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

# Mountain Path

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# Divine Names of Arunachala

32. ॐ जगन्नाथाय नमः

Om jagannāthāya namaḥ

Prostration to the Lord of the Universe

When we think of a sovereign, we usually think of worldly things. Although Arunachala as Lord is a hill in the material world, its true meaning is beyond any physical manifestation. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi taught us that truth in his sublime hymns to Arunachala. In verse 9 of *Sri Arunachala Padigam* he showed us how to surrender ourselves and the world, both products of *māyā*, with bone-melting love.

*O Supreme! ... Make my actions cease, (taking them) as Your burden, (for) what will be a burden to You, who sustain (the whole universe)! O Supreme! what I have gained by holding this world on my head (that is, by bearing the burden of samsara), having let go of You, is (now) enough (for me). O Arunachala, who are the Supreme! do not think hereafter of keeping me away from Your Feet (or state).<sup>1</sup>*

In verse 7 of *Sri Arunachala Ashtakam*, surrender takes the form of self-investigation.

*If the thought 'I' (the ego or mind) does not exist, no other thing will exist. Until that (that is, until the thought 'I' is found to be non-existent), if other thoughts rise, (one should enquire) To whom (do they rise)? To me (then by scrutinising) what is the rising-place of 'I'?, merge (within). Diving within (in this manner), if one reaches the Heart-Throne, (one will become), verily the Sovereign under the shade of one umbrella (that is, one will become the One non-dual Supreme Reality itself).<sup>2</sup>*

So, the Lord is not just a physical form but the supreme space of pure awareness, and that supreme space is none other than our true nature!

— BKC

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<sup>1</sup> *Sri Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*, Meaning by Sri Sadhu Om and Translation by Michael James, Sri Ramana Kshetra, Tiruvannamalai, 2007, pp. 140-142.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164-167.

# EDITORIAL

## Faith

Each morning when we wake up we face a new day which in its general outline we know and anticipate. But all the same, there will be surprises and unexpected pleasures and pains. We try to minimise the pains and maximise the pleasures. As normal human beings, we do our best to control our environment, home and work life. More often than not we are afraid of the unknown.

Fortunately for us, life is not a steady predictable progression. It is full of unexpected surprises and for this, we should be grateful. For if our life was just a controlled setting where we already know all that is to happen, we may as well be dead. By accepting that each second is unknown we allow ourselves to be open to infinite possibilities. By recognising that we cannot control not even the next second in our life we acknowledge that we are confident that all will be well.

The concept of faith is not a predominant thought in one's mind as we lie supine in a dentist's chair while the dentist with possibly a mask or an intimidating plastic shield hovers over us holding a whining drill that is about to cut through an infected or damaged tooth in our defenceless mouth. But faith is necessary if we are to be cured of an infected tooth that causes pain. Without faith, we would not be calmly in a chair while someone inflicts some degree of pain on us. There is faith that the dentist knows what he or she is doing. And faith that the pain involved is worth the final result.

Sadhana is like that. The guru uses whatever tools at his or her disposal to remove the ignorance that causes us suffering. Once we

have accepted the necessity and surrendered in the chair of compliance asking for help we trust that whatever the procedure is, it good for us.

A further extension of the analogy of the guru as a dentist is the fact that when we decide to sit in the dentist's chair, we have already brushed our teeth and are wearing clean, odourless clothes as a demonstration of respect towards the dentist but also as a sign of self-respect. Too often we come to the guru with our head and hearts full of negative thoughts and emotions. We expect the guru to ignore our sorry state and treat us as if we were spotless. It is only with time and wisdom we begin to realize how much rubbish we thoughtlessly carry. The guru's principal function is to help us realise our own limitations, see the dreadful impact of all the unnecessary stuff we burden ourselves with and show us how to clean up all the negativity that clouds our eyes and troubles our hearts.

What exactly is faith? Faith is a courageous leap into the dark. It is stepping out of our comfort zone and daring to ask if there is something better. It is the admission that we are unhappy and do not know what to do next. Faith is an admission that though we are blind to the forces at play in our lives, we do believe in a high power or purpose to our lives. All of us who come to Ramana Arunachala experienced this twilight zone in which we were neither here nor there. That is, we were willing to leave the past and face a future of which we had little or no idea but in which we had the faith of a child, a blind trust that all will be well.

When we read the stories of the various devotees who came to Bhagavan we are struck by the quiet confidence that when they heard of Bhagavan they knew that they had to meet him. There was an indisputable conviction that what they were doing was the right action. We read of Kunju Swami hearing about Bhagavan in Kerala in the early 1920s and coming to him from the then enormous distance. We read of Annamalai Swami walking mile after hungry mile from Polur to reach Arunachala. Today, it is easier for us to hear and read about Bhagavan and to reach Tiruvannamalai but that does not in any way diminish the giant leap we make in faith. It is not so much distance now that is the barrier but the increasingly tight world of financial insecurity that may keep us chained to a pattern of repetitive, economic behaviour.

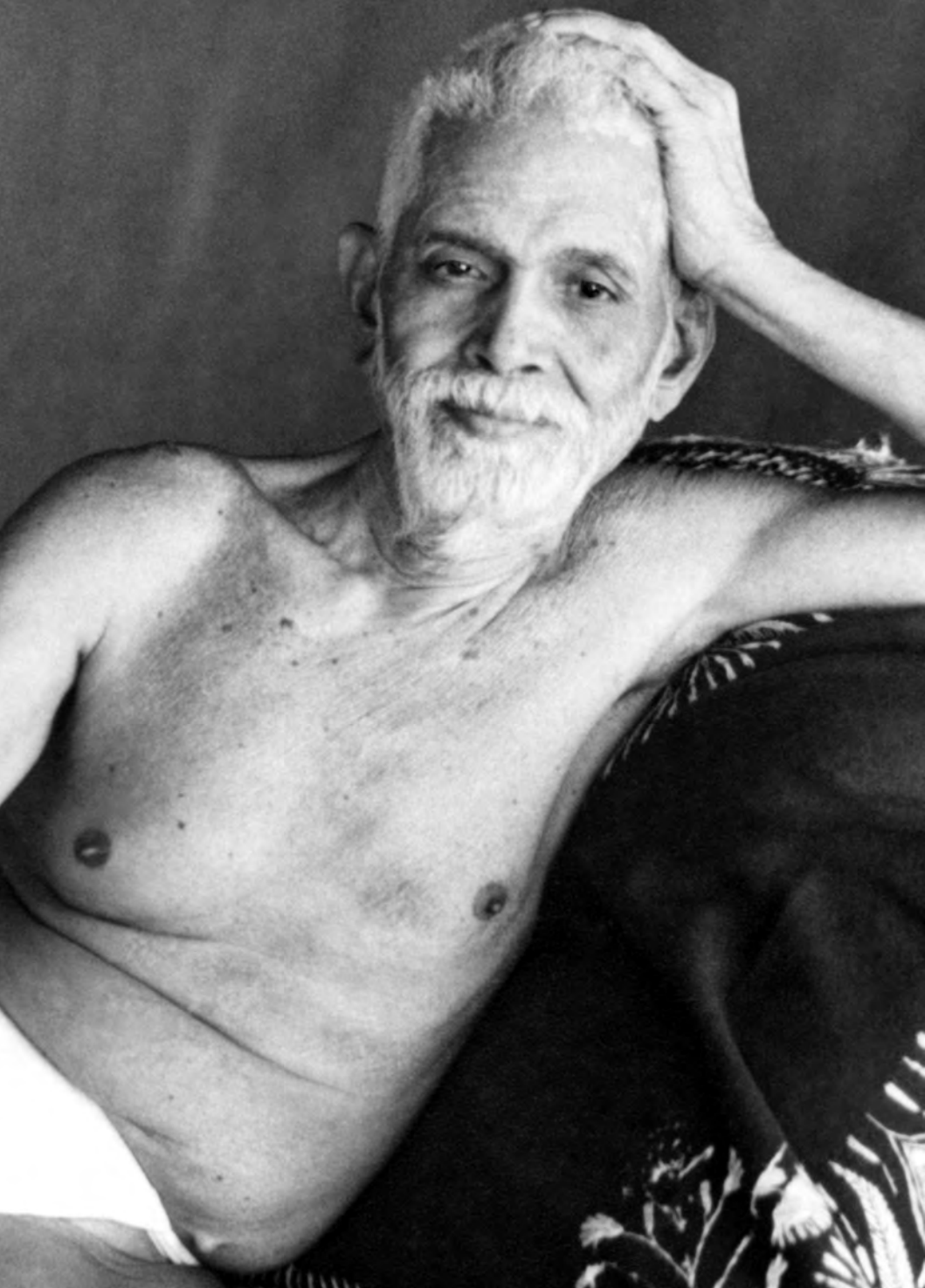
All of us who made contact with Ramana Arunachala have our own story to tell. Quite often we had no idea what to expect and were pleasantly surprised at the normality of life surrounding the ashram. No great revelation, no dramatic parting of the clouds and flashing lights. Just plain ordinary life. And yet for many, there is no sense of disappointment but rather a curiosity, an inner sense of something new but vaguely familiar. There is now no question of uncertainty or fear but maybe a sense of homecoming. That blind leap has become a normal step and looking back on one's life a new perspective comes into play. For many, there is no turning back as a new chapter opens and their future is realigned in some significant way while for others who return to their normal life a seed has been planted that one day will blossom and demand attention.

There now appears to be a constant turnover of newcomers at the ashram. However, that has always been so, though not to the same level of intensity and sheer numbers as it is today. Those who have received their fill merge into the background and a new wave arises to fill the gap.

The ashram is currently undergoing a renewal. This too is a leap of faith. In what form and what degree of acceptance remains to be seen. All we can do is wait and see. Even our uncertainty is a sign that change is in the air and hard as we may try to freeze time, it is futile. As the world changes so do we. As we change so does the world.

The recent COVID pandemic has taught us that though we remain separate beings, with the ever-new technology and advances in communication we are not ever in the dark. Knowledge is at our fingertips, literally. The question that now arises is the question of being. How do we silently communicate with Ramana Arunachala even if we are on the other side of the world?

First, we affirm that we can. Yes, we can. Second, we agree that it calls for discipline and perseverance but with the conviction that our faith in the process will come right. For in the beginning, we had little more than faith and now with experience and that indubitable experience of Grace we have the conviction all will be well. For though we may be in a state of perpetual uncertainty we do not fear the unknown but welcome it as a necessary prelude to the beginning of a new dawn. ▲





# The Practice of Stilling the Mind

LUCIA OSBORNE

*The following is the final chapter of Lucia Osborne's unpublished manuscript about her life with Bhagavan.*

When during meditation a thought sprouts up the best weapon to make it vanish as Bhagavan teaches is the vichara or self-enquiry. What after all is this thought? Where did it come from? We penetrate with the spearpoint of our enquiry to the source of thought where it vanishes.

Once I spent the night or most of the night on Arunachala trying to find out how thoughts arise. Where do they come? Trouble, distress comes from disturbing thoughts. Pain is bound up with thought. One should be able to turn it off. I must find out at all cost how to be free from its tyranny. I find out! And so I sat alert like a cat over a mouse hole. Thoughts are born instantaneously. They come from nowhere. Their relative source, one could say, is our *vasanas* or predispositions; their real source is Silence where they vanish as if they had never been.

Bhagavan explains: "...What happens when you make a serious quest for the Self is that the I-thought disappears, something else from the depth takes hold of you and that is not the 'I' which commenced

Lucia Osborne is the wife of Arthur Osborne, the founder of the *Mountain Path*. She was editor of the magazine between 1970 and 1973, and was absorbed in Arunachala in December 1987.

the quest. That is the real Self, the import of the 'I-I'. It is the Supreme Being Itself."<sup>1</sup>

When during meditation one is alert a rising thought can be intercepted: "Oho! You are trying to get hold of me" intercepted like an enemy as it takes to flight. Or by mental alertness in the early stages we come to be aware of thoughts following one another so numerous that they seem interminable, whereas ordinarily they cloud the mind and take possession of it without our noticing it. Thus we recognise this thought-process and can deal with it objectively.

An ancient says: "In Zen the important thing is to stop the course of the mind."<sup>2</sup> The great Dogen wrote: "Cut off thought by the power of meditation. By this alone nearly everyone can attain the way."<sup>3</sup>

The last words of the Buddha were: "You must subjugate the mind."<sup>4</sup>

The great Zen Master Huang Po wrote, "Could you but restrain each thought from arising then would the Eighteen Sense Realms be made to vanish. How Godlike then your bodily rewards and how exalted the knowledge that would dawn within your mind."<sup>5</sup>

Another expedient way is to dive down deep into the heart centre into the fullness of void or listen to the heartbeats of the spiritual heart on the right, a focussing point till with practise it becomes spontaneous and all-embracing. "The wise man's heart is on the right, the fool's heart on the left" is a biblical saying. If we listen to it with patience and perseverance it will reveal itself.

Zen Master Hakuin puts extraordinary stress on the proper concentration on the heart. One form of Zen illness is caused by the vital energy rising uncontrolled to the head.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sat-Darshana Bhashya and Talks with Maharshi* by K, *The Talks*, 'Initial Doubts'.

