Royal-throne of the heart
(one becomes)
Verily
The Monarch
Under the shade
Of the sole Umbrella-of-State.*

(After which)

*The twosomes of
Inside-outside; twin-karma (good and bad)
Birth-death; pleasure-pain; darkness-light;
Etc.,
Dreams all
Cease to be.*

(And)

*In the golden-hall of the heart
Dancing, without moving,
That mighty hill known as Aruna
The ocean of light
Of limitless Grace
Alone (Is).*

Notes:

In the previous part, we explored how the verse spells out the path of self-inquiry. When the 'I'-thought exists, the world exists. Upon seeking the source of the 'I'-thought, the mind, drowning within, merges in the heart; whereupon the notions of an

individual 'I' and a distinct world, ceases; and one is established in the Kingdom of the heart, as the Supreme Non-Dual Reality, the One Lord-Almighty.

Let us continue, with the exploration of verse...

Take the phrase - *oru kuTai nizharkOvE* – meaning 'O Emperor, with one umbrella shade'...

Bhagavan says that upon the culmination of self-inquiry, one drowns within; and reaching the Royal-throne of the heart, one becomes, verily, the Emperor-Supreme, the Sovereign, abiding under the shade of the sole Umbrella-of-State (i.e., one realizes one's identity as the Lord-Almighty, the overlord of all worlds, ruling under the shade of the One umbrella of unparalleled Grace).

The description of this 'Supreme Sovereignty', is indeed a Self-Portrait (if one may say) of Sri Ramana Himself.

Take the name 'svarAt', from the litany of 108 names of Bhagavan Ramana (Ramana Ashtottara). It is the fifty first name in the Ashtottaram, expanding as the obeisance - '*Om svarAjE namaH*' – '*Prostrations to the Autonomous, Self-Luminous One*'. Explaining this name, the composer of this litany, Sri Viswanatha Swami says² – "*The Self-Luminous One. One who exists all by Himself, and shines by Himself – In the verse 'iruntoLi runaiviTut taTuttiTal teivam' (verse 4 of Arunachala Ashtakam) – Bhagavan has elaborated on this One-Existence-Consciousness nature. Moreover, in the same composition (Arunachala Ashtakam), in the verse 'inRakamenu ninaivenil', (verse 7) (this Supreme-Emperor) has been described as the 'One who abides at the source of 'I', which is the source of all that there is'; 'One who sits on the Royal-throne of the heart'; 'One who rules over entire Creation, under the shade of the sole umbrella of State'.*"

In the English commentary of Ashtottaram rendered by Prof K Swaminathan, the name 'svarAt' has been explained as: "*He is the sole Being, hence the Emperor of the realm of Being. Swaraj is self-reliance, self-awareness, self-control, the inner or organic self-rule which the Vedas proclaim as the human ideal and which Gandhi pleads for in his 'Hind Swaraj'. It is not mere freedom from control by others or freedom to control others. It is freedom from the sense of duality*".

It is this freedom that Bhagavan describes in this verse

as ‘...the twosomes of inside-outside, twin-karma (good and bad), birth-death, pleasure-pain, darkness-light; all these, mere dreams, will cease to be.’

This Supreme-Emperorship abiding in (and as) the heart is what the Veda-s describe in Narayana Suktam as:

*tasyAH shikhAyA madhye paramAtmA vyavasthitaH
| sa brahma sa shivaH sa hariH sa indraH so.akSharaH paramaH
swarAT.h ||*

‘In the center of the flame (in the heart) lives the all-pervasive God. He is Brahma; He is Shiva; He is Vishnu; He is Indra; He is the imperishable; He is the Emperor-Supreme.’

It is this Kingship that is depicted as the silent-Shiva Dakshinamurthy, the Acharyendra (Emperor among Preceptors), sitting under the canopy of the Banyan tree, the umbrella shade of Supreme-Grace.

And it is this ‘Supreme Symphony of Silence’ that is the Self-expression of Bliss as the ‘Cosmic Dance of Perfect Stillness’³. And this is depicted in another name of Bhagavan Ramana – ‘*rachitAchalatANDava*’. ‘*Om rachitAchalatANDavaya namaH*’ – ‘*Prostrations to the Dancer dancing the dance of stillness!*’

Explaining this ‘name’ – Sri Viswanatha Swami says⁴:

racitAcalatAndava :- He who performs acala-natanam (Still-Dance)... How does one perform the dance of stillness? What, indeed, is acala natanam? Being of the nature of Fullness, with nothing as apart from itself, the Self is acala (Motionless / Still). The anubhava-sphuraNa (throbbing experience) of the Self is spoken of as natanam – dance. Even so, there is no duality phenomena of ‘Experiencer and Experience’ in that (Self). For that very reason, the Self-Experience has been referred to by the rasa-soaked (aesthetic-taste-filled) term of acala-natanam (Motionless Dance). This holy name (racitAcalatAndava) points to the substance of the verse 7 of Arunachala Ashtakam, which says:

3 The 108 Names of Sri Bhagavan, Sanskrit Commentary of Viswanatha Swami – English translation by Prof K Swaminathan, Published by Sri Ramanasramam , 2008

4 Ramana Ashtottara Shatanama Stuti Tamizhurai Vilakkam

In the Heart-Space of One, Who, Seeking deeply within, For the place where the origin of all thoughts, the “I”-thought, rises from; (he then) Abides, Anchored in that adhistaNam (place / foundation / root-location); (In the heart-space of such a person) Arunachala Shiva Of Infinite/Indivisible Form Performs the “Still-Dance”!

Bhagavan Ramana alludes to this theme of still-dance in some of his other compositions as well.

And here, he rounds up this verse of Ashtakam with the words:

*In the golden-hall of the heart
Dancing, without moving,
That mighty hill known as Aruna
The ocean of light
Of limitless Grace
Alone (Is).*

Interestingly, from the perspective of Science, the physicist Fritjof Capra wrote in his bestselling book ‘Tao of Physics’ - “According to quantum field theory, the dance of creation and destruction is the basis of the very existence of matter. Modern physics has thus revealed that every subatomic particle not only performs an energy dance, but also is an energy dance; a pulsating process of creation and destruction. For the modern physicists then, Shiva’s dance is the dance of subatomic matter, the basis of all existence and of all natural phenomena.”

Indeed, at the heart of all existence, there is dance.

And that is Arunachala Ramana.

For has He not said about Himself:

“In the recesses of the lotus-shaped Hearts of all, beginning with Vishnu, there shines as pure intellect (Absolute Consciousness) the *Paramatman*, who is the same as Arunachala Ramana. When the

mind melts with love of Him and reaches the inmost recess of the Heart wherein He dwells as the beloved, the subtle eye of pure intellect opens and he reveals Himself as Pure Consciousness.”⁵

And even today, when we go to His shrine at Sri Ramanasramam, we see Bhagavan as the Emperor-Supreme, ruling under the shade of the One-umbrella of infinite-compassion, dancing as ‘I’-‘I’ in the Heart of all Creation.



Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya !

5 Miscellaneous verses of Bhagavan Ramana (The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi – 10th revised edition 2007; p 143)

Only Boundless Grace

Girija Arakoni

Ramanacharanatirtha Sri Nochur Venkataraman shared a song on Bhagavan Ramana by Smt. Girija Arakoni and added a note, "This is composed by my cousin in Washington DC, Girija. She has seen Bhagavan in a way. Her mother had darshan of Bhagavan when she was carrying her." Hearing that her mother had darshan of Bhagavan prompted the question whether Smt. Girija could share her mother's reminiscence of seeing Bhagavan. Following, is an account from her as an answer to the request. We are thankful to her and Sri Nochur Venkataraman for this sahring

-Editor

"My mother is late Smt. Kanthimathi Venkataraman. I have clear memories of her talking to me about Bhagavan. She was an ardent devotee of Bhagavan.