<sup>2</sup> Discourses by Takashina Rosen (1876-1968). *A First Zen Reader*. Translated by Trevor Leggett. Charles E. Tuttle, Tokyo, 1960, pp. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. See also Dogen Zenji, See *Fukanzazengi*, 'Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen'.

<sup>4</sup> The exact words were: "Behold, O disciples, I exhort you. Subject to change are all component things. Strive on with diligence (*Vayadhammā samkhārā, Appāmadena sampādettha*).

<sup>5</sup> *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po on the Transmission of Mind*, 'The Wang Lin Record'. Translated by John Blofeld. Section 44. pp. 120-1. Grove Weidenfeld, New York.

When walking round Arunachala (*giripradakshina*) for many days in succession I sometimes resorted to a state of half-sleep by diving inwards and retaining a sort of trancelike awareness, a shadow of the state in which a *jnani* is fully conscious while asleep. Here one is only on the way to it, still very relaxing and banishing tiredness. It was more like floating than walking, like having wings.

Another way is letting thoughts pass over one like waves unmoved by their influence that is to leave unformulated or nebulous any thought or concept or idea that tries to arise or take root and to be indifferent to the thought neither falling under its influence nor attempting to impede it. Let the mind be a witness and continue meditating. Thus the mind can attain the state of passive tranquillity and one-pointedness. Bhagavan compares it to diving under the waves and letting them pass overhead while below them all is quiet.

To illustrate it Bhagavan gave this reply to an old devotee who asked how thoughts can be actually controlled: “A man who has never seen the sea before saw it one day and was awestruck by the big waves on it. He very much wanted to bathe in it but was waiting for the waves to subside. Another man who was seeing this queried him as to what made him pause. Learning that he was waiting for the waves to die down he was amused and explained that the waves will be there as long as the sea is. There is no stopping the waves. But what should be done? One should ignore the waves and not try to resist them. One should bend down, keep low and let the waves pass over. Similarly with thoughts. If one fixed ones attention on the Self or the Heart and ignore all thoughts which come up, remembering that they really do not affect one, the mind will be controlled. Just as one can hold the breath and keep one’s poise by the practice of standing the onslaught of one wave, two of them and so on; similarly one can get over any number of thoughts if one can hold on only to the ‘I’.”<sup>6</sup>

Bhagavan teaches that Knowledge of the Truth of the Self is obtained by stilling the mind mainly through Self-enquiry (*atma-vichara*) and not by any number of actions, which lead only to purification of the mind and not to Realisation; circumstance, time and Grace are aids to the quest. Such a man must be tireless in practise

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<sup>6</sup> We are unable to locate the exact reference. — Editor

and be able to discriminate between the Real and the unreal or hold on to the essential and reject the inessentials. The sine qua non of the quest is ardent desire for liberation and faithfully following the path shown by the Guru.

Bhagavan warns us not to feel frustrated when beginning to practise the vichara; the attempted concentration gets disturbed by thoughts. This can be turned to advantage, since in this way thoughts can be seen objectively as on a screen and weaknesses and impurities can be discovered and dealt with.

In *Vivekachudamani*, translated by Bhagavan while he was living in the Virupaksha cave, Sankara also enjoins Self-enquiry as a short-cut and royal road to Self-realisation.

“By enquiring whence thoughts arise the time will come when the mind unable to answer will be free of even a ripple of thought. The questioning mind suddenly vanishes and the body feels as if it were without substance.”

This is the gist of a reply given to a Zen follower: “This is the first stage to which Zen beginners attain and it should not be mistaken for the manifestation of Mind-in-itself but it is some encouragement. In Realisation of the Clear Light or Mind-in-itself, within which is the original blissful nature of the mind before it became darkened and obscured by thought-construction, a man feels like one who abruptly awakens from a dream.”<sup>7</sup>

A devotee asked the Maharshi: “What is that one thing knowing which all doubts are solved?” The reply was: “Know the doubter. If the doubter is known, doubts will not arise... It is only the mind which entertains doubts. Doubts must be uprooted. The method for accomplishing this is the investigation Who am I?”<sup>8</sup>

Having understood intellectually that one is not ‘my’ body nor ‘my’ thoughts nor ‘my’ name nor anything else with this possessive pronoun, the question arises ‘Who am I?’, since nobody doubts that he exists. This preparatory mental version of the quest leads to the real quest which is more than mental questioning or repetition like a mantra. It involves an intuitive one-pointed alertness of the entire mind

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<sup>7</sup> We are unable to locate the exact reference. — Editor

<sup>8</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§41.

to keep it poised, and a wordless urgency to know. When our effort has reached its limit it subsides of its own accord and Grace takes over. Until the effortless supreme state is attained it is impossible for a man not to make effort compelled by his own nature or so long as the ego persists as Sri Bhagavan teaches and as Lord Krishna pointed out to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Sri Bhagavan's teaching hinges on Self-enquiry but seekers find guidance on whatever path they follow from their level of attainment. The guidance given to each disciple was direct and adapted to his level of understanding and ability, ultimately leading to surrender or to Self-enquiry. It implies discrimination between the Real and the unreal, the Self and the ego. In Bhagavan's own words: "An examination of the ephemeral nature of external phenomena leads to vairagya (dispassion). Hence Self-enquiry is the first and foremost step to be taken. Vichara (Self-enquiry) is the process and the goal also. 'I AM' is the goal and final Reality. To hold on to it with effort is vichara. When spontaneous and natural it is Realisation that which Is, is the One Reality. Vichara and other attempts finally resolve themselves into the one single Reality. Bhakti (devotion), japa (incantation), vichara (Self-enquiry) are only different forms of our efforts to keep out the unreality. The unreality (identification with the body or the ego) is an obsession at present. Reality is our true nature."<sup>9</sup>

Various opinions are put forward as to Sri Bhagavan's teaching. Some hold that he taught the Vichara and nothing else. Others act as if a complementary guru was necessary to be able to follow Sri Bhagavan's path.

As pointed out, Sri Bhagavan guided seekers on all paths suitable for their spiritual development, ultimately converging on the enquiry or surrender. Truth is simple and direct. So is Bhagavan's teaching.

Of late articles have appeared and a book expressing the view that Bhagavan's teaching is the same as J. Krishnamurti's. This is far from true except a few sayings with Taoist or advaitic (non-dual) connotations, but not so the expositions. However, it is not within the scope of this chapter to enlarge upon this subject. A summary of the essential teaching of Bhagavan will *sui generis* clear misconceptions of those with discernment. People tend to believe what they like to believe.

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<sup>9</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§27, Talk§390 and Talk§401.

Self-enquiry is not psychological probing into the faculties, urges, memories or tendencies of one's conscious or subconscious mind but a quest for pure I-AM-ness which is pure Awareness that lies behind all these. One is not looking for anything 'new' or rejecting the 'old' or anything outside oneself. 'New' as against 'old' implies diversity and is not choiceless. Of course, one starts from diversity but not when supposed to be choiceless. Bhagavan taught us not to be carried away by thoughts, or try to understand the workings of the mind, but to still thoughts and then full awareness, unclouded by thoughts, will result. Psychological probing into the nature of various emotions feeds the mind instead of stilling it. "Who asked you to think about all that?" Bhagavan admonished an aspirant. "All those are also thoughts. What good will it do you to go on thinking about memory and perception etc.? It will be endless. Ask who has this perception and memory, whence does it arise? Find this out."<sup>10</sup>

Reality is not limited to the 'new' nor 'constant change' but is the Unchangeable underlying all change, the new and the old. Bhagavan said it is, "Existence underlying all forms, all changes, all forces, all matter and all spirit; Existence everywhere, endless, infinite, without beginning or end. It is as IT IS."<sup>11</sup>

To a question about effortless and choiceless awareness. Bhagavan replied: "Effortless and choiceless awareness is our real nature but one cannot reach it without effort, the effort of deliberate meditation. All the age-long *vasanas* (propensities) carry the mind outward and turn it to external objects. All such thoughts have to be given up and the mind turned inward and for that effort is necessary..."<sup>12</sup>

When the mind is silent in choiceless awareness there are no problems whatever. Problems are bound up with thoughts. A silent mind in choiceless awareness is the state of Enlightenment, the state of a jnani. All sadhana or investigation starts from the relative plane of a mind in ignorance of its true state, a mind in confusion, in order to reach clarity. Those who have the necessary strength to persevere on the path indicated by Bhagavan with earnest effort find that it works.

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<sup>10</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 3-7-46.

<sup>11</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§28.

<sup>12</sup> *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 11-1-46 Afternoon.

A devotee complained that when he tried to meditate more thoughts than usual seemed to arise. The Maharshi explained: “Yes, all kinds of thoughts arise in meditation. That is right; for what lies hidden in you is brought out. Unless it rises up, how can it be destroyed? Thoughts therefore rise up spontaneously in order to be extinguished in due course.”<sup>13</sup>

In any case investigation into the mechanism of the mind does not lead to Self-knowledge for it leaves unanswered the essential question: ‘Who am I?’ There is the well-known parable of a man hit by a poisoned arrow. If instead of pulling out the arrow straightaway he started analysing its components he would be dead before he finished.

The Maharshi also explains how the *vichara* is used more directly to deal with thoughts as they arise: “Even when extraneous thoughts sprout up during enquiry, do not seek to complete the rising of thoughts, but instead deeply inquire within, “To whom has this thought occurred?” No matter how many thoughts thus occur to you, if you would with acute vigilance enquire immediately as and when each individual thought arises, to whom it has occurred, you would find, it is to ‘me’. If then you would enquire ‘Who am I?’ the mind gets introverted and the rising thought also subsides”<sup>14</sup>

Question: “When we enquire within ‘Who am I?’ who enquires?”

Bhagavan’s reply: “It is the ego. It is that which makes the *vichara* also. As a result of the enquiry the ego ceases to exist and only the Self is found to exist. The excellence of the practice (*sadhana*) lies in not giving room for even a single mental concept. The path of Self-enquiry is suitable only for ripe souls. The rest should follow different methods such as *stuti* (singing the praises of the Lord with a feeling of great devotion), *japa* (uttering the name of God or sacred mantras like AUM either mentally or verbally); *dhyana* (when one is in *dhyana* the mind does not contact the objects of the senses, it is still); *jnana* (stilling the mind and realising the Self through the constant practise of *dhyana* or enquiry).”

“When the mind turning inwards inquires ‘Who am I?’ and reaches the heart, the ego sinks crestfallen and the One (Self) appears as ‘I-I’ the real Self.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Maharshi’s Gospel*, Chapter III, Mind Control.

<sup>14</sup> *Who Am I?*

<sup>15</sup> See *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 21-11-45 night.

To illustrate it there is a story of an imposter who attached himself to a marriage party. Both sides thought he was the guest of the other so they put up with his offensive behaviour till, reluctant to stand it any longer they started investigating: “Who is he? How could you invite such a fellow? We thought he was your guest and we thought he was yours”. When the imposter got wind of the investigation he vanished, just like thoughts when we start enquiring. By the way, a marriage ceremony may go on in India for up to one week.

Bhagavan is identified with Lord Dakshinamurti, the primal Master of Silence. These times of Silence sitting at His Feet, devotees found most precious and the effect very potent; truly wonderful moments when time ceased to matter. Now it is the same. Bhagavan’s Presence continues as before and devotees find guidance and help as before, if anything in even greater measure. Christ’s saying cannot be repeated too often. It applies. From all corners of the world seekers come nowadays to Sri Ramanasramam testifying to the continued Presence of Arunachala-Siva-Ramana, the eternal Source where everybody finds what he needs and what he can carry, provided he is a sincere seeker and his heart, the vessel empty enough to be filled with ever-present Grace. ▲

### **Editorship of the *Mountain Path***

After 21 years as editor of the *Mountain Path*, Christopher Quilkey will step down from the position after the publication of the October 2023 issue of the magazine. The President of the Ashram, Sri Venkat S. Ramanan will assume the editorship from January 2024.

Christopher Quilkey wishes to thank all those who supported him over the years and whose encouragement gave him the strength to continue in the task. It was a privilege to serve Bhagavan and the Ashram.



# What Bhagavan Means to Me

SUSAN VISVANATHAN

I came to Ramanasramam in 1995. I had just submitted a small book called “The Ethnography of Mysticism” to Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. Five years had gone into the making of that slender volume, and the footnotes had been carefully annotated by me. One wrong step, and the industry of followers of the literary traditions in Ramana scholarship would have noticed. I came to Asramam to see the place which I had been writing about. Archival work for those five years had set up a curiosity about the real place, real people. Arunachala rose up, as it always does, as a monument to faith, a mnemonic for centuries of Saivite devotion.

Everything about Tiruvannamalai over the next twenty five years interested me. I found its seasons, its crowds, the crushed jasmines and the general ardour of the devotees fascinating. In the early

Susan Visvanathan is an Indian sociologist, social anthropologist and a fiction writer. She is well known for her writings on religious dialogue and sociology of religion. She was a professor at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). She has written *The Children of Nature: The Life and Legacy of Ramana Maharshi* among other books.

years I arrived once or twice a year, full of curiosity. How did it work? Bhagavan's immanent presence was discernible. Faith came instinctively. Either by dream or by conversation, or by reading, does one come to the instinctive presence of the Lord. Theologies disappear, as does differentiation: yet, there are ritualistic spaces of hierarchy and formality. Between these, people meander. The Brahmin priests hold sway, as they did in Bhagavan's time, but they too are gentle and immersed in their duties.

Bhagavan's presence is infinite. It lies over his mausoleum like an intangible ever present aura. I am reminded of the photographs of his corpse that the French photographer Henri Cartier Bresson took which significantly show to us the desperateness of mourning and loss of devotees. That too is present now. Every day, the priests rigorously wash the lingam, and below supported by the elephant columns of black granite, lies the corporal body of the Lord. That Bhagavan believed in the return to earth as a sacred symbol is typical of his love for nature. He buried his mother, his crow, his deer, his dog, his cow. No one as democratic as Bhagavan, who ate from the hands of the poorest of the poor: the shepherds, the widows, the grasscutters. It is this utmost humility in the presence of the divine that brought me the greatest comfort.

"The meek shall inherit the earth" seemed to be a precept that was put in practice in Sri Ramanasramam. There was a call to perfection which resulted in whole-hearted hard work by resident sadhakas. Everywhere one looked, one found people consumed by the need to produce in the name of Bhagavan. It was as if the flower garlands, the recitation of shlokas, the ringing of bells, the preparation and distribution of food, the perfection of the publishing house with its books and calendars was the result of enchantment.

"Be as you are" became for me the algorithm underlying the place and its people. It was a call to happiness. I absorbed their happiness like a second skin. I understood that the inhabitants of this small compound had by the accident of birth, or of vocation, had come across the manifestation of divinity in the presence of Bhagavan. Religious sectarian differences vanished, and even the distinction between Vaisnavites and Shaivites became blurred. Arthur Osborne brought that theological discourse of interreligious dialogue as central to the

publication of early issues of the Mountain Path. No one could take away the grandness of the song of oneness with God. The mother's presence was equally vivid. Suffering and resolution were both incandescent in the rituals that unified.

This great happiness, *sahaj*, or Self-realisation is available to householder and renunciant equally. Perhaps because sadhakas were conversant with Ramana's need to integrate families into the fold of the monastery, we were not sent away. We were welcomed, and given the space we needed. We came with our children, who learned the rules of asramam quietness. We joined the prayers and songs, even if only as audience or spectators. There was a lot to learn, and we were given the space in which to unravel our thoughts. In the early decades of the 21st century there was a particular sense of commemoration, nostalgia, and events that foregrounded the anniversary of the coming of Ramana Maharshi to the holy hill. I found that digital reconnaissance was the most exultant space by which devotees could share the worldview of the Ramanasramam. Very early on it was understood that the grammar of rituals and incantation, the musical traditions of hymns and the visual intensity of colours and the eternal flame was precious to those who were immersed in satsang and meditation.

"Letting people be" to realise their participation in the activity of keeping asramam going was the basic philosophy. I watched, standing at a distance, and felt love envelope me. I was 38 years old in May 1995, when I came to Asramam for the first time. It was an instinctive curiosity which led me there. My father's sister's husband the eminent theologian Mathai Zachariah had advised me to follow the work of Dom Henri Le Saux in 1990. I was looking for new inroads into the area of interreligious dialogue. Le Saux wrote many books on Ramana Maharshi having adopted the Indian name Abhishiktananda. And it was then that my dream of Maharshi smiling and dispelling my fear, became evanescent and fructified in my goal in writing a book about him.

One thing led to another, and I became a regular visitor at the Asramam. Christian by birth, married to a Hindu, secular in disposition I found in Ramana a space of the heart. The sadhakas, both men and women, became my support group, as I suffered from multiple sclerosis. Their quietness and acceptance of fate, and love of Ramana

Maharshi became a kind of symbolic framework in which I hung my hope and despair. I didn't try to hide my feelings, I was there, they accepted me for what I was. As the years passed, what was a mortuary site where Sri Ramanasramam is situated, was for more than a century before, a burial cremation ground. It became a safe haven. Death was defeated. Ramana was ever-present.

I arrived, and let the routines take over. I always came exhausted and worn out, but a few days in the Asramam made me feel embellished by my participation. I was not a believer in the true sense of the word as I oscillated between devotion and my rational intellectual sensibilities. To this too, Bhagavan said that it was typical of intellectuals not to accept the stillness of mind as something which was preferred. It was true, I need to be in the ferment of continuous thinking. Yet, Arunachala presented me a calm mind, fait accompli. I didn't have a say in it. I accepted the path of silence, I bowed before Dakshinamurthy. I went away back to my garrulous job as a teacher without disquiet, but I looked forward intensely to my return to the holy hill.

Just as Ramana could not make out the difference between himself and Arunachala in the consuming love that enveloped him, I too could not disassociate myself. I carried the holy hill in my heart, and over time achieved the discipline that japa brings to the mind. I never was able to bring myself to Self-enquiry, as the only answer that I got was "I am Ramana", further enquiry led me to say "I am a fool". This seemed counterproductive to me, so I remained with japa. Joelle Mazet, the French ballet teacher told me that she benefited by repeating the mantra 'Om Nama Bhagyawati Ramana'.

As the decades passed, and my three daughters grew up and found their separate vocations as historian, musician and film maker respectively, I found happiness in being myself. As water finds its own level, my friends stood by me, and their presence was always a joy. Solitude was my chosen path, and in the 28 years that passed from my first meeting of fellow travellers in Ramanasramam, I understood that Bhagavan asks us to be true to our vocations. Mine, as a writer, is to accept the world for what it is. I accept that personal ambitions drive us to our goals. We never lose sight of what gives us comfort.

Bhagavan never loses sight of us. Each time, we sense our dissipation, we return to Bhagavan instinctively and he never lets us

down. Meeting his gaze is the easiest thing to do, when we are sure of ourselves and our actions. When we fail him, his gaze rebukes us. It is the conviction in the Rorschach of our mutual concentration that we live our lives as devotees. We no longer try to interrupt the pendulum of our feelings. We no longer believe that we betray our faith, which in the moment of Self-realisation frees us. We accept the intensity of our obligations to let go, to accept ourselves with all our deficits as beloved of Bhagavan.

In that acceptance of Bhagavan's love, we experience both surcease from suffering and grief. That detachment that we work so hard to achieve falls on us like a blessed cloak. We don't shrug away our worldly attachments or obligations, but instead, see in them the power that love brings to us. It is this that releases us. Our fortune lies in the beauty that we see in the world. When rage or disappointment overtakes us, for we are only human, we reach into the corpus of words and signs that appear for us as beneficence. Through the act of translation, worlds become revealed to us. This very act of focused meditation/reading/singing allows us to transcend our rage and horror at the world, the many domains of intemperate actions we trespass into. Bhagavan's presence assures us that existence transcends our biographical or historical manifestation. In him we find ourselves in eternity.

The contradictions of this experiential state and the need to use words to describe it are best explained as the necessity of sharing our view of the unknown, the unrealisable. The call to silence is paramount, but as writers, we have an obligation to cross the boundary to make sense of the mystical. This pleroma is always in the making, it is our way of saying we saw something fleetingly, and we knew it was the presence of God. For Maharshi, it was sufficient to express his love for the earth and the divine through the ordinary: feeding the hungry/or the overfed...he made no distinction. People arrived on the holy hill because they were looking for something. He made them feel at home in the presence of that which was immensely cosmic. They felt that Bhagavan kept them company in their search. He did not turn them away, he did not make them feel they were out of place. He accepted their foolishness, their ardour, their shifting loyalties, their noisiness just as he accepted the play of the monkeys. So also, those

## MOUNTAIN PATH

who worked for Ramanasramam brought their sense of ecstasy into their daily chores, whether it was making food, milking cows, drawing kolam patterns with chalk, or saying/singing prayers. The world marched in, and each sadhaka brought his/her calmness to those of us who passed its doors on their way to some other place. As Bhagavan always said, “Finish what you have to do and then come back.” Yes, indeed, we must die one day, but our dreams will carry us forward. In that very moment of acceptance of finitude, we are presented with what Sri Ramanasramam calls ‘New Beginnings’. This takes away the fear of death and makes us ever-ready for what lies beyond the horizon. Each one of us who belongs to this ever-expanding magic circle knows that it’s not about politics, theology, power, or control but something so much greater and transcendent. The guru lives in us, teaching us how we may control our emotions, laugh at our fears, bring joy to others, revel in our successes, and share our disappointments. Often no speech is required. The guru teaches us that here and now, body and universe are conjoined with our realisation that his is the euphoria of the ascent to the hill, and the culmination of the search. The loneliness of being different and apart, the babble of constant striving, the essence of being out of place, not belonging...all these become as nothing in the plenitude of Bhagavan’s presence. ▲

It is with regret that we inform readers that Robert Butler is unable to continue with his translation of *Siva Bhoga Saram* by Guru Jnanasambandha Desikar. We wish Robert the very best for a full recovery from his recent medical condition. The situation will be assessed in a year’s time and hopefully he will be able to continue his splendid translation work.

Robert Butler has been an outstanding contributor to the *Mountain Path* and the various ashram publications which he translated, particularly his edition of *Arunachala Aksharamanama*, A Detailed Commentary by Muhavai Kanna Muruganar and *Ozhivil Odukkam*, the Tamil Advaita text which Bhagavan often referred to.

Robert is a lover of the Tamil language, a fine poet, and a diligent scholar in the best tradition of pundits who enrich our understanding of the noble and profound tradition of Tamil Advaita Vedanta. We salute him.

# The Maharshi: The One as All

KAYS

**B**hagavan, the pervasive form of *jnana* abiding as the vast sky of grace cascaded as the sweet rains of Grace. Shining as the life of all beings, he claimed one and all impartially. But those spiritually athirst lifting up their hearts to him, reaped a rich harvest. He is known to have given *darshan* of the chosen deities of various devotees so much so that Swami Madhava Tirtha remarked that “God took many forms”<sup>1</sup> may be applied to him also. Sivaprakasam Pillai announces, “Blessed be the Feet of the Lord who granted a vision in the form of Light.”<sup>2</sup>

Sri Sadhu Om, the gifted poet and an ardent devotee of Bhagavan, extols him thus: “Obeisance to Thee, who the Jews, Christians and Mohammedans call upon as their Guru,”<sup>3</sup> and who “Hindus, Moslems and Buddhists worship as their own guru and are soaked in grace.”<sup>4</sup> He was ever established in the state of *turiya* or wakeful-sleep which is called ‘*nirvana*’ by Buddhists, *samadhi* by Hindus and mystic union in Christian Spiritual literature.

The foremost tenet of Jainism is the cherishing of all lives as the form of the Self. This is the principle of ‘*daya dharma*’ (compassion

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<sup>1</sup> Godman, D., *Power of the Presence*, Part I, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ramaṇa Dēva Mālai*, v. 39.

<sup>3</sup> *Ramaṇa Akṣara Malar Mālai*, v. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Kiḷippāṭṭu*, Sadhu Om.

and virtue). Bhagavan comprehensively nourished it richly and made it shine in all its effulgence. Muruganar lauded him saying, “There is none in all the seven worlds who like him shone as one living entirely for the sake of others. He like the Prophet Mohammed shone bereft of the self that the world may prosper. May the dharma of Sri Venkata Buddha, our Father of rare virtues flourish and shine. May he whose life was the atonement for the sins of others and the virtue of the cross (loss of ego) uttered in his own words be enshrined in the hearts of beings.”<sup>5</sup>

If we reflect but a little we can see some similarities between Bhagavan and Jesus the Christ. Christ means the anointed one. If we look back through the many chronicles of his devotees – his apostles – we come to know that Bhagavan was also a Christ, who his apostles had enshrined him in their hearts. His birth during Christmas week and dropping of the body in Easter season endear him to many devout souls. In Bhagavan, the identity between the ideal and the actual was perfect. His words – grace condensed – and his physical life lived as an example of these words, not only proved the truth of the scriptures but rendered his life a practical demonstration of the Gītā and the Gospel. “Bible and Gītā are the same.”<sup>6</sup> For many a foreigner, a single visit to him brought a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Gospels by making them luminous and helping them realise what Jesus taught.