By His grace I, Girija Arakoni, and my husband, Sri Narayan Arakoni, are also devoted to Bhagavan and our life revolves around Him. My father Sri N.L.Venkataraman was the elder brother of Sri N.L.Sundaram who was the father of Brahmasri Nochur Venkataraman. My mother was hence a paternal aunt to Sri Nochur. Like the custom in those days, my ammai was married and went to that family when she was just thirteen years old.

When my mother was with me in New York in her later years, torrents of devotional songs on Bhagavan would pour forth from her.

Below is a transliteration and translation of one of her songs:

*azhagu sundaramAi avaniyil uditta aRpudamE ramaNA
Adiyum andamum aTRavanAna jyotiyE ramaNA
inba tunba mennum innalkaL vandu izhukkinRadE ramaNA
ingidamAi en idayattil irundu iyangiDuvAi ramaNA*

O' Wonder who has risen in this world as Beauty embodied!
Ramana!

O' Brilliance devoid of beginning and end! Ramana!

The twin maladies of joy and sorrow are dragging me, Ramana!

Abide firmly in my heart and govern my life, Ramana!

*kAma krOdamenum kaLviriDam irundu kApATRuvAi ramaNA
unnai yaAmal oru vazhi kANEn uNarndiDuvAi ramaNA
ulaga vAzhkai enum ODam tanilE uzhaluginREn ramaNA
mUzhgi viDAmal mukti aLittu karam koDuppiAi ramaNA*

Save me from thieving Desire and Anger, Ramana!

Know that I have no refuge other than you, Ramana!

I am tossed in the boat of worldly existence, Ramana!

May your protective hand free me from drowning, Ramana!

*ARaRivirundum aRiviliyAgi alaiginREn ramaNA
ARudal aLittu ATmagnAnattai aLittiDuvAi ramaNA
ennuLam ennum tAmarai tanilE veeTRirupAi ramaNA
eDutta piRavi veeNAgAmal AkkiDuvAi ramaNA*

Though endowed with six senses, I wander ignorant, Ramana!

Give me solace, bestow Self-knowledge, Ramana!

Remain enthroned in the lotus of my heart, Ramana!

Ensure that this birth is not wasted away, Ramana!

*tETRuvArinRi dikku teriyAmal tiriginREn ramaNA
teengu varAmal deivamAi irundu tiruttiDuvAi ramaNA
vADiDum payirAi ninRiDum enakku vAzhvaLippAi ramaNA
tEDiDum endan kaN munnE nee tOnRiDuvAi ramaNA*

Uncared for, directionless, aimless I wander, Ramana!

Remain as my God, protect me from error, guide me Ramana!

I am a plant drooping and fading, bestow life Ramana!

Appear before my eyes that longingly seek you Ramana!

*karpUra jyOtiyAi aruNAchalattil kalandavanE ramaNA
kalangi niRkum aDiyAr manadil amarndavanE ramaNA*

You merged in Arunachala like a flame of camphor, O' Ramana!
You abide in the hearts of devotees who yearn for you Ramana!

I remember my mother recalling, with a face glowing with delight, her visit to Bhagavan. At the time when my parents went to have darshan of Bhagavan, cancer was racking His body. When Bhagavan's glance fell on her, His eyes were brimming with compassion though His body was very frail. Only boundless grace was visible, nothing else. It was hardly as if there was a form, a body there. "

Reiterating this fact and the magnitude of Bhagavan's darshan, Sri Nochur Venkataraman said, "When my aunt spoke to me about her darshan of Bhagavan she recollected that she never felt she was seeing a man, a human being, a person clad only in a loin-cloth. 'No such thought ever came to the mind' she said. This is one thing that I remember her sharing with me. The impact of Bhagavan was very deeply imprinted on her. Although it did not seem to manifest in an evidently spiritual manner in the early years of her life, in her sunset years she woke up to the immeasurable treasure that she had been blessed with. When she saw me being drawn to Bhagavan in such an intense manner, it appears she began to wonder that this could be possible in someone who had not seen Bhagavan physically. She told me that the power of Bhagavan manifesting in my life woke her up to the value of her having had darshan of Bhagavan. This found expression in the form of an outpouring of songs."

He added, "In her last days she completely lost her eyesight. Despite this she was immersed in a beautiful world of Bhagavan. It may be this beauty that she refers to when she says in her song that Bhagavan came into this world as the very embodiment of beauty. A few days before she passed away, she asked to see me and I visited her. I told her that as she had seen Bhagavan there was nothing further that she needed in her life. I found that her mind was fully absorbed in the presence of Bhagavan in the form of the world of songs on him. In the case of many devotees, the glance of Bhagavan remains within like a seed that has been planted deep in their hearts and it blossoms much later in the ripeness of time."

Smt. Kanthimathi's daughter, Girija continues, "At that time when my ammai had darshan of Bhagavan she was carrying me in her womb. Therefore, Sri Nochur Venkataraman has said that in a way I too have been blessed with Bhagavan's darshan."

[We remember that in Mudaliar Patti's last years devotees suggested to her that the Asram could arrange to have her daily offering collected and served to Bhagavan, she need not take the trouble of personally bringing food to Bhagavan every day. 'Why do you need to come personally when your eyesight is failing and you can't see Bhagavan even when you come here?' they asked. She replied, 'I don't come here to see Bhagavan but for Bhagavan's glance to fall on me.']

"Ten days after my parents had Bhagavan's darshan, news came of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana. My mother had the great blessing of seeing the divine meteoric light that slowly blazed across the night sky at the time of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana. She said that many others with her too witnessed the light at the time and all of them prostrated to it with awe and devotion."

[This too is undoubtedly a darshan of Bhagavan in his form as Light, a form in which he manifested at the time of his Mahanirvana and blessed numberless people, even several hundred miles away from Tiruvannamalai, to behold his glory. Many knew even as they saw it that this was Bhagavan's Light. Some felt that this phenomenon must be on account of some great sage dropping his body. It was undeniably a magnificent sight instilling the devotion that Smt. Kanthimathi recalled. We see that the glory of this darshan and its lasting impact is recorded by her in her song as well: 'You merged in Arunachala like a flame of camphor, O' Ramana! You abide in the hearts of devotees who yearn for you Ramana!']

Smt. Girija concludes, implicitly describing the lasting impact of her mother's devotion, "We, I and my husband, feel that our lives are tied to Bhagavan, though perhaps presently with a slightly long rope. Our prayer is that by continuously revolving round Him, there will come a day when there is no more rope left and we end up tied to Bhagavan, tight. Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya."

The one obstacle is the mind

Bhagavan is always with you, in you, and you are yourself Bhagavan. To realise this it is neither necessary to resign your job nor run away from home.

Renunciation does not imply apparent divesting of costumes, family ties, home, etc., but renunciation of desires, affection and attachment.

The one obstacle is the mind and it must be overcome whether in home or in forest.



A MERE LOOK

Swami Chinmayananda

I was just emerging from high school, exams were over, and the summer holidays had just started. On a package railway ticket I was roaming through South India.

As the train steamed through the countryside at a halting speed, most of the other passengers in my compartment suddenly peered through the windows in great excitement and bowed reverently to an elaborate temple beyond. Inquiring about it, I was told that it was the Tiruvannamalai Temple.

Thereafter, the talk of my fellow travelers turned to Sri Ramana Maharshi, who, they said, was staying in the dusty, sleepy town of Tiruvannamalai. The word "Maharshi" conjured up in my mind ancient forest retreats and super-human beings of divine glow. Though I was at that time a convinced atheist, I was deeply drawn to visit the Maharshi's asram. Since I had nothing else to do, I chose to take the next available train to Tiruvannamalai.