Bhagavan is the expression of the divinity of the Sanātana Dharma, the religion of perennial virtues. “The four pillars or aspects of Dharma according to Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, are Austerity, Purity, Fellow feeling, and Truth.”<sup>7</sup>

Truth or *Sat* or ‘What IS’ is his form. (Thou who art verily the Form of ‘What is’<sup>8</sup>). Truth constituted as the form; wedded to Holy poverty and clad in simplicity with just a ‘kaupīna’ (loincloth) but truly attired in the garment of ‘cidākāśa’ that never wears out; permanently established in the bliss of ‘No want’; possessing as ‘I’ the ONE who is present everywhere; the richness of spirit within yielding to the

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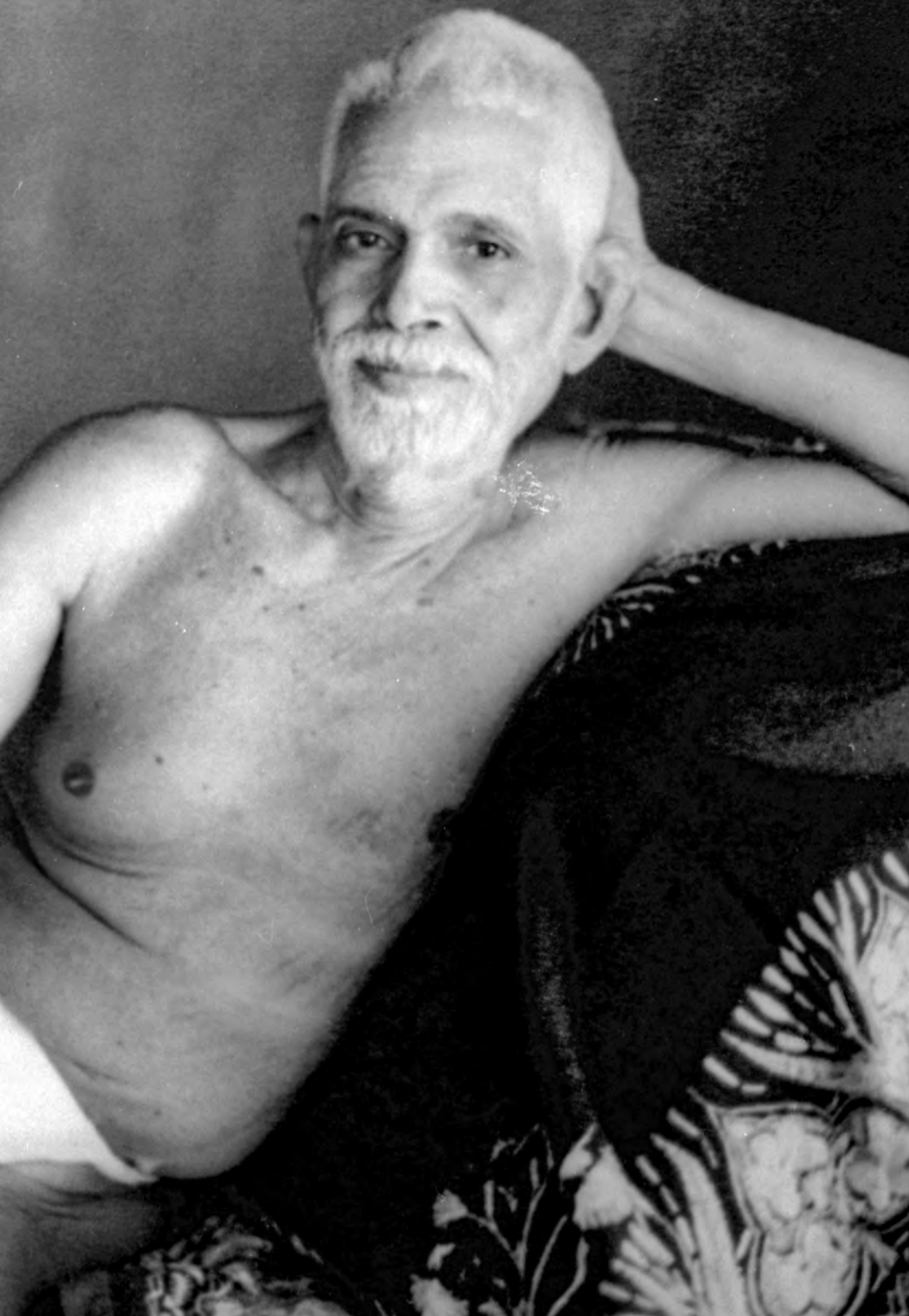
<sup>5</sup> *Thiruvundiyar*, verses 14, 16, 20.

<sup>6</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§163.

<sup>7</sup> *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 24-17-1.

<sup>8</sup> Muruganar, Uḷḷadāl uruk koṇḍavaṅ, *Srī Ramaṇa Sannidimurāi*, ‘Sutṭaruttal’ - 4, 94-1049.





austerity of silence that thundered the Truth; his life was truly the Song of a Sannyasin. He is hailed by Muruganar as “the King of ascetics shining as the farthest boundary of dispassion.”<sup>9</sup>

When the ‘Kingdom of God within’ is found, the body becomes Knowledge, Heart-Love and all beings become but ‘That’ in Being, presence and power. To such a love in heart and gaze even a stone perceived is but divine. Like the Brother Sun and Sister Moon of St. Francis of Assisi, to Bhagavan animals were friends and trees ‘stationary human beings’ and human beings ‘walking trees’. He, in whose mansion of the sky within the splendour of love and bliss sports forever, recognised love everywhere and was profoundly moved by the rhapsody of Love.<sup>10</sup>

Bhagavan’s teachings are a Universal Religion transcending place and time. In its catholicity it embraces every human being as it is centred solely in aiding humanity to realise its own divine nature.

Bhagavan’s Gospel centres around Self-Enquiry. A Christian wondered whether he could follow the method of Self-Enquiry and still be a Christian. Maharshi replied, “What I say is the essence of Christianity.”<sup>11</sup>

He would say, “... the whole Vedanta is contained in the two Biblical statements: ‘I am that I AM’ and ‘Be still and know that I am God’.”<sup>12</sup> The Self is known to everyone but not clearly. You always exist. The Be-ing is the Self. ‘I am’ is the name of God. Of all the definitions of God, none is indeed so well put as the Biblical statement “I AM THAT I AM” in EXODUS (Chap. 3). There are other statements, such as *Brahmaivaham*, *Aham Brahmasmi* and *Soham*. But none is so direct as the name JEHOVAH = I AM. The Absolute Being is what is – It is the Self. It is God. Knowing the Self, God is known. In fact God is none other than the Self.<sup>13</sup>

The *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* says that Aham (I am) is the first name of God. In the Biblical statement, “In the beginning was the word, the word was with God and the word was God,” ‘the word’ refers

<sup>9</sup> Padiyādi mūṅṅum pazhudaṅakkāṅ parkers/mudalāy muṅṅinda muzhumudalā vāṅṅē. *Srī Ramaṇa Purāṇam*, *Srī Ramaṇa Sannidimurāi*, line 413-14.

<sup>10</sup> Corinthians, Chapter XIII, vv.4-8. “Love endures long and is patient and kind... love does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; ...”

<sup>11</sup> Prof. K. Swaminathan, *The Maharshi*, p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talks§338.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Talk§106.

to 'I AM'. In the Mahāvākya 'Ayam Atma Brahman' '*ayam*' means 'That which Exists', Self-shining and evident. 'I am Brahman' means Brahman exists as 'I'. The Self is simply the sphurana of 'I AM'. That is why in the Bible Jehovah says, "I am before Abraham; He does not say, 'I was', but 'I AM'. Bhagavan calls It 'Pūṇḍram', perfect and whole.<sup>14</sup> Even to Moses, the Lord in the burning bush revealed Himself as 'I AM THAT I AM'. The one Infinite is unbroken; the Whole is aware of Itself as 'I'. This is the original NAME. The eternal subject in the Heart who says, "I am" in every Heart is the deathless one, the sleepless one, ever awake, the immortal whose glory never dies.

He who is who cannot be seen as 'He is' is heard to say, "I AM THAT I AM".

Bhagavan calls it the "ONE unfragmented light in all beings fragmented"<sup>15</sup> and "the ONE string on which all religions are threaded as pearls and ONE ESSENCE that shines in all beings as 'I AM'".<sup>16</sup>

Realisation is indeed freedom from the tyranny of thoughts. Absence of thoughts is both devotion (*bhakti*) and liberation (*mukti*). Silence is the best prayer and for 'Thy will' to 'Be done', the individual will should be negated by silencing the mind.

Bhagavan's utterance of the 'two words', "Summa iru," (Be still) is the succinct form of the Biblical statement: "Be still and know that I am God."<sup>17</sup> This content is beautifully encapsulated by Bhagavan as "Abide still in the heart in tranquil quiescence so that the ocean of beatific Bliss and joy may surge forth."<sup>18</sup> 'Being still', therefore is the greatest and holiest pilgrimage one can make.

The turning of the sense organs from the sense-objects in the direction of the Lord or Self within either through Supreme Love or Enquiry is the standard technique of the science of religion, for external nature presents only the perishable crust of names and forms. Jesus said it: "My Kingdom is not of this world" and "Ask, it shall be given unto you/Seek, you shall find/Knock, it shall be opened unto you."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Talk§396.

<sup>15</sup> *Āṅgma Vidyā*, v.3.

<sup>16</sup> *Aṣṭakam*, v.5.

<sup>17</sup> Psalm 46.

<sup>18</sup> *Akṣaramaṇamālai*, v.31.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 7:7.

Ask – “Who am I” within or ask for the Divine nature of the Lord and oneself.

The first part is *vichara* and the second part is but devotional enquiry.

Seek – Dive within with an introverted mind and seek the kingdom of God or the Self, churning the mind with the pure mind.

Knock – Abide still at the entrance of the Heart or the origin of the I-thought with words and mind stilled when the door opens from within, grace rushes forth, and the fire of spiritual wisdom or the incorporeal essence flourishes even as a lustre emerges when a gem is polished against a whetstone or fire emerges when two flintstones are rubbed against each other. Love or devotion to God is the science of love, the highest. While human love is interdependent, divine love is a continuous stream bereft of bondage. Love of an object is of an inferior order and cannot endure, whereas the Self, in other words God, is Love itself. Do not the Upanishads say everything loved is not for the sake of itself but for the sake of the Self?<sup>20</sup>

The melting litany of Bhagavan Ramana’s *Aksharamanamalai*, springing out of the melody of abiding union with the Lord within, flowed out of compassion for pilgrims on the path who wished to be reborn in the pure spirit of oneness. Not only does it demonstrate the highest science of supreme love but is truly the quintessence of the beatitudes of Christ.

The thirst and hunger for the Lord turning the senses finer and higher with all that is low falling off, gradually blossoms into raging hunger and burning thirst. This ecstasy of love melting the very bones says, “Not I, not I, but thou, O Lord.”<sup>21</sup>

“If Thou dost not commingle with me my body due to unbearable grief will perish in the river of tears” or “My sinful deeds catching up with me will roast me as fire” and “Before Thy Form burns me as ashes of Thy Form let Thy rain of grace descend on me.”<sup>22</sup>

This supreme love that melts the heart like wax on fire in rapturous tears of love, is a precursor to realisation even as rosy (*aruna*) dawn is followed by the glorious sun. Bliss indeed is the precious yield of

<sup>20</sup> *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, II-iv-5.

<sup>21</sup> Song by Carlo Acutis.

<sup>22</sup> *Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, vv. 34, 35, 55.

Love. “Softened and softened by the yearning for Thy Grace body, mind, melting away ever more and more with love and languor and on surrendering to Thee as my soul refuge Thou revealest Thyself as the Transcendent Expanse.”<sup>23</sup>

The verse “Enfold me in thy embrace to destroy our separate identities as ‘Thou and me’ so that I may ever abide in the state of Bliss-filled Self,”<sup>24</sup> is indeed reminiscent of Thomas à Kempis’ soulful prayer, “Oh Lord God, when shall I be made one with Thee and be molten into Thy Love so that I wholly forget myself. Be Thou in me and I in Thee and grant that we may so abide always together as one.”<sup>25</sup>

This mourning is indeed blessed for “Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.”<sup>26</sup>

Purity achieved through penance heralds the Lord within for a Pure mind is the best mirror for reflection of the Truth.

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”<sup>27</sup>

Purity here stands for humility, that is, to be bereft of pride of wealth, learning, beauty, lineage and preconceived ideas of Truth for they lead to lack of receptivity to grace. The expression of wonder at “the Lord consorting ever with the humble who with humility as the badge of their very nature become more and more humble”<sup>28</sup> is a reminder of the above beatitude.

Perfection is negatively the cessation of misery and positively, immortal life, infinite knowledge, and eternal love – *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. This perfection is our divine heritage and our right to own it. Perfection is realisation or to be reborn in spirit: “Lord! Rid my mind of all the worldly attachments, make me attached to the fragrance of Brahman, objectless Awareness and by Thy grace unite me non-dually with the Perfect Whole.”<sup>29</sup>

He who is Perfect having realised God sees only divine existence everywhere and is in universal love.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., v. 59.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., v. 56.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*. Chapter 21

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 5:4.

<sup>27</sup> Mathew 5:8.

<sup>28</sup> *Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*, v. 83.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., v. 69.

Hence, “Be Ye therefore perfect even as your Father in Heaven is Perfect.”<sup>30</sup>

Righteousness also stands for deliverance from evil and union with God. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled.” These virtues are the treasure which Jesus asks us to “lay up in Heaven where there are no moths and thieves”<sup>31</sup> One’s heart is where one’s treasure is.

“Prayer, pure, unceasing and uninterrupted cleaves to breath and the intellect is ravished by divine light. The highest state of prayer is reached when the intellect goes beyond the flesh and the world and is utterly free from matter and form.”<sup>32</sup>

The technique of this process of enquiry is extensively given in that small gem of an Upanishad, *Upadesa Saram* by Bhagavan. In this process, watchfulness and prayer mutually reinforce each other.

The most ancient “existing ere all the ancient things yet whose nature shares the newness of all things,”<sup>33</sup> who resides in the inmost recess of every human heart is hidden inside the atom. Sages realised Him through the power of introspection and Self-enquiry and got beyond joy and sorrow. The technique of this process of enquiry is extensively given in the *Upadēsa Sāram, Nāṇ Yār?* (Who am I?) and *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*.