On arriving at my destination, I began to inquire about the way. Although it was only ten or eleven O'clock in the morning it was insufferably hot. Tired and exhausted, not used to walking in the sun, I dragged myself forward, asking at every few furlongs, "Where is the Ramana asram?" Everyone very obligingly pointed in the very direction I was moving and assured me, "There - just a little more - you have almost reached it." After another half hour of tiring walk, I finally reached the asram.

At the asram I was told that Maharshi was in the thatched hall directly in front of me and that anybody was free to walk in and see him. As I entered the hall, I had to stop and grope: having come in from the blazing light of the midday sun, I found myself blinking. After a few moments I could vaguely make out some eight or nine people sitting silently around a wooden couch. I moved forward and sat down in an empty space.

There was a silence. Slowly my eyes began to see things more clearly: On the couch was an elderly man, wearing but a loin-cloth, reclining against a round bolster, his hand now and then moving languidly to fan himself.

It so happened that I had sat down at the very foot of the wooden couch. The Maharshi suddenly opened his eyes and looked straight into mine; I looked into his. A mere look, that was all. I felt that the Maharshi was, in that split moment, looking deep into me - and I was sure that he saw all my shallowness, confusions, faithlessness, imperfections, and fears.

I was ashamed, But I did not want to take my eyes away from his embracing look. Yet I could not stand that honest, kind, and pitying look of pure love and deep wisdom. I fact, it was I who had to look away - and the next moment, when I gazed at his face again, he had again closed his eyes.

I cannot explain what happened in that one split moment. I felt opened, cleaned, healed, and emptied! A strange feeling - fear mixed with love, hate colored by affection, love honeyed with shyness, joy drowned in sorrow.

A whirl of confusions: my atheism dropping away, but skepticism flooding in to question, wonder, and search. My reason gave me strength: "It is all mesmerism, my own foolishness." Thus assuring myself, I got up and walked away.

But I knew. The boy who left the hall was not the boy who had gone in some ten minutes before. After my college days, my political work, and after my years of stay at Uttarkashi at the feet of my master, Sri Tapovanam, I knew that what I had gained on the Ganges banks was that which I had been given years before by the saint of Tiruvannamalai on that hot summer day - by a mere look.

A WINDOW FOR STILLNESS

Swami Dayananda

I have never seen Bhagavan Ramana in person. My introduction to Ramana was through Yogi Ramaiah. He talked of

Bhagavan more in silence than in words. I understood Ramana as one I could never be away from.

In those days when I was struggling to find the ground under my feet, Ramana was my hope as well as the ground. I have talked about him and his works all these years, and I have always felt that I could say something more. If I had attempted to say more, perhaps I would have been silent.

The beauty of Ramana is that you see him as a person and at the same time you don't see him as a person. He is sitting there in front of you with eyes open. You see him and you keep seeing him - only to see that the person is but a form of something still, not captured by known words.

When you see the stillness of Ramana, you are stillness. For, how can you see stillness unless you yourself become stillness, a stillness that continues to be still in spite of the movement of thoughts, of limbs, of events?

Ramana's figure - his name - is a window for that stillness, silence. You can look through that window not merely for a hundred years, but for all time to come. You need no change, no turning away of the head. What a window, what a scene!

A LETTER FROM FRANCE

Pascaline Mallet

Lady Bateman came here with her daughter to visit Sri Bhagavan. She brought a letter dated 21st November 1938 from Pascaline Mallet, Versailles which reads as follows:

“Two years have come and gone since I last crossed the threshold of Thy asram and yet in spirit I have ever remained there.

“Though illusion often veils the vision of Reality revealed in the silence of your blessed Presence; though the silver thread of Self-awareness be often lost midst changing light and shadows, still the inner urge to realise the Self remains and grows stronger and more insistent as grace and search go hand in hand.

“At times, yet rare, with no apparent cause, the spontaneous awareness of ‘I’ springs up and bliss fills the heart with glowing warmth. Effortless concentration goes with this state, while all desires do come to a rest fulfilled in utmost peace, till once more the veil is drawn and illusion seeks to blur the vision of the Real.

“Yet what the soul has experienced and knows repeatedly as Truth, can neither be denied nor ever forgotten and ‘That which is’ gives constant strength to persevere.

“I pray to Thee as to my Self for light and guidance that I know are ever there and at Thy feet lay the offerings of unchanging love.”

WITH THE SAGE OF THE HOLY HILL

Dilip Kumar Roy

Ramana was suddenly drawn to Arunachala Hill in 1886, when he had just turned sixteen. With just three rupees in his pocket, he left his home and parents and everything a man holds dear. He did not even know the way but somehow arrived there with literally just what he wore, trusting entirely to the mercy of his heart’s Lord, Arunachala Siva. He arrived at the temple and went straight to the sanctum of the Lord and, with tears coursing down his cheeks, said: “I have come at your call, Lord. Accept me and do with me as you will.”

Thereafter he lived ever immersed in the bliss of Samadhi. My dear friend Duraiswami, who knew him for years as one his intimates, told me this: once he was expressing his admiration for the sage’s power of concentrating day and night on his sadhana, when the other cut in smiling. “Sadhana? Who did sadhana? What did I know of sadhana? I simply came and sat down in the temple or elsewhere in Arunachala and then lost all count of time.” To me he said the same thing in a slightly different way with his characteristic irony. “People call Him by different names, but He came to me with no name or introduction so I know not how to define Him. What happened was that my desires and ego left me, how and why I cannot tell, and that I lived thenceforward in the

vastness of timeless peace. Sometimes,” he added with a smile, “I stayed with closed eyes and then, when I opened them, people said that I had come out of my blessed meditation. But I never knew the difference between no-meditation and meditation, blessed or otherwise. I simply lived a tranquil witness to whatever happened around me, but was never called upon to interfere. I could never feel any urge to do anything except to be, just be. I see that all is done by Him and Him alone, though we, poor puppets of maya, feel ourselves important as the doers, authors and reformers of everything! It is the ineradicable ego, the I-ness in each of us, which is responsible for the perpetuation of this maya with all its attendant sufferings and disenchantments.”

“What then is the remedy?” I asked.

“Just be” he answered “Delve down into That which only is, for when you achieve this you find: ‘That am I’; there is and can be nothing else than That. When you see this, all the trappings of maya and make-believe fall off, even as the worn-out slough of the snake. So all that you have to do is to get to this I, the real I behind your seeming I, for then you are rid forever of the illusive I-ness and all is attained, since you stay thenceforward at one with That which is you; that’s all.”

“We have to do nothing then?”

“Why? You have done the greatest thing, the only thing that is worth doing, and when you have done this, you may rest assured, all that has to be done will be done through you. The thing is,” he added, “not to worry about doing; just be, and you will have done all that is expected of you.”

“That is all very well,” I demurred. “But who is to show us how to do this - or rather be, as you put it? Is not a guide, Guru, necessary? Or are you against Guruvad (the Guru Principle)?”

“Why should I be against Guruvad?” he smiled. “Some people evidently need a Guru; let them follow him. I am against nothing except the ego, the I-ness which is the root of all evil. Rend this and you land pat in the lap of the one Reality, That, the one solvent of all questionings.”

"But why then don't you come out to preach this great message?" I asked, "For most people, you will agree, do not even know there is this I-ness to be got rid of."

He gave me again that quizzical smile tinctured with his characteristic irony. Then he turned grave and asked:

"Have you heard of the saying of Vivekananda that if one but thinks a noble, selfless thought, even in a cave, it sets up vibrations throughout the world and does what has to be done, what can be done?"