The non-rising of desire for enjoyable objects is the farthest boundary of dispassion (*viveka*). The non-rising of the ego within is the farthest reach of true knowledge (*jnana*). The cessation of those thoughts that have subsided in the heart is the farthest boundary of Peace (*shanti*).

*Viveka* or discrimination between the ephemeral and eternal is an essential requisite for this journey within.<sup>34</sup>

“The annihilation of ‘I’ is liberation. The ego is like a shadow thrown on the ground.”<sup>35</sup> And giving room for the emergence of subsided thoughts aids the ego in survival. Bhagavan’s litany contains melting pleas for the “removal of the perverse knowledge of the besotted mind”<sup>36</sup> And, “the sole hurdle namely the waves of thoughts

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<sup>30</sup> Matthew 5:58.

<sup>31</sup> Matthew 6:20.

<sup>32</sup> St. Hesychios, *Philokalia*, Volume I, ‘On Watchfulness and Holiness.’

<sup>33</sup> Māṇikkavācakar, *Tiruvempāvai* 9.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 6.18-34 emphasises the importance of this.

<sup>35</sup> Talk§139 and Talk§ 146.

<sup>36</sup> *Akṣaramaṇamālai*, v.58.

and billions of misconceptions to the union with one who shines as a most subtle form of space of consciousness.”<sup>37</sup>

“One who rejecting the perceived outer world with a pure mind and breath restrained and with increasing contemplation on Him abides in the Heart beholds Him as the light of Awareness.”<sup>38</sup>

St. Hesychios speaks of Self-attention or watchfulness in the same strain. “Attentiveness is the continual heart’s stillness unbroken by thought. Watchfulness is the continual fixing of the thought at the entrance to the Heart.”<sup>39</sup> “Watchfulness as a spiritual method leads to the sure knowledge of the unapprehensible Lord,”<sup>40</sup> which reflects the Upanishadic dictum, “from whom speech and mind unable to apprehend return.”<sup>41</sup> And again, “The virtues exist for the sake of knowledge of creatures; knowledge exists for the sake of the knower; knower for the sake of Him who is known through unknowing and who knows beyond all knowledge”<sup>42</sup> is but an echo of the content of some verses in *Ulladu Narpadu*.

This friction (*tapas*) or churning out of the contents of consciousness and by implication, the constituents of the mind, creates Supreme Love of God or Watchfulness. The senses and mind are silenced in the citadel of stillness and this naturally ignites the influx of the divine which spontaneously provides and perfects what is lacking. Then the relentless flow of the ego – the little self-called *aham vritti* – is totally erased and replaced by the regal throb of ‘I AM’ *aham sphurana*. This is succinctly expressed by Bhagavan. “Be still, with word and mind stilled so that the Ocean of Bliss may surge forth.”<sup>43</sup> It is by self-forgetting or dying to the self that one finds the Lord or Self within.

This is called *atma hatya*.<sup>44</sup> The original sin, says Bhagavan is only the *dehatma buddhi* or the sense of ‘I am the body’ idea.<sup>45</sup> When the ego is crucified what survives after the perishing of the ego is the

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., v.57.

<sup>38</sup> *Aruṅācala Pañcaratnam*, v.4.

<sup>39</sup> Op. cit., St. Hesychios. ‘On Watchfulness and Holiness.’

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> *Kena Upaniṣad*, 1.3.

<sup>42</sup> *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, See Chapter IV—Yājñavalkya and Maitreyi.

<sup>43</sup> *Akṣaramaṇamālai*, v.31.

<sup>44</sup> Literally, suicide.

<sup>45</sup> See Talk§186. See also “Death in true sense is separation from God and the sting of death is sin.” St Maximos the Confessor, *Philokalia*, Volume II. ‘Four Hundred Texts on Love’.

Absolute Being leading to the Experience of oneness of ‘I and my Father’. This glorious survival is called Resurrection.

Ultimately, dedication to God is denial of the ego for Jesus Christ says, “If any man will come after me let him deny himself.”<sup>46</sup> Narrow is the lane of love. It cannot hold both the ego and the Lord. There is one above and there is no second and “the wise man’s heart is at the right side and the fool’s heart is on the left.”<sup>47</sup>

Bhagavan affirms it on the basis of the unassailable authority of his personal experience in addition to scriptural authenticity. During his second experience of death at Tortoise Rock (*āmai pārai*) on the east side of Arunachala, when his biological heart had stopped and the body had become blue, the Heart on the right was working all along. Hence “Unceasingly and for all eternity the ‘I AM’ that dances in the Heart (on the right) is but Thee.”<sup>48</sup>

This inner journey with its many pitfalls proves to be difficult and is often compared to walking on a razor’s edge. Cleansing the tendencies and quietening the turbulence of the mind demand one’s total attention. In this spiritual incorporeal warfare, prayer or watchfulness is the spiritual weapon and purity, humility and asceticism – all together called *tapas* – are allies.

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God”<sup>49</sup> is an eternal truth for a pure soul is called a chosen vessel of the divine. Realisation is perfection and this perfection says Bhagavan is the birthright of everyone.

The knowledge ‘I am pure and deathless Self’ is the rock of conviction on which we can attain fulfilment of a divine and holy life. Probably the parable of “the wise and foolish men building their houses on rock and sand”<sup>50</sup> refers to the knowledge of this eternal Truth the rock – which provides constant nourishment to the intellect regarding the Primal source.

Further, this eternal Truth is present here and now waiting to be realised for “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Luke 9:23.

<sup>47</sup> Ecclesiastics, 10:1.

<sup>48</sup> *Aruṇāchala Pañcaratnam*, v.2.

<sup>49</sup> Matthew 5:8.

<sup>50</sup> St. Luke, 6:48-49.

<sup>51</sup> St. Mark, 8:36.



“Grace is but another name of God or Self” says Bhagavan.<sup>52</sup> It is Grace or God that gives the gift of prayer to him who prays and a seeker who practises watchfulness, is guided by His Grace to the Seer. It is Grace that manifests Itself. God in the depths of us receives the external God or guru who comes to us. It is God contemplating God. Jalaluddin Rumi conveys the message of God to a soul during the dark night of the soul thus:

“Thy call ‘O God’ is my call ‘I am here’.

Thy pain and praying, message mine so clear

Thy love-woe is my Grace.”<sup>53</sup>

The Holy Trinity is defined by Bhagavan as “God the Father represents the Iswara, God the Holy Spirit represents Atman and God, the Son represents Guru.”<sup>54</sup>

“In each human spirit is a Christ concealed

To be helped or hindered to be hurt or healed,

If from any human soul you lift the veil

You’ll find a Christ there hidden without fail.”<sup>55</sup>

It is through the valour of Grace that the vaulting ego is vanquished. Grace and God are one the same. Bhagavan said, “Grace is the Self and one is never out of its operation.”<sup>56</sup>

The emphatic confirmation won by Dr. Syed in a conversation with Bhagavan is an uplifting assurance for all of us.

Dr. Syed: “I was meditating. I began to reflect on the Grace shown by Christ to some devotees who got salvation. I consider that Sri Bhagavan is similar. Is not salvation the result of similar Grace?”

Bhagavan replied: “Yes! Right!”<sup>57</sup>

Just as one who looks at the Sun cannot but fill his eyes with light so he who always gazes intently unto his Heart cannot but be illumined.

Be it forbearance, forgiveness, healing by love and Grace or owning the sins and sufferings of others, which he called ‘vicarious suffering’, Bhagavan was another Sankara or Christ. Bhagavan quotes the *Ribhu Gita* where it is stated that all the Gods namely Brahma, Vishnu and Siva run after a *jnani* and in the *Bhagavad Gita* the Lord says *jnani* is but Me. ▲

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<sup>52</sup> Talk§271.

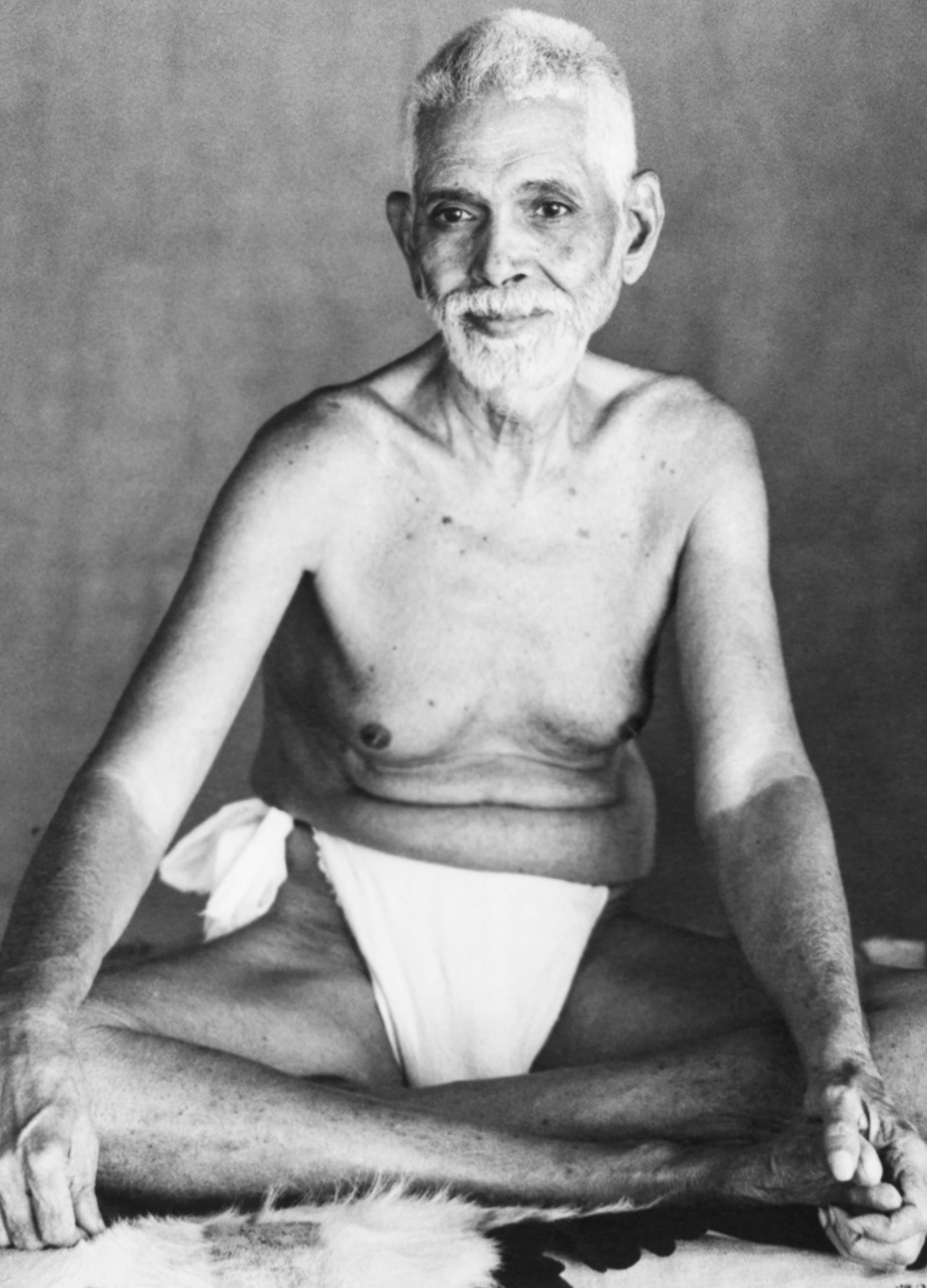
<sup>53</sup> Jalaluddin Rumi.

<sup>54</sup> Talk§90.

<sup>55</sup> Jalaluddin Rumi.

<sup>56</sup> Talk§251.

<sup>57</sup> Talk§268.



# The Paramount Importance of Self Attention

## Part Forty Seven

SADHU OM  
AS RECORDED BY MICHAEL JAMES

24<sup>th</sup> February 1979

**Sadhu Om:** Whether one follows the path of *bhakti* or the path of *jñāna*, love is the essential ingredient without which neither can be followed. There is a widespread misconception that *bhakti* and *jñāna* are two separate paths, whereas in fact the path of *jñāna* is the culmination of the path of *bhakti*.

That is, when a devotee starts on the path of *bhakti*, they generally take God to be other than themselves, but as their *bhakti* matures, they come to understand that God is the sole reality, the only thing that actually exists, so he is the one infinite whole, other than which nothing exists. He is therefore our own being, our very existence, so we cannot be anything other than him. When this clear understanding arises in our heart by his grace, we begin to seek him within ourselves, so this is the point at which the path of *bhakti* matures into the path of *jñāna*.

Michael James assisted Sri Sadhu Om in translating Bhagavan's Tamil writings and *Guru Vācaka Kōvai*. Many of his writings and translations have been published, and some of them are also available on his website, [happinessofbeing.com](http://happinessofbeing.com).

This is what Bhagavan teaches us in verses 3 to 8 of *Upadēsa Undiyār*. So long as we believe that God is other than ourself, if we love him for his own sake and not just for the sake of whatever benefits we believe we can gain from him, we will try to express our love for him by doing actions for his sake, and such actions that we do without desire for any benefit but just for the love of him will purify our mind and thereby give us the clarity to recognise the correct path to liberation, as Bhagavan says in verse 3:

*Niṣkāmya karma* [action not motivated by desire] done [with love] for God purifies the mind and [thereby] it will show the path to liberation.

What purifies our mind is not the actions themselves but the love with which we do them, because we could do the same actions for the fulfilment of our desires, but they would not then purify our mind. This is why Bhagavan emphasises that the actions we do should be *niṣkāmya* (not done for the fulfilment of any desires) and ‘*karuttanukku ākkum*’ (done for God), implying that they should be done only for the love of him.

The impurities in our mind are our *viṣaya-vāsanās* (inclinations to seek happiness in the objects of the world), which are the seeds that sprout as worldly desires and attachments, and which are therefore the seeds that drive us to do *kāmya karmas* (actions done for the fulfilment of desires) and thereby become immersed in the great ocean of action, as he said in the previous verse, so purification of mind is the gradual weakening of all such *vāsanās* and the desires they give rise to. Since these impurities are what cloud our mind with worldly desires, when our mind is cleansed of these impurities, we gain the inner clarity to recognise that the path to liberation does not lie in going outwards to engage in actions but only in going inwards to subside in the action-free state of just being, as Bhagavan implies in this verse by saying that *niṣkāmya karma* done for God ‘will show [or make us see] the path to liberation’. That is, though *niṣkāmya karma* done for the love of God is not itself the path to liberation, by purifying our mind it will lead us towards that path.

In verses 4 to 7 Bhagavan then discusses the various *niṣkāmya karmas* that we can do with love for God, namely *pūjā* (worship), *japa* (repetition of a name of God) and *dhyāna* (meditation), which

are actions of body, speech and mind respectively, and says that in this order each of these is superior to the previous one, implying that it is more efficacious in purifying the mind. Finally in verse 8 he says:

Rather than *anya-bhāva* [meditation on God as other than oneself], *ananya-bhāva* [meditation on him as none other than oneself], in which he is [understood to be] I, certainly is the best among all [practices of *bhakti*].

That is, when our mind is purified sufficiently by the practice of *niṣkāmya pūjā*, *japa* and *dhyāna*, we will thereby gain the clarity of mind and heart to recognise that we cannot actually be anything other than God, so he is what is always shining in our heart as ‘I’. When we clearly understand this, we will cease meditating on him as if he were something other than ourself, and will instead meditate on nothing other than ourself, with the firm conviction that he alone is ‘I’. In other words, we will meditate only on ‘I’, so what Bhagavan describes here as ‘*ananya-bhāva*’ (meditation on what is not other) is *ātma-vicāra* (self-investigation), which is the path of *jñāna*.

Therefore when he says that this is ‘the best among all’, he implies that *ātma-vicāra* is the best among all the practices of *bhakti*. It is best not only because it is the most efficacious means to purify the mind, but more importantly because it is the only means to eradicate ego, the root of all impurities. Other practices can purify the mind only to a limited extent, because so long as ego survives, it will inevitably have impurities, namely *viśaya-vāsanās*, to a greater or lesser extent, since it is its very nature to have *viśaya-vāsanās*. In order to remove all impurities, therefore, it is necessary to eradicate ego, and since we rise, endure and flourish as ego to the extent to which we attend to anything other than ourself, we will subside and merge back into the source from which we rose only to the extent to which we attend to nothing other than ourself, so meditating on ourself alone is the only means by which we can eradicate ego.

Since we will subside to the extent to which we attend to ourself, this practice of self-attentiveness is the correct practice of self-surrender, as Bhagavan implies in the first sentence of the thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*:

Being *ātma-niṣṭhāparaṇ* [one who is firmly fixed as oneself], giving not even the slightest room to the rising of any *cintana*

[thought] except *ātma-cintana* [thought of oneself, namely self-attentiveness], alone is giving oneself to God.

Since giving oneself entirely to God is the ultimate aim and goal of the path of *bhakti*, and since we can give oneself entirely to him only by being so keenly self-attentive that we subside deep within and thereby lose oneself completely in him, *ananya-bhāva*, meditation on nothing other than oneself, is the best of all the practices of *bhakti*.

By patient and persistent practice of *ātma-vicāra*, that is, by trying to hold on to self-attentiveness as firmly as possible and by turning our mind back within whenever it is diverted outwards under the sway of its *viṣaya-vāsanās*, ‘for the mind the power to stand firmly established in its birthplace increases’, as Bhagavan says in the sixth paragraph of *Nān Ār?*. This ‘power to stand firmly established in its birthplace’ is what he refers to in verse 9 of *Upadēsa Undiyār* as ‘*bhāva balam*’, ‘the strength of meditation’, which in this context means the strength, intensity, firmness or stability of *ananya-bhāva* or self-attentiveness:

By the strength of [such] meditation, being in *sat-bhāva* [the state of being], which transcends [all] *bhāvanā* [thinking, imagination or meditation in the sense of mental activity], alone is *para-bhakti tattva* [the nature, reality or true state of supreme devotion].

That is, when by patient and persistent practice of self-attentiveness (*ananya-bhāva*) the mind increasingly gains the ‘power to stand firmly established in its birthplace’ (*taṅ pirappiḍattil taṅgi nirkum śakti*), by that power it will subside and remain firmly established in the state of being (*sat-bhāva*), which transcends all mental activity. Since the state of being (*sat-bhāva*) is itself God, being in it without rising to know anything else is surrendering oneself completely to God, which is *para-bhakti tattva*, the nature, reality or true state of supreme devotion.

Therefore the early stages of the path of *bhakti* are the path of *niṣkāmya karma*, in which one does devotional actions just for the love of God and not for the fulfilment of any desires, whereas the later stages of it are the path of *jñāna*, in which we withdraw back within to lovingly meditate upon him in our heart as our own being, ‘I am’, thereby ceasing to rise as ego to do any actions whatsoever. Since God is our own being, our very existence, the most perfect expression of

love for him is not to rise and go outwards to do any actions but only to sink back within to just be in our natural state of being (*sat-bhāva*), thereby dissolving and merging forever in him, as him.

Attending to anything other than ourself is an action, because our attention is moving away from ourself towards that other thing, whereas attending to ourself is not an action but a cessation of all action, because to the extent to which we attend to ourself, we as ego will thereby subside and dissolve back into our own being, which is the source or 'birthplace' from which we had risen. Therefore, so long as we take God to be anything other than ourself, our meditation on him is a mental activity, whereas when we recognise that he is actually not anything other than ourself, our meditation on him is not a mental activity but a state of just being (*summā iruppadu*).

So long as we are engaged in doing action of any kind whatsoever, we have risen as ego, because what experiences itself as 'I am doing' is only ego, so as Bhagavan said in verse 2 of *Upadēsa Undiyār*, action does not give liberation. Therefore, when he said in verse 3 that *niṣkāmya karma* done for God will purify the mind and thereby show the path to liberation, what he meant by the 'path to liberation' is not any action or doing but only just being as we always actually are, namely as the eternally action-free pure existence-awareness (*sat-cit*), 'I am'.

In order to be as we actually are, we need to cease rising as ego, and in order to cease rising as ego we need to cling firmly to our own being, 'I am', so *ananya-bhāva* or *ātma-vicāra* alone is the path to liberation, but in order for us to see this clearly, our mind first needs to be sufficiently purified by the grace of God, which rises in our heart in the form of our love for him.

More than any of the other practices of *bhakti*, the practice of *ātma-vicāra* requires deep, whole-hearted and all-consuming love, because any other practice, such as meditating on a name or form of God, is done by us as ego facing outwards, away from ourself, so our existence as ego is not thereby threatened, whereas *ātma-vicāra* is done by us as ego facing back inwards, towards ourself alone, and to the extent to which we thereby face ourself, we will subside and dissolve back into our own being, which is the *svarūpa* or real form of God. Therefore we cannot attend to ourself without thereby surrendering ourself to

God, so we will be able to go deep in this practice of *ātma-vicāra* only to the extent to which we have all-consuming and heart-melting love to surrender ourself completely to him.

Therefore those who think that the path of *jñāna* is superior and the path of *bhakti* inferior, and who therefore consider *bhakti* to be unnecessary and irrelevant to the path of *jñāna*, have not actually understood either of these paths. Though the path of *bhakti* does begin with doing *niškāmya karma* for the love of God, and though at that stage the devotee may consider God to be other (*anya*), by purifying the mind of the devotee, such practices will eventually give the devotee not only the clarity to understand that God is actually non-other (*ananya*), but still more importantly the wholehearted love that is required for us to be willing to surrender ourself completely to him by investigating what we actually are. The path of *jñāna* is therefore not a separate path but the culmination of the path of *bhakti*, and without sufficiently deep *bhakti* we cannot practise the path of *jñāna*. ▲

## My Heart is His Field

Suresh Kailash

He made me a ploughman and my heart his field,  
A land vaster than all that the mind can conceive,  
Patience and persistence he gave as oxen to yoke,  
Unwavering attention, as the trustworthy plough,  
To keep tilling without tiring, worksongs he wrote,  
Their words heavy in wisdom that lighten the load,  
Divine love he gives as seeds to scatter and to sow,  
In furrows free from weeds of all thought and ego,  
For timely rains he sends the downpour of his grace,  
Without which all effort made would come to waste,  
The grain so grown is by his blessed light sun kissed,  
And the abundant crop harvested, silence filled bliss.  
Yea, my God is my landlord and my heart is his field,  
Daily I plough and I sow and at his feet I daily feast.



## KEYWORD

# *Cal, cañc*

To move, be unsteady

Part Three

**B.K. CROISSANT**

This is the third article in a series of articles devoted to the *Devikālottara: Jñānācāra Vicāra Pāṭalaḥ* (Chapter on the Investigation of the Means for Jnana as Given to Devi at the Final Stage of Maturity), an ancient Sanskrit text that was translated into Tamil by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in his youth when he lived in Virupaksha Cave. The purpose is to identify and expound on key concepts that are repeated throughout the work. The subject of the first two articles was ‘*ālamba*’ meaning ‘attachments or *upādhis*’. Selected verses are examined in detail to show how Bhagavan’s translations into Tamil clarify or enhance the meaning of the original Sanskrit.

What a wonder! Religions and creeds of every sort have sprouted from the human brain since time immemorial. And yet, curiously, they all have one thing in common, namely conquest of mind, a concept more difficult than taming wild elephants or waging war with invincible armies, yet available to every one of us no matter who we

B.K. Croissant first encountered Bhagavan in 1993. She retired in 2006 after serving as a senior administrator in the arts and humanities at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Since then *sādhana* has been her highest priority and greatest joy.

think we are. It's the only true means for attaining everlasting peace, and it happens to be free.

OK, so when we are told to put the baggage down and let God bear the burden for us, why can't we do that, and what is keeping us from unalloyed happiness, which sages throughout the ages have told us is our true nature? Only the mind. What is the mark of ordinary human beings? Movement, the restless, agitated mind, thoughts whirling in every direction, sometimes here, sometimes there. No surprise then that various forms of *cal*, the Sanskrit verbal root meaning 'to shake, tremble, move, stir, to be disturbed, to agitate' or *cañc*, a similar root meaning 'to move, be unsteady, shake', occur and reoccur throughout the 85 magnificent verses of *Devikālottaram*.

Now, let's begin from the beginning. First the setting. We are witnesses to an intimate conversation between the mighty Lord Siva and Parvati, his beloved consort. Spontaneously, the loving Mother of us all sweetly asks how her dear children can be saved. What is the supreme path for liberation and what should be their conduct? Simple enough. Compassionate in his grandeur and naturally swayed to grant her wishes, Lord Siva agrees to reveal the supreme truth without which the highest spiritual goals of human birth cannot be attained. That's it, the whole poem is framed! He then exhorts her, and us, to listen carefully, to cast aside all doubts and to faithfully follow his instructions without deviating from them in the slightest. In verses 6-9 we are unequivocally told that unless we still the mind, we cannot achieve liberation. It is the only way.

*He who is able to bring his mind under control is Brahma, Siva, and Vishnu, he is Indra, King of the devas, he is the six-faced Skanda, he is the guru of all devas, he is the supreme yogi who has performed every austerity; he alone is truly learned, for he has achieved the supreme spiritual goal, whose mind is no longer unstable (calat) like air but is held firm (niścalam).*

*The means by which this mind, which is restless (calitam) and moves about quicker than the wind, can be brought under control, is indeed the means to liberation and is good for those who seek the permanent Reality. It is pure consciousness and the state of firmness. It alone is the righteous duty to be observed by discerning seekers. It alone is the pilgrimage to holy waters.*

*It alone is charity. It alone is austerity. Know that there is no doubt about this.*<sup>1</sup>

The means for achieving that absolute stillness is not just one idea among many, but it alone is the main subject of the entire poem. Keep that in mind!

Now onto verse 10, both in the original Sanskrit followed by Bhagavan's translation in Tamil.