I nodded. "But forgive me if I presume to ask whether it is being done in a tangible way."

He gave me a quizzical smile. "Listen. A spiritual seeker used to attend religiously the lectures of a great pulpit orator and feel thrilled by all that he heard from day to day. But after sometime he discovered, to his chagrin, that after all that he had heard he was just where he had been at the start - not an impulse had changed. Then he happened upon a silent man, a Yogi who said practically nothing; nevertheless he felt attracted by something in him he could not define and so went on being near him. After a time he discovered, to his great joy and surprise, that things which had worried him before affected him less and less, till he came to feel a deep peace and a sense of liberation he could not account for. And this grew with the passage of time until at last he became a different man altogether. Now tell me, which of the two would you name as the doer of something 'tangible'?"

And this was true. After just being near him for a little while my gloom of months melted away like mist before sunrise. Nor could I myself "account for" why and how it happened. I shall never forget that night when, after having meditated at his feet, I felt a sudden release from what had been stifling me for weeks. It was such a delectable experience that I did not feel like going to bed. I pulled out a deck-chair and merely reclined in it under the stars, utterly relaxed. Everything around me seemed to drip peace and harmony; the breeze, the murmuring leaves, the hooting of an owl, a dog barking, the insects screeching...everything deepened my vivid sense of care-free plenitude. And I wrote a poem in the fullness of my heart of which I will give here a few lines:

You came in a pauper's garb and stayed to teach
That world what only a beggar could impart
And offered a kingdom we could never reach
By all our science, philosophy and art.
Some day a light shall dawn and the we'll know
What you came to give - a King, incognito!

Such was he. No wonder they called him Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.

The modern man often enough denounces the mystic as a selfish seeker of personal salvation. There may, indeed, be some sadhus who belong to this category. But the major mystics have never been indifferent to the suffering of others. Sri Ramana Maharshi proved this once again by the great life he lived after his attainment. He was always available, always ready to help with his words - more with his silent spiritual presence. He was the soul of divine compassion, always giving, never asking anything for himself. No man who is selfish can attract such a band of devoted seekers around him. This is not the place to talk about his remarkable devotees but I will end this tribute with a letter from one of his disciples, an Englishman, Major A.W. Chadwick. I was fascinated by his personality and wrote him a letter which I need not quote as it will be readily inferred from his reply, which is dated October 11, 1946.

Dear Dilip,

It was kind of you to write. I feel diffident in answering your question as I fear I have made or may make myself appear of some spiritual attainment, a thing to which I have no pretension. I am just a humble seeker, with the same failings and the same difficulties as everybody else. That all paths are extremely difficult

there can be no doubt, but how can it be otherwise? The ego which has taken such tremendous pains to establish itself as a seemingly independent and self-sufficient entity will fight to the last ditch before it will admit defeat and relinquish its claims. But my motto has been persistence and I think that by that victory is assured. The Guru of a friend of mine, who passed away some years ago and was undoubtedly a jnani, used to tell him that if he desired Self-realization sufficiently he could not even die till he had attained his goal. And in that is our hope.

You ask me how long I had to persevere in solitude before I attained peace... Surely peace is a thing which grows and is not for the majority attained in a flash once and for all, (I do not speak of Self-realization). The moment I came into the presence of my Guru, eleven years ago, I found peace. My staying here was never premeditated; it was just something which had to be in spite of myself. It was my true home. However, the pendulum swings, in time the beats grow shorter and shorter until it comes to rest in the Self. To expect anything else is to expect the impossible.

It seems to me that the great thing is to follow one Guru and one path unwaveringly and the goal is assured. For after all, the goal and the path are the same; the Chinese call both the Way - Tao. But we become disheartened and impatient. These seem to be the two greatest obstacles to attainment. If we can only face up to these and go on in spite of everything and everybody then there is absolutely no doubt as to the result. But how few of us can! May the Supreme Guru give us the necessary strength!

I seem to have been very prolix and to have preached.
I ask your forgiveness.

Very cordially yours,
A.W. Chadwick

Glory to the Guru who can inspire such love and devotion in men of this caliber!

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The Dance in the Heart - Ramananjali Nritya - VII

Ujwal Jagadeesh

Dr. Sarada Natarajan is serving as the President, Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning from February 2008. She is a Master of Arts Graduate in English literature from Bangalore University and a triple gold medalist in the same. She has also been awarded a Doctorate in English from Bangalore University on the subject "Concept of Self, a Study in Comparative literature".

Dr.Sarada has been the Editor of the Monthly journal "The Ramana way" since its inception in 1981. She has also authored several books including Ramana Thatha, Ramana Way in Search of Self, Surging Joy of Self-Discovery, The Wonderous Vigilance and Self-knowledge through Self Enquiry. She has also designed and contributed photographic designs for pictorial books like Radiance of the Self, Arunachala from Rigveda to Ramana Maharshi and His Holiness Chandrasekhara Bharati Mahaswami – A Pictorial Biography & Teachings.

She has been trained in Carnatic Classical Music from her young age under the tutelage of her mother and Guru Smt. Sulochana Natarajan. She has been the core singer of Ramananjali, the Music Wing of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning and given more than 500 live performances all over the world and has been a part of numerous audio recordings.

In Dance, she has received intensive training in Bharatanatyam under Guru Kum. Meenakshi of Veena Vishalakshi Art Centre, Bangalore. Dr. Sarada has conceived, scripted and directed more than 125 dance ballets till date on the life and teachings of Ramana Maharshi and other value-based themes.

In the field of Literature, Dr.Sarada has composed more than 100 poems in Kannada and Tamil respectively and 40 poems in Hindi – some of which are published in the book, "Ramana Holey". She has also conceived and presented on behalf of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning two T.V. Serial of 13 and 26 episodes in four languages each.

She is an eloquent orator and has presented papers in 44 National and 4 International Seminars conducted by Ramana

Maharshi Centre for Learning. She has also given talks as the faculty Member in 50 Workshops on Life and Teachings of Ramana Maharshi. She has given more than 100 lectures on works of Ramana Maharshi and also gives regular talks at Satsangs conducted by Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning.

Ujwal: Namo Ramana Sarada Akka. We are celebrating 40 years of Ramananjali Nritya. You have been associated with the Ramana Cultural movement from the day of its inception. Please share your memories of how the fine arts in the form of theatre entered your life and has impacted it.

Dr.Sarada: Bhagavan's picture is one of the earliest memories I carry. My mother first told me that Ramana Thatha and Sri Ramakrishna and the other Gods, whose pictures lined different sides of my cradle, would take good care of me and I need not fear anything or think I



was alone. Among all these pictures, it was somehow Bhagavan's picture which embedded itself in my mind's eye. Maybe this was the seed for my love for photography and painting. Although I have never tried to paint or sketch Bhagavan's picture, I have amply enjoyed working with his photographs. In fact, I could easily say that I have loved every aspect of theatre right from my early childhood.



But my engagement with Natya or theatre actually began with story telling. Because, as I became a little older my mother also told me stories of Ramana Thatha. She told me several other stories as well. Amma would say that I was a very good story teller almost after I started talking fluently and would narrate several stories with clarity, ending with the moral of the story clearly spelt out. My special favourites were the stories of the Goose that laid the golden eggs and the story of King Midas and the golden touch. Both

the stories were about the tragic effects of greed. At a time when I was shy to speak in public, I gradually made myself comfortable to express myself on the dais by always beginning my talk with a story as a warming up session for my own confidence. Till date I love to narrate stories and listen to stories as well.