चित्ते चलति संसारो निश्चले मोक्ष एव तु  
तस्माच्चित्तं स्थिरं कुर्यात् प्रज्ञया परया बुधः

citte calati saṁsāro niścāle mokṣa eva tu  
tasmācchittaṁ sthiraṁ kuryāt prajñayā parayā budhaḥ

*When the mind moves (calati), that is saṁsāra. On the other hand, and similarly, when it is still (niścāle), that is mokṣa. Therefore, the sage should make his mind firm by the highest knowledge.*<sup>2</sup>

சித்தஞ் சிறிதசையச் சம்சார நிச்சலமாச்  
சித்தநிலை நிற்கமுத்தி சித்தமிது — சித்தாந்  
திரமாக்க வேவேண்டு மாதலினாந் நீமான்  
பரமாம் பிரஞ்ஞையினாந் பார்.

*cittaṁ cīridasaiyac saṁsāra niścālamāc  
cittanilai niṅkamutti siddhamidu — cittān  
thiramākka vēvēṇḍu mādalinaṅ rīmān  
paramām piraṅṅaiyinaṅ pār.*

In the *kalivenbā* version of this verse, at the beginning of the first sentence Bhagavan added the word ‘எவ்விதமும்’ (*e-v-vidham-um*), ‘in

<sup>1</sup> *Parayana: The Poetic Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Second Edition, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2008, pp. 136-139. This translation is a revision by Swami Shantananda and Michael Highburger of a translation by T.K. Jayaraman that appears in the 1996 edition of *Collected Works* and in *Sri Devikālottara Jnānāchāra Vichāra Patalah, Rendered into Tamil by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi with Original Sanskrit Text, English Transliteration and Translation*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 1998, pp. 12-15. Unfortunately the latter publication is no longer available. Although the original verses are included, T.K. Jayaraman translated Bhagavan's verses in Tamil and did not provide a literal translation of the Sanskrit version.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by the author.

whatever way’ or ‘in whatever manner’, so with this word the verse means:

*When the mind moves [even] a little in whatever way [or manner], [that is] saṃsāra. When the mind stands firm motionlessly, [that is] mukti. This is certain. Therefore, it is necessary for the wise to make the mind fixed by prajñā, which is beyond. See.<sup>3</sup>*

In Bhagavan’s translation, he has rendered the first three sentences of the verse emphatic in both tone and content. ‘When the mind moves’ becomes ‘When the mind moves even a little in whatever way or manner’ and ‘When the mind is still’ becomes ‘When the mind stands firm motionlessly’. So, there is no fudging allowed! In case you have any doubts about that, he concludes by saying “This is certain,” and he means it. *Mukti* is remaining only with the absolute awareness of being. What a simple, intensely powerful and supremely elegant statement of the goal!

The fourth sentence of the verse tells us the means for achieving the goal, namely firmly placing the mind beyond the mind. In his paraphrase of this verse, Michael James points out the importance of discernment. “Therefore it is necessary for the wise to make the mind fixed [firm, steady, motionless and immovable] by *prajñā* [discernment, implying self-attentiveness, which entails distinguishing oneself from all other things in order to discern oneself as we actually are], which is *para* [beyond the false appearance of subject and object, and hence superior to everything else].”<sup>4</sup> According to T.R. Kanakammal, *prajñā* is Absolute Knowledge from which *vijñāna* or relative knowledge proceeds.

Bhagavan ends his translation with one word, ‘*pār*’ meaning ‘see’. Now what does he mean by that? It could be a subtle reference to *ātma vicāra*, therefore elaborating on the means for achieving the goal and

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<sup>3</sup> Michael James graciously provided English translations of the Tamil.

<sup>4</sup> With his English translations of Bhagavan’s poetry, Michael James also included the original Tamil verses, transliteration of the Tamil, word-separation, words arranged in prose order, explanatory paraphrases and detailed translations of each word. I am extremely grateful to him for his generosity and willingness to share his deep and profound knowledge.

an invitation to put in practise what has been stated so unequivocally. Consider the second verse of the *Śrī Aruṇācala Aṣṭakam* addressing Arunachala as Siva.

*When investigated within the mind who the seer is, I saw what remained when the seer became non-existent. The mind did not rise to say 'I saw'; in what way could the mind rise to say 'I did not see'? Who is one who has the power to elucidate this speaking, when in ancient times you elucidated without speaking [as Dakshinamurti]? Only to elucidate your state without speaking, you stood shining as a sky-earth-hill.<sup>5</sup>*

Now back to the text. There are six more verses in *Devikālottaram* that contain versions of *cal* or *cañc*. Here are the next five.<sup>6</sup>

*Perpetually longing for sense objects, the mind is restless (cañcalam) like a monkey. Holding it, thereupon, in a place of complete void, one will attain perfect calm. (verse 27)*

*When the mind becomes still, it should not be moved (cālyam) in any way. One should not think about anything else, and one should make it steady. (verse 34)*

*One should make the mind depending on support devoid of support. Having made the unsteady (cañcalam) steady (niñcalam), one should not disturb (na cālayet) that steadiness (niñcalam) in the least. (verse 35)*

*That practise by which the mind, restless (calat) like the wind, is held still (niñcalam) is attainment of life's highest purpose and true scholarship. (verse 37)*

*If the mind is asleep, waken it; if distracted, make it calm over and over again. When one has succeeded in eliminating both, don't wander (na cālayet) in the slightest. (verse 39)*

Notice how Lord Siva insists on the means or the how to of liberation in these verses. It's a predominant theme here and

<sup>5</sup> Translated by Michael James. See <https://happinessofbeing.blogspot.com/2022/11/sri-arunacala-aksaramanamalai-verse-17.html#aa2>.

<sup>6</sup> These translations, by the author, do not include additions made by Bhagavan in his Tamil translations.

throughout the *Devikālottaram*. We are told over and over again to drop practises involving the mind and instead place our entire attention on the awareness ‘I am’. It’s all about elevating, refining and deepening our practise. Turn inward, away from the body, mind, sense objects and the world and meditate on the *ātman* only. In other words, self-attention. When pure consciousness ‘I am’ is reached in the cave of the heart, hold onto that, and when the mind wanders, bring it back to that place under the sway of the *ātman*. Practise this constantly and, against all odds, persist.

Verse 46 contains the last instance of a version of *cal*, namely ‘*acalā*’. Like ‘*niścala*’, it’s a very potent negation of movement. Here it is first in the original Sanskrit, then in Tamil.

हृत्सरोजेह्यहं रूपा या चिति निर्मलाऽचला।  
अहङ्कार परित्यागात् सा चिति मोक्षदायिनी॥

hṛtsarojehyaham rūpā yā citir nirmalā’calā |  
ahaṅkāra-parityāgāt sā citir mokṣa-dāyinī ||

*What blemishless and motionless (acalā) awareness which is in the form of ‘I’ in the heart-lotus, that awareness grants liberation by destroying ego.*

இதயகம லத்தே யகமுருவா மெச்சித்  
ததுநிமல நிச்சலமே யாகு — முதிக்கு  
மகங்கார நீக்குதலா லச்சித்தே முத்தி  
சுகங்கொடுப்ப தென்று துணி.

*idayakama lattē yahamuruvā meccit  
tadunimala niccalamē yāhu — mudikku  
mahāṅkāra nikkudalā laccittē mutti  
sukhaṅkoḍuppa dendru tuṇi.*

In the *kaliveṅbā* version of this verse, before the phrase ‘இதய கமலத்தே’ (*idaya-kamalattē*), “in the heart-lotus”, Bhagavan added a relative clause, ‘உடல் உள் சாரும்’ (*uḍal uḷ sārum*), ‘which mingles within the body’, and he changed the final word, ‘துணி’ (*tuṇi*), ‘conclude’ or ‘know for sure’, to ‘துணியாய்’ (*tuṇiyāy*), ‘may you conclude’ or ‘may you know for sure’, so this *kaliveṅbā* version means:

*What awareness is the 'I'-form, which is blemishless and motionless, in the heart-lotus, which mingles within the body, may you know for sure that only that awareness will give the happiness of liberation by removing the rising ego.*

An earlier version of this verse appears as verse 9 in the Supplement to *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*. Sadhu Om translates it as follows:

*What knowledge (or consciousness) is (shining as) the form of the pure and motionless 'I' (the real Self) in the Heart-lotus – know that, that knowledge which is 'I' (the adjunctless and thought-free self-consciousness) alone will bestow liberation (the state of) Self, by destroying 'I' (the ego).<sup>7</sup>*

Here he gives the import of both translations:

**Unless we attend keenly to the pure consciousness 'I', which shines devoid of impurities in the form of *upadhis* and devoid of movement in the form of thoughts, the destruction of the *vasanas*, which is the state called liberation, cannot be attained.<sup>8</sup>**

Comparing the Sanskrit verse to Bhagavan's *kaliveṅbā* version, there are several notable differences. Walking through them will give a more profound and new meaning to the original. It goes as follows.

The 'I' in the Heart-lotus is pure and motionless (*acalā*). Bhagavan adds, it '**mingles within the body** (*uḍal uḷ sārūm*)'. So ego is *cit* plus adjuncts, beginning with 'I am the body'. He adds, '**may you know** (*tunīyāy*)'. Know what? He adds, '**the rising ego** (*udikkum ahaṅkāram*)'. How to know? Inquire whence the ego arises. When it disappears, what remains is 'I'. He adds, '**happiness** (*sukham*)'. 'I' is happiness, and we are 'I'. Our true nature is happiness. Liberation is happiness. He adds, '**only** (*ē*)'. All other practises continue to involve the mind. Only self-attention will lead to the goal.

Recall the first paragraph of *Nāṇ Yār*:

*Since all sentient beings want [or like] to be always happy without what is called misery, since for everyone the greatest love is only for oneself, and since happiness alone is the cause*

<sup>7</sup> *Sri Ramanopadesa Noonmalai*, Sri Ramana Kshetra, Tiruvannamalai, 2008, p. 101-103.

<sup>8</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 133. The bold was added by Sadhu Om.

*for love, [in order] to obtain that happiness, which is one's own nature, which one experiences daily in [dreamless] sleep, which is devoid of mind, oneself knowing oneself is necessary. For that, jñāna-vicāra [awareness-investigation] called 'who am I?' alone is the principal means.*<sup>9</sup>

So you see, Bhagavan's teachings are embedded in verse 46. They infuse it with the means (self-inquiry) for attaining liberation, and they make clear that 'I' is the target. It is both the starting point and the end of the search for perpetual happiness.

Bhagavan wrote a wondrous verse in 1927 that beautifully summarises the essence of his teaching. Initially he composed it in Sanskrit, inspired perhaps by the first word of every line, namely *deham, nāham, ko 'ham, so 'ham*, then soon after translated it into Tamil. It follows verse 9 of the Supplement to *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, which is verse 46 in *Devikālottaram*, and is written in the lilting *śārdūlavikrīḍitam* metre, the same metre Sri Shankara chose when he wrote his *Hymn to Dakshinamurti*.

*The body (deham) is insentient like an earthen pot; since the consciousness 'I' does not exist for it (that is, since it possesses no 'I'-consciousness) and since our existence is experienced (as 'I am') daily in (deep) sleep, where the body does not exist, it is not 'I' (naham). Within the Heart-cave of those who abide (as Self) having (scrutinised and) known 'Who is (this) ego-person (who rises as 'I am this body') and where is he' (koham), Arunagiri-Siva, the Omnipresent (vibhu), will shine forth spontaneously as the sphurana 'He is I' (soham).<sup>10</sup>*

The essential difference between verses in *Devikālottaram* and Bhagavan's own verses is his explanation of the nature of the non-existent ego and his unique interpretation of 'who am I' or *ko 'ham*, which occurs time and again in the *sastras*. In other words, according to Bhagavan, when the ego is scrutinised, everything is transcended, even the practice 'I am Siva'. It is his *bhramāstram* and constitutes the most significant enhancement of the Sanskrit verses

<sup>9</sup> Translation by Michael James. See [www.happinessofbeing.com/nan\\_yar.html](http://www.happinessofbeing.com/nan_yar.html). The bold in this quote was added intentionally by Bhagavan.

<sup>10</sup> Verse 10, translated by Sri Sadhu Om. See *Sri Ramanopadesa Noonmalai*, Sri Ramana Kshetra, Tiruvannamalai, 2008, pp. 103-105.



from *Devikālottaram* that he translates into Tamil. ‘Who am I’ or ‘whence do I come’ are not to be practised as a mantram but as the infallible means for reaching the heart-cave and liberation. In *Nāṇ Yār*, we are told “The name ‘*ātma-vicāra*’ [refers] only to always keeping the mind on *ātma* [oneself]...”<sup>11</sup>

But what about the path of self-surrender, which is also recommended by Bhagavan? Sadhu Om has a very satisfying explanation for why *bhakti* and *jñāna* are the same.