I can't say whether it was the story element in dance that attracted me so much to it. I do not clearly remember the first dance program that I watched but have a faint memory of it being a program by Kamala Laxman. She performed the entire Bharatnatyam repertoire and just before the conclusion



came her famous number 'Adu paambe'. Her suppleness in emulating the movements of the serpent was indeed amazing and her gracefulness was beautiful, but what really stayed with me was the song, the lyrics of the song to be exact. It looked as if dance had a mesmerizing effect on me. If I saw someone dancing, my eyes would get glued to the scene. It was the same with different forms of theatre. A drama or a movie would have me riveted from any moment I started seeing it. It mattered little whether I knew the story or the background. However, looking back, I can see that it was the abhinaya aspect of dance that thrilled me. In my childhood it was not so much the Nritya part or its beauty as the Natya that had me fascinated. It is only in later life, after I began to consciously relate to music that I grew to greatly enjoy the Nritya sequences in Bharatanatyam. In fact, this began to interest me to such a great degree at one stage in my life that I started focusing more and more on intricacies of rhythmic patterns in choreographing our dance dramas at Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning.

At this juncture my younger sister and soulmate Ambika lovingly warned me and guided me. She asked me to internalize as to the specific purpose of dance in our theatre presentations. She pointed out that dance for us was solely a vehicle to communicate the grandeur and beauty of the life and teachings of Bhagavan Ramana. In fact, it is the very purpose of Natya to act as a path to Self-Knowledge. No doubt, imbedded in this path is its aesthetic beauty. Yet, the aesthetic experience must be seen as a path to

the Supreme and not as an end in itself she reiterated. This was with reference to the technical intricacies of Nritha. The sheer abandon of pure dance itself was not something that I could intuit or perceive with clarity until the practice of self-enquiry gradually expanded the boundaries of beauty. I say all this, of course, only in retrospect. And it is in retrospect, as the pieces of the jigsaw that is one's life start slowly falling into place that one sees Bhagavan's gracious hand in our life script.

U: Do you remember any specific dance performances which remain fresh in your memory and have inspired you?



Dr.S: As I was saying, it was the script, the concept or the story part of the dance that attracted me the most. Perhaps, unknown to me I could relate to it by seeing the scenes which I heard narrated in the stories of Rama and Krishna. I myself

was a voracious reader and would read books on the lives of these and other great ones. Natya made this come alive for me. I clearly recall the impact that Kamala Laxman's 'Nauka Charitram' had on me. The scene of surrender of the Gopis to Krishna was the highpoint of this dance drama. Then there were Padma Subramaniam's 'Krishnaya Tubyam Namaha'. The two scenes which remain imprinted in my mind are Puthana Vada and Rukmini's letter to Sri Krishna with the words 'Srutva gunaan bhuvana sundara'.



Yet another unforgettable dance number for me from what I had witnessed in my childhood is Chitra Viswewaran's Varnam 'Velanai varaccholladi', which she



performed with elaborate abhinaya for nearly an hour, and the sanchari for the line 'Senthil Velanai tedinen kaanaamal vaadinen'.



We had the unique opportunity of seeing Balasaraswathi perform at the Delhi Red Fort festival. There was some issue, I do not clearly recall what it was, perhaps it was a failure of the audio system, that prevented the singer from continuing the rendering of 'Krishna Nee Begane Baro'.

Balasaraswati continued the performance, herself singing the song. She emoted numberless variations of expressions on that one line itself.

One of the most impactful experiences of my childhood was of the dance drama 'Sri Rama Leela' presented by Sriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra. This was literally an out of the world experience from the world of theatre with marvelously synchronized group dances in a blend of various classical and folk styles, dramatic sequences of intense emotional experience with a background score of vibrant, rich music. We had witnessed both Rama Leela and Krishna Leela live presented by them. Later I have seen their presentation of Krishna Leela on Doordarshan which I could make a rough recording of. I must have watched and re-watched this show scores of times. The fact that it was not just me who was influenced deeply by these dance theatre productions came home to me while working on our own mega production entitled 'Sri Ramana Leela' in 2004. My father, also the Founder President of Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, advised me to recall the production 'Sri Rama Leela' and conceive of our dance drama based on that inspiration.



U: Did these performances inspire you to learn Theatre Arts? When did you start learning them?

Dr.S: Yes, I have spoken about the public performances that I have witnessed, been influenced by and benefited immensely from. What about my own learning? Music was the constant background of our lives. It is not surprising that my first formal engagement with the Fine Arts was with music. This is the path that Bhagavan laid for me and Ambika.



Although Ambika had several significant inputs in dance from leading choreographers right from her childhood, for me formal training was only in music although dance was a greater passion at that time, being a visual art form. Destiny did not plan for me to learn Bharatanatyam then, although an effort was made by my father to put me into formal training in that area. It just didn't work. Even in school, while Ambika was chosen for dance and drama, I would be given opportunities only for music and sometimes for painting. Bhagavan did fulfill my desire to learn dance by providing a loving teacher in our dear friend and Ramana Satsang playmate, Kalarani. Such is Bhagavan's indulgence towards all His devotees that He provided two opportunities for me to present solo dances during our annual school events in the very beautiful school auditorium.



Yet, it was music that we received full-fledged training in all through our childhood. Decades later, when we could complete the formal learning of the entire Bharatanatyam Margam in just a couple of years, our dance Guru, Kumari Meenakshi said, 'I can

teach you an entire varnam in a couple of days because you are

soaked in Carnatic classical music. Music is running in your veins. You grasp the intricacies of the song immediately and don't forget it. It is then just one step away to communicate to you the dance which is the visual form of that music'.



U: Music is the integral part of Dance. Do share your memories of learning Music through the years.



Dr.S: My mother had a sweet voice and deep love for singing. Despite this, I did not get to consciously love music till I was twenty years old. I slept through the first Carnatic concert I was taken to at the age of eight. I started learning Carnatic music formally when I was 6 years old and my younger sister Ambika was a little over 2. She would simply overhear the teacher's lessons to me and repeat them exactly and instantaneously, while I struggled a bit to catch the exact musical intonations. This comparison was highlighted by my teacher, probably in the hope that it would inspire me to work harder at my

music. Unfortunately, it had the reverse effect on me and I became very diffident about singing classical music. Nonetheless, my mother did not give up on my musical ability. She began to teach me herself and Ambika spontaneously joined in the classes. My mother taught with love, love for music. She was gentle but unsparing in putting us through the all the required rigors of learning the classical art form. She insisted on only one rule. 'Whenever anyone asks you to sing a song, you must do so immediately. No reasons for not singing. Not even any hesitation. Have a ready repertoire of songs from which

you can choose whichever you like to sing as soon as someone asks you to do so.' When singing along with Ambika, I too would forget my diffidence and sing happily.

On my own, I would listen to and sing all the film songs picturized on my then iconic hero, Rajesh Khanna. And I was praised too by our friends for these renderings. Interesting though, that Ambika would correct me about the accuracy of the tunes and I would in turn point out to her the accuracy of the words.



I recall that the first Carnatic classical concert that I truly enjoyed was when I was around ten years of age. It was the violin duo of Krishnan and Chandrashekar. After that I began to enjoy concerts as well. I had a greater love for instrumental music to begin with.

On one occasion I had been to a violin concert by Lalgudi Jayaraman along with my grandmother. At the end of the concert I remember her telling me that she would like to have another birth to play the violin with the pristine purity of Lalgudi. She told me that he never swerved from the sruti, the keynote, even



for a split second. Although I was a bit taken aback at the thought that anyone could wish for another birth, let alone for such a reason as playing music, even if it be the very best, it gave me insight into the significance of the concept of sruti. Much later, after being a core singer in several recordings of cassettes for Ramananjali music the beauty and subtlety of being tuned to the sruti note was brought home clearly to us, especially by Sri V.S.Narasimhan, Sri K.S.Raghunathan and Dr. Rajkumar Bharathi.

Ultimately, whether it is music or dance or drama – it is all about being in tune with the Self, isn't it?

Home is Where the Heart Is

Vinitha Aithal

We keep recalling how the students of the first batch of Ramana Bala Kendra were truly blessed and also a blessing to Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning. In Bhagavan's gracious plan the second batch was in no way less than the first. The 'junior batch' had the vantage position that all younger siblings usually have. They were quick to grasp the various inputs at Bala Kendra as they would have already absorbed much of it even while their seniors were learning. In fact, the second batch had students from the first batch, Prathiba and Saritha, as their teachers.



Some of these students blended spontaneously with their seniors especially because they participated with them in many of the Centre's theatre productions. Vinitha was one of the younger batch to quickly become a part of the senior's troupe. She stood out by her absolute determination. Even as a child she would refuse to budge for any reason once she had taken her position on stage. In later years her vivaciousness and positivity brought her to centre-stage. Vinitha continued to serve the Centre in many capacities and participate in our dance dramas for many years after her seniors had moved on to varied callings, until she herself moved to Singapore after her marriage. Because she was equally at home with children and the elders and her long stint at the Centre donning several roles on and off stage, she became an inspiration for several younger generations of Ramana devotees serving at the Centre. She played significant roles in our tele-serial Ramana Holey and Ramana Leela.

While she is open to all paths, for herself she has chosen Eka Bhakti to Ramana as her way of life.

Home is where the heart is. Never did I know as a child that this deceptively small 4 letter word would come to mean so much to me. Whether it was attending Ramana Class in Sadashivanagar, visiting Tiruvannamalai, being grounded in my Palace Guttahalli house, catching up on school, having fun with my friends or entirely building a new life in Singapore, my understanding of home never changed. My feet have carried me from place to place, my words have connected me from people to people, my Bhakti has taken me from temple to temple, but my mind and heart has never wavered from Bhagavan.



Being born in a family where both parents were working, my siblings and I learnt to become independent quite early in life. We ate whatever food was put on the table, rode bikes with our friends, ate bhajjis from the roadside stalls without batting an eyelid. We would leave home in the morning and play all day during the holidays, we were never ever bored, and we were allowed freedom as long as we were back home by sunset, or by a time given by our parents.

Bhagavan happened to me amidst the frenzy of my childhood. By 1985, my eldest sister was already a long time student of Ramana Bala Kendra. My parents saw her blossom and decided it was time for me to quit my childish antics and join Ramana Bala Kendra. A few of my friends had already joined Ramana class as it was fondly called. Thus started my journey at RMCL. The Bala Kendra class then was taught by two seniors of which one was my own sister and the other was Prathibha. We learnt to chant Aksharamanamalai and Upadesha Saram. I

remember eagerly listening to Bhagavan's stories, and even more fondly remember the Prasadam I devoured after classes.

Initially, attending RBK was just another frivolous avenue of having fun and making friends. It was a thorough enjoyment and learning for everyone involved. Eventually, some of us progressed to the senior's class which was conducted by Sarada Akka. It felt like we had graduated. Being the youngest child at home, I enjoyed years of getting away with childish antics and letting my elder sisters take the fall for it. This was my first taste of true responsibility. In this class we learnt dancing to songs on Bhagavan, singing Ramananjali songs, chanting and Sarada Akka would have the last half an hour for Bhagavan's teachings which was just the cherry on top. Somewhere between being a part of the senior class, having Srinivasan mama's special tea after class and having biscuits (which was never to be eaten without having a plate to collect its crumbs) in Sarada Akka's room, it feels like growing up as a student in Ramana Bala Kendra was a privilege. I lack the words to describe my gratitude.

Growing up with five maternal uncles who were all photography enthusiasts, I never shied away from an opportunity to be in the limelight. During those years, RMCL had a dance ballet production called Skanda Ramana which was being filmed at the famous Chamundeswari Studios. It was my first time facing an actual video camera. I walked in with unearned confidence, and the experience humbled me to an extent that I can still laugh about! Naturally, there was room for improvement.



Although I managed to come a long way from the Skanda Ramana days, nothing could prepare me for the shooting of Ramana Holey (tele-serial filmed in Tiruvannamalai). Tireless hours of filming in the hot sun, cuts, retakes and costume changes took us on a royal roller coaster of emotions. Throughout all this, the locals opened their arms to us and treated us like royalty. This is the beauty of being a part of something bigger than yourself.



As RMCL grew, my association with RMCL grew with it and the time spent at Ramana Class drastically increased. All other pastimes slowly dwindled down and I finally invested my energy into only school and in Ramana Class. School friends became classmates and neighbourhood friends became acquaintances. If I could go back in time, I wouldn't change anything because

no amount of people or functions can ever give me what I gained from being a part of RMCL. The uniqueness of my friend circle at Ramana Class was its diversity. Through classes, I had fostered close relationships with people of different ages, schools and backgrounds. From those an entire decade older than me to the sheer toddlers of Bala Kendra, I realised that everybody had something to offer. Developing the ability to learn something from anybody you meet helps you maintain an open mind even during difficult times. It was this mentality that made it a lot easier to acclimatise to the social environment in Singapore when I first migrated here with my husband.

As RMCL spread its wings, we started performing more and more in and outside Bangalore. We also travelled and performed in different states of India. It was a group of singers, dancers, instrumentalists and volunteers, each of whom played a different role in making our shows a great success. It was not easy to coordinate with people of different ages across different disciplines and it added to the confusion and excitement of planning travel and performances. I learnt that it is just as important to be a good team player as it is important to be a leader. Collaborative work taught me these social and organisational skills, as all of us had to work in harmony in order to achieve our shared goal of hearing roaring applause at the end of every show. The challenging part was neither the nritya nor the Bhava, but the process of active learning and unlearning. Whether it was in a different language, presented to a different audience, or performed with new cast members, quick change of costumes in between scenes in a dance drama, adapting and accepting the constant changes had come to become the new normal. In hindsight, these lessons of adapting to change, learning and unlearning etc that are taught nowadays to youth in pursuit of self-growth are the very same lessons we unknowingly learnt just by being in the moment.



Time flew and soon enough the kids that joined Ramana Bala Kendra were no longer Balas. They had grown into wonderful young adults and one by one began getting busy with their higher education or career. All those I was dearly attached to had moved on to different chapters of their life. Much to the annoyance of my parents, I began to stay back for longer hours at RMCL, be it for practice sessions for programs, contributing to the set and props for a production, fixing costumes for the next performance or accompanying Sarada Akka to Prabath Studios for editing. I personally cherish the time I got to spend with Akka during the studio visits. We used to have such long conversations and somehow Akka would always have a way of redirecting casual conversations into Bhagavan's teachings. She is somebody that has talked me through every last worry and given me the confidence to persevere. She dedicated countless hours to making sure every last child was learning, contributing and growing all at once. She has been the vehicle of self-realisation and change for so many people including myself, constantly reminding us to have faith in Bhagavan and remain grateful and grounded. Recently, with her and Ambika Akka's guidance, we were able to execute a weeklong series of breathtaking performances and workshops all over Singapore. To watch the talented group perform felt like a piece of my childhood coming to life in a different country, and the experience was exciting not just for me, but my family as well.





In spite of all the performances we gave nationwide, we would all look forward to the Annual Seminar which used to be held every year during the month of March. It was the most important event for all of us. Every year, RMCL would have a new ballet for which we would have learnt and practiced for months. As joyous it was, we dreaded the D-day. Invariably, it always coincided with the school final exam season to the point where I was dancing in a seminar one evening, and writing my SSLC Math exam the very next morning. I doubt any parent would allow that in the current time! Although my parents were cross at me for what I did, they were very happy when my results were out. Bhagavan took care of that exam for me.



If I think back, I wonder what made us commit to that year after year. Although it feels unreal to me, it was a significant number of us that experienced this without having any second thoughts. Was it that we were irresponsible? Were we taking unnecessary risks? Were our parents the irresponsible ones? As I reflect, perhaps it was our resolute faith in Bhagavan and our love for what we were doing that nothing else seemed to matter.

Another such leap of faith I remember is emceeing 'Onde Bharatha', an event that involved students from various schools in commemoration of India's 50th Independence Day. With no prior experience, in the overwhelming vastness of Koramangala Indoor stadium, I had to project my voice and command an entire audience through the events of the day. It is another example of Bhagavan's grace as I simply am unable to comprehend how I made it through the day without losing my composure.



The beauty of learning Guru Bhakti is attaining a strong sense of purpose, one that doesn't give up on you even when you give up on yourself. The liberation and inner peace that I feel most of the time, is obtained from the fact that HE chose me. The fact that Ramana

happened to me is something that has kept me happy, sane and strong, a journey I believe anyone will benefit from embarking on. That belief led me to stay on at



RMCL and birthed my involvement with the school competitions they organised in Bangalore as I strongly wish for every child to grow up in the same loving environment that I did with the same growth opportunities that I enjoyed.



My parents, once hesitant to entrust me with juggling RMCL and school, now fondly sing Arunachala Shiva with their grandchildren, passing the torch from one generation to another. In a time where any information can be retrieved by a few clicks on a screen, it is a lot easier to navigate through life and realise what resonates within you. I guess it was my great fortune that landed me at Bhagavan's feet at such a young age, and he holds the answers no Google, Bing or Yahoo could ever find for me! All the people and lessons that RMCL has given me have stayed

with me from adolescence and will definitely be the brightness in my graying years.

It is crazy to think that despite a pandemic, RMCL has managed to sustain Sunday Satsang at our Ramana Shrine through virtual platforms like Whatsapp discussions and Google Teams. A hearty thanks to the Internet for giving us this solid alternative! Reflecting again on the concept of home, I can confidently conclude that my home is Bhagavan himself, and the wonderful community he has gifted me at RMCL. These are individuals that either consciously or subconsciously have been moulded into the Ramana Way. They are a bunch that will never fail to celebrate your highs, give you the resilience to fight your lows and support you for everything in between.



How Bhagavan Captured Us

Smt.Sulochana Natarajan

ARN recuperated quickly after his surgery for appendicitis. When ARN was convalescing, my father-in-law flew in with the children to spend some time with him and all of us. This showed his immense love for ARN, something which was never overtly expressed, my father-in-law being extremely quiet by temperament.

Practically like every aspect of life, as it is planned in detail for us by Bhagavan, I could say that the surgery proved to be a blessing in disguise. After the surgery ARN's digestion improved. He would always eat very frugally and never indulged in excessive eating of any dish because he liked the taste of it. Yes, he had specific preferences and only those items were cooked by and large at home. That being the case, one would imagine that he would over-eat on some days at least. But that was not the case. Food was always consumed only in limited quantities. If he liked the taste of some dish, he would have one small serving. If he did not like the dish, he would have no serving, that was the only difference. If by chance he happened to have one and half vadas instead of his usual one, for instance, he would claim that he had over-eaten heavily.

Later, when we were at Bangalore and the Ramana Movement was in full swing, many of the volunteers would join us at home for lunch from time to time. I once noticed that Shivaramiah, our compere hesitated to do so. I privately asked him whether he did not like the taste of the food cooked in our house. He answered that it was not so, but that he felt shy to eat along with ARN as the quantity consumed by ARN was so little that he felt himself to be greedy eating even his normal meal. Thereafter, I would make it a point to plead that we had some extra work to complete and ask ARN to finish his meal ahead of us. My very dear friend Malathi would tease ARN asking him, 'At this young age if you are eating so minimally, what will happen as the years go by? You would probably then cut down from three to two to one piece of pulka for the night meal and thereafter you may just drink a glass of water and finally probably gulp some air as your meal like the rishis of yore.' As it happened ARN simply continued to eat frugally and

maintained all aspects of his normal diet right upto his last day. In this way he probably naturally followed Bhagavan's instructions to spiritual seekers to have sattvic food in moderate quantities.

The difference was that prior to the surgery he would find it difficult to digest even the little that he ate and it was next to impossible to eat outside without having an upset stomach. This changed after the surgery and there was a greater degree of comfort about his intakes. While remembering ARN's eating habits, I must mention that while he was fussy about his tastes at home, whenever we went to Ramanasramam he would eat all the dishes cooked there without expressing any preferences. As our trips to the Asram became more frequent after going to Bangalore, ARN slowly began to enjoy all the dishes that were prepared at Asram and our menu at home also expanded to include those.

Sarada too had what we called 'a delicate stomach'. She had suffered an acute attack of gastroenteritis when she was three, severe jaundice as I had recounted, when she eight and typhoid when she was ten. It was not that she was sickly all the time but somehow or the other it seemed as if she would pass through a bout of severe illness once in a year. Just before her 11th birthday, in the summer vacation of 1971, when we were at Chennai, she came of age. I had anticipated early puberty for her and prepared her mentally for it. Both the children, I may say in retrospect, were very accepting by nature. They never sought to resist anything that we told them. From the perspective of logic or analysis they may have internalized or had discussions with us but emotionally they would accept whatever we said. I mention Sarada's coming of age because within two weeks of her completing her first cycle she started her second. This too may not have been unusual but unfortunately the bleeding did not stop for a whole month. Then we went to our family gynaecologist Dr.Dharma Chatterjee, Professor Mama's daughter and a dear friend. She tried certain mild hormones along with advising bed rest, but to no avail. She then recommended that Sarada be hospitalized for observation and diagnosis. Likewise, she was admitted at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. However though days and weeks were passing, there was no change in her condition and no diagnosis was revealing itself. The doctors finally suspected leukemia, blood cancer. ARN and I naturally spent sleepless nights.

At this juncture, a prayer was also put in to the Sringeri Jagadguru, Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha Mahaswami. It is certain that Bhagavan forged the connection to that great force in our lives at that point in time and thenceforth. Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha Swami advised a simple remedy asking us to do 'tailabhishekam', abhisheka with oil, to Chandramouliswara Lingam at the Sringeri temple at Delhi Sankara Vidya Kendra. He also stated that whatever medicines the doctors prescribed should continue to be taken. Accordingly, the tailabhishekam was performed. All the blood test reports that came soon thereafter were negative, giving us great relief.

In the event of not being able to arrive at any diagnosis, Sarada was discharged and sent back home. Her condition did not change though. Dr. Dharma then suggested that we could try one more round of the mild hormone that she had tried in the beginning. This time, the medicine did its job. This clearly brought home to us the fact that it is Bhagavan alone who is the doctor and the medicine as well. It is by Grace and Grace alone that anything works or does not work. The course of events brought about a new bonding with Abinava Vidyatirtha Mahaswami for all of us and we had the immense good fortune of continuously experiencing his graciousness thereafter. As for Sarada, although she had a difficult time with her menses cycles, her overall health improved by leaps and bounds and she was transformed from being a sickly child to a healthy young adult. What can one say of Bhagavan's Grace?

78. SARVAVANI MATASTHANAM ARADHYAHA

Worshipped by people of all religions

He had no religion of his own. He accepted all religions. The goal of all religions is the same. He was aware that the One in all of them is not different. Hence, he was praised by practitioners of the various religions as the embodiment of the essence of their scriptures.

In 'Eight Stanzas on Arunachala' Ramana writes, 'O Arunachala! In order to reveal your nature as the light of Existence you are manifest in different religions in varied forms!' Through this he has clarified that Arunachala, the Self, is verily all forms, especially all manifestations that are considered worship worthy, these may be sacred symbols, names or images. Ramana explains that 'faith' or 'devotion' may be to any ideal, to the fine arts, to service, to truth or any ideal. Ramana's path of self-enquiry transcends all beliefs and is open even to atheists.

Om sarvAvani matasthAnAm ArAdhyAya namaha

79. SARVASADGUNI

Possessor of all good qualities

One need not practice virtues one by one. If one abides in the Self he becomes the repository of all auspicious qualities. Ramana would say that the 'body am I' idea is at the root of all bad qualities and that its uprooting would automatically bestow all worthwhile qualities.

Ganapati Muni sings, 'Even Adishesha, the divine serpent, with a thousand heads and a thousand tongues is incapable of singing your praise O Ramana, how can a mere mortal describe your glory?'

Om sarvasadguNinE namaha

80. ATMARAMAHA

One who rejoices in the Self

The Bhagavad Gita praises a jnani as one who is aware of the beauty of the Self. Atmarati, as one who is content to abide as the Self, Atmatrupta and as one who revels in the Self, Atmasantusta. Sadasiva Brahmendra, the great saint, refers to himself as one having repose in the Self, the abode of peace. Bhagavan's state of rootedness in the formless Self makes this name appropriate for him.

Bhagavan has answered thousands of queries of earnest seekers on the path of Self-knowledge. Not once does he swerve from the emphasis on the supremacy of Self-abidance. Whether it is to Gambhiram Seshayya and Siva Prakasam Pillai in the early 1900's, the first spoken upadesa given to Ganapati Muni in 1907, the guidance given to F.H.Humphreys in 1911 or the answers to various seekers recorded by Muni as 'Ramana Gita', the clarion call is unwaveringly only to abide in the Self. In all his works, be it Upadesa Undiyar, Ulladu Narpadu, the Supplement to Forty Verses, the Five Hymns to Arunachala, Appalam Song, Anma Viddai Song or any of the translations or other miscellaneous poems, the focus is solely on Self-abidance. The numerous photographs of Bhagavan all draw us to themselves as the bliss of Self-abidance ever springs forth from them.

Om AtmArAmAya namaha

81. MAHABHAGAHA

Endowed with all noble qualities

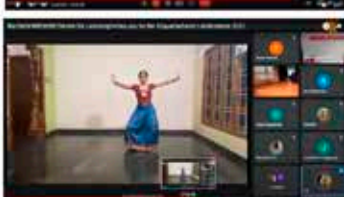
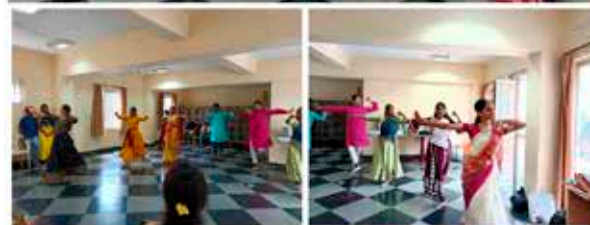
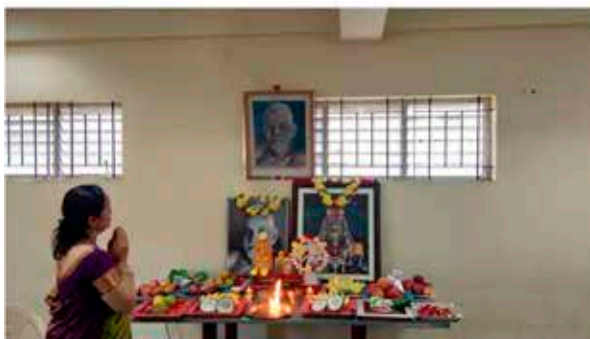
It is only one in whom all noble qualities are found spontaneously who deserves to be called a Mahabhaga. For this, one must lose his jivahood and find true life by merging his individuality in Brahman. In such persons, noble qualities are visibly seen.

Om mahAbhAgAya namaha

News & Events

Revathi Sankar

As the conclusion of Navaratri Celebrations – the Vijaya Dasami offering of Music and Dance was made on two days, both as an online and an offline program.



Inauguration by Sri Venkatesh Deshpande, Sri Dileep Simha and Dr.Sarada Natarajan

'Eka Bharata' - A Multi-lingual Music Ensemble led by Smt.V.Radha. Songs from the Ramananjali repertoire on the theme of oneness along with some patriotic numbers.

SOUTH ZONE CULTURAL CENTRE
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
RAMANA MAHARSHI CENTRE FOR LEARNING

RASHTREEYA EKTA DIWAS - EK BHARAT, SHRESHT BHARAT
31ST OCTOBER 2021

*Inauguration by Sri Venkatesh Deshpande, Sri Dileep Simha
and Dr.Sarada Natarajan*

'Eka Bharata' - A Multi-lingual Music Ensemble led by Smt.V.Radha

‘Dhanya Bharata’ Based on the vision of Sardar Vallabhai Patel – Iron man of India. Fusion of Storytelling by Smt. Aparna Athreya with Music, Dance and Drama by the Differently-abled Artistes from RASA Aadharan with other Senior Artistes led by Guru Smt. Rupa Hemanth. Theme is inspired by Shuddhananda Bharathi’s song on Bhagavan Ramana ‘Sari samaanar’.



‘Divya Bharata’ Swami Vivekananda's Vision of One Glorious India. A Puppet Theatre Presentation led by Sri Raghavendra and Smt. Shubha Pranesh, Swami Vivekananda Educational Trust. The theme was inspired by Swami Vivekananda’s prophetic statement about the coming of Bhagavan.



Jaya Bharata' Music and dance presentation by artistes from Shree Ramana Maharshi Academy for the Blind.



Special Dates in November and December**At Ramana Maharshi Shrine, Bangalore****November**

- » 19th Friday, Karthigai Deepam (Pournami)

December

- » 4th and 5th Saturday and Sunday, Shrine Opening Celebrations
- » 18th Saturday, Pournami
- » 31st Friday, Ramana Jayanthi Celebrations

Special Online Dates – November and December

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 to get detailed program)**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
- » 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 and On site 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 and On site 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

40 years of The Ramana Way

Numberless are the insights that the magazine has bestowed on the team working on it. Discussions, arguments, time targets, delays and the contentment every month when each stage of the work is done and finally the magazine is posted. Done, by grace, done by grace, done by grace...

Muralidhara Hegde always begins to think about the concept for the new cover design for each successive volume a few months in advance of the change. For the first three years the format was a vertical folder of six to eight pages. The variety began to unfurl in the fourth year when the journal format changed to a horizontal twelve to sixteen page booklet. This was the first landmark in the baby steps of the journal. The new cover design had a multiplier effect of the name 'Ramana'. We were able to carry two new articles in addition to the editorial and news coverage of which one covered the experiences of devotees establishing an added connect with them.



Guru Vachaka Kovai in English

Original : Muruganar

Translation: David Godman

Investigation into Truth

130. Peace can never be attained by one who subjects himself to ignorance by embracing the body and the world, regarding them as enduring and beneficial. Equally, suffering or fear will never be experienced by one who renounces this ignorance and reaches the permanent resting place of the ego, the Heart, clinging tenaciously to it like an udumbu lizard, without letting go.