Though on superficial observation there may appear to be a difference between the path of enquiry and the path of devotion, namely that an aspirant on the path of enquiry attends to Self while an aspirant on the path of devotion attends to God, it will be clear to one who earnestly applies himself to practise that both are the same, not only in the result, namely to be established in Self by means of the destruction of the ego, but also in practise. A sincere devotee who wants to surrender himself completely to God should refuse from the very start to continue taking the body as ‘I’ and ‘mine’. If he again thinks ‘I am the body’ or ‘this body is mine’, he is committing the sin of *dattapaharam*, that is, taking back what has already been offered to God. Thus, the correct way of practising self-surrender is for him to be very vigilant that the thought ‘I am the body’ or ‘this body is mine’ does not rise in him again. Now, how does he do this? Does he not try to be very watchful within lest the first person – the feeling ‘I am the body’ – should rise again, that is, does he not try always to remain with a sharp attention fixed on the feeling ‘I’? Hence, the same Self-attention which is going on in an enquirer is also going on in a devotee! Thus, it is clear that an attention withdrawn from the second and third persons and focused on ‘I’ is the correct and practical method of surrendering oneself to God. On the other hand, if a devotee seeks God outside himself, it will amount to being a second person attention. Since God ever shines as the reality of the first person, **attending to the first person is the right attention to God and this is the true path of devotion.**<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Translation by Michael James. See [www.happinessofbeing.com/nan\\_yar.html](http://www.happinessofbeing.com/nan_yar.html), Paragraph Sixteen.

<sup>12</sup> *The Path of Sri Ramana, Part One*, Sri Ramana Kshetra, Kanvashrama Trust, Tiruvannamalai, 2008, pp. 28-29. The bold was added by Sadhu Om.

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Bhagavan wrote a heart-meltingly beautiful verse in the *Padikam*, one of his hymns to Arunachala, that describes the destruction of the ego in terms of self-surrender.

*I have seen a wonder, the magnetic hill that seizes the soul.  
Subduing the mischievous activity of the soul who thinks of  
it once, pulling to face towards itself, the one, and making it  
motionless like itself, it accepts that sweet soul as sacrificial  
offering. What this is! O souls, be saved thinking of the great  
Aruna Hill, this killer of the soul, who shines in the heart.*<sup>13</sup>

So, liberation is going from *cittam calitam* to *cittam acalam* and from *cittam niṣcalam* to *ātma niṣṭha* (establishment in the *ātman*). May we know that by experience in our daily practice. Bon courage, for there is never a single moment when true happiness is not available to each and every one of us! ▲

*śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ*

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<sup>13</sup> Verse 10. Translation by Michael James. See <https://happinessofbeing.blogspot.com/2022/11/sri-arunacala-aksaramanamalai-verse-16.html#apad10>.

## Beloved

Ana Ramana

Beloved,  
won't you join me  
and sip the cooling nectar  
of silence, let it rinse  
your heart, your spirit  
with the scent of remembrance,  
won't you sit here with me  
now, free of your problems,  
can we simply bathe  
in the crystalline waters  
of peace, of presence,  
of perfect, radiant grace?

# A Tribute to My Father

RAY RAPPOLD

*Samuel Rappold was an American who came to Tiruvannamalai on 27th December 1947 and finally left in January 1951. Later he married Thelma Dyke another devotee in residence whose diary was published in the Mountain Path about the last years of Bhagavan's earthly life. Permission to publish the following article, a transcript of his conversations with Bhagavan has been kindly given by their son, Ray Rappold who was born Ramana Samuel Rappold in 1952.*

In 1948, Sam from Chicago and Thelma from Ohio met at Ramana Ashram and experienced deep recognition and soul connection. After Bhagavan's 1950 Mahasamadhi, they left the ashram and went their separate ways. A year later they married and moved to Chicago to live a spiritual life. My mother was 47 when I was born in 1952, and I was a surprise! This Tribute tells the story of how my father Sam came to the ashram and the profound impact Ramana Maharshi had on his life.

Samuel Thomas Rappold was born in Chicago in 1917. His father was a hardworking and highly successful real estate broker and lawyer. His mother was a nurse, and he became fascinated with Eastern thought after reading of the Buddha in the Encyclopædia Britannica at age 8. Sam loved the trumpet, ham radio, growing vegetables and

## MOUNTAIN PATH

fruits, and always followed his heart. As a teenager, he played trumpet in the school orchestra and ROTC band, and at night he performed in Al Capone's speakeasies.

At the age of 19, he had a serious accident and lost his sight. He regained his sight two years later while living in the Northwoods of Wisconsin among Native Americans. He wanted to become a doctor, but eyesight weakness stopped him. Sam's father financed Sam's travels to the Far East and China in the 1930s. He studied Buddhism, Taoism, and brought his transcription of the Tao Te Ching to the US. During World War II, he was unable to serve in the military due to poor eyesight and lived at the Yogananda Ashram in the Los Angeles area.

While living with Yogananda, Sam learned about Ramana Maharshi. As soon as the travel ban was lifted after the war, he immediately went directly to Ramana's ashram in India. He became devoted and sat with Bhagavan almost daily until his Mahāsamādhi. Bhagavan told many foreigners to return home, but not my father. He patiently answered Sam's questions. Gradually Sam shed his delusions and aspirations, met my mother, and returned to Chicago to work in his father's real estate office in 1951.

After I was born, he rode the train to and from Chicago every day from the quiet rural town of Wonder Lake where we lived. I watched and "helped" him in his basement workshop as he made his own ham radio gear. I picked up his design skills and developed a lifelong love of electronics.

Five years later, my parents felt shackled by family ties and Chicago consciousness, so we moved to Hawaii in 1959, just in time for the statehood parade. In 1962, my parents divorced, and my mother and I moved to San Francisco. My father always wanted to be a doctor, so he enrolled in chiropractic college in Los Angeles. Due to poor eyesight and part-time work to pay for his studies, it took him 6 years to complete a 4-year diploma.

Every summer I lived with him for a few weeks when he was in chiropractic college, and he took me to his classes. Every Sunday we went to the Theosophical Society in Los Angeles to hear Manly Hall and others. In 1969 he graduated, moved to San Francisco, and opened his own chiropractic office.



Samuel T. Rappold in 1988

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We saw each other more when he moved to San Francisco, and regularly had dinner. He loved Chinese and Mexican food. Living the simple life Ramana taught, he moved to Redway, a rural town of 3,000 near Eureka, California in 1976.

A classic country doctor, he saw patients in his home with his ham radio room. Everyone talked about his healing hands. Some people couldn't pay, and he'd treat them anyway. He said: "These people are suffering, I can't refuse them." They loved him and brought him fruits, vegetables, chickens and whatever they could.

He walked several miles daily to stay in shape, and everyone knew him or saw him walking. In his last 6 years, he met and married the love of his life, a Mormon woman. She died 6 months before he did, and the Mormon ladies continued looking after my father.

In 1997, he was coming to live with us in Sebastopol, California. My wife was pregnant with our second child, and he reached a harmonious state of understanding with my mother. Over Christmas we all spent 10 days together.

When he walked around our house and yard, he was so happy and felt very content. We went back to Redway to pack. He died suddenly 4 days later of unknown causes.

I love my Father and send him Love. As a proud father, he loved me in his own way. It's been over 25 years since Sam passed away, and I still hear some of the quotes he gave me as gifts. He quoted Ramana Maharshi: "Why are you crying, I'm not going anywhere." Looking back at my father's life during the time I knew him, he lived in accordance with this teaching. ▲

## Home

Ana Ramana

The crystalline peace of the mountain  
Rings through my being, inviting  
What seems broken into silence  
Until even the bones imbibe  
Its pure presence, its beauty,  
Its love, our birthright,  
Our Home.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

# Conversations Between the Maharshi and STR

SAMUEL T. RAPPOLD

**Q**uestion: The book “Who Am I?” says: The mind has a unique power (*sakti*) whereby thoughts are generated. What is that *sakti* and where are its root and origin?

Answer: It is the mind itself. Kill the mind completely and thoughts cannot arise, for without mind there are no questions, no arising of self, world and *Ishwara*.

Question: Then *Ishwara* too, is only in the mind?

Answer: There is no thought of ‘another’ without the thought ‘me’.

Question: Then, I am the beginning and the end? That there is nothing save what is seen of the mind itself?

Answer: Yes I am the beginning and the end. He who sees his Self, sees the Self of all, and does not heed the differences, which is duality.

Question: Does the wise man, the fully enlightened Sage think thoughts and have thoughts of his own?

Answer: Yes, the ONLY difference between the wise man and the fool is that in doing the same things – the Sage KNOWS who he is and what is happening and the fool does not.

Question: Then the ONLY difference between the wise man and the fool is that the Sage KNOWS and the fool does not?

Answer: Yes.

Question: As *Ishwara*, is Brahman, also a creation of the mind.

Answer: *Jiva*, *Ishwara*, Brahman are all creations of the mind, *maya*. When the mind is still there is Brahman. There can be no creation without mind.

Realisation is complete cessation of the mind, effected by *vichara*. Brahman is repose in Itself (abidance). It is not realised at some future time but ever is NOW. When the process of *Vichara* reaches its culmination it is seen that one has never been the mind, but THAT. The seer is in the world but not of it. Of that state it cannot be written, for Publication is by *sadhana* with commentary by *mounam*.

Terms are but attempts to name and describe conditions, and most have no meaning in Reality. All things are resolved in the Pure Mind. All things are in Brahman, thus formless, and path a realisation. Maharshi's way is to realise NOW what is and has ever been, ever-present. Hold fast to THAT – which does not move, *sattwa*, and becomes subtle as the other and Clear. This is the Self – It will not appear in front of you. In *sadhana* put aside all sense of "I" – for you are THAT – and you, otherness and motion. Eternal persistence in THAT state achieves the goal.

Be still and know that I AM God. All things are in the mind, *yoga nidra*, OM sounds, lights, *samadhi*, etc.

Bhagavan commenting on the "word" said,  
"When a *jnani* speaks, it is the word of God."

Question: Yogis say the word is the *nada*.

Answer: "*Nada*, *OM*, *pranava* – all are symbols of THAT which the *jnani* IS."

Question: Then, I AM THAT? I AM? the beginning and the end?

Answer: Yes, for the *jnani* IS THAT!

Question: Bhagavan has said *turiya*, the 4th state is the abidance as the Heart and *turiyateeta* the 5th state follows. How is the *turiyateeta* brought about?

Answer: *Turiya* pertains only to the 3 states – of waking, dreaming and deep sleep – to the one who experiences them as successive states; as the changing pictures on the cinema screen.





Samuel T. Rappold on Arunachala in October 1949

*Turiyateeta* is the screen which ever persists. You are THAT. BE it. It is the natural. *Turiya* and *turiyateeta* are the same, and there is really no 5th state. Terms are for explanation and philosophical convenience. Only for the ignorant are there the different states, for the *jnani* there is but his one, ever-present state, changeless, Silent, Being, which can not be divided. *Jnani* does not identify himself with the apparent changes.

Question: Is the intellect diminished or obliterated in THAT state?

Answer: No, being THAT does not mean being lunatic. The *jnani*, Realised One, no longer HAS an intellect, but IS that and all things – which for HIM are merged in His Oneness, Being, and do not stand separately as his possessions or attributes.

It is thought and individuality that keeps *samsara* going.

Be still and know that I AM God; no, be still and know that I AM. I AM GOD is a thought.

Kill the ever-arising ego, I-thought at its source and rise to more refined, higher spheres of consciousness.

Question: The *Adwaita bhava* of *Ulladu Narpadu* (#39) supplement?

Answer: *Adwaita* always is a thought (*bhava*) to the *sadhaka*, is an attribute of the Heart, and is to beheld therein, but never to be observed with regard to the guru – such as sitting in his guru's place, etc. Though *Adwaita bhava* is a thought for the *sadhaka*, *jnani* IS *Adwaita*, Being. *Adwaita* is not to be expressed in life's activities, for it would upset those activities and make *jnani*'s life relations un-necessarily difficult; – as treating servants as oneself. Life's distinctions are to be made, indeed the *jnani* is like the actor or professional mourner who plays grief more than the grieved, while maintaining *Adwaita* at heart, and remains unaffected, secure in THAT.

Question: Is the love-experience of the mind?

Answer: *Bhakti*, *jnana*, are all the same in the Oneness. To the *bhakta*, THAT is love, to the *jnani* THAT is the Self, is bliss.

Question: What is the meaning of the word '*kaivalya*'?

Answer: Oneness. But even this term implies duality of some sort. THAT cannot be adequately described by all the words – *mukti*, etc. To say of It Unity, salvation, integration, etc. implies duality of some sort. It is beyond all duality.

Question: Does *kaivalya* mean the same as *adwaita*?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Bhagavan has said bliss and the self are identical. In *Mandukyopanishad* it says – mind should not be allowed bliss of the *samadhis*.

Answer: Bliss is all the same. *Samadhi* which changes has 8 stages and is for the *sadhaka*, and is a necessary preliminary. *Samadhi* pertains to the mind. The Real Bliss is beyond these *samadhis* and perpetual.

Question: Will Bhagavan please tell us of the stages of *samadhi*?

Answer: *Samadhi* is one, but is said to have 6 stages. Two main divisions are *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*. *Savikalpa* is with effort, is with thought. *Nirvikalpa* is effortless, it is the boundless Ocean, without thought. There are 4 stages of *savikalpa* and 2 of *nirvikalpa*.

Question: What is the place of *prapatti* (surrender) in the life of *vichara*?

Answer: *Prapatti* and *vichara* merge into Self-realisation. *Vichara* IS *prapatti* and vice-versa.

Question: Bhagavan has said ‘what is inside must come out’. Is what comes out to be allowed to fully rise and take hold of one?

Answer: The *vasanas* will come out in *sadhana* and are to be cut off by returning attention to the Source.

There is no good in going down to their level. Hold fast to the Oneness.

Question: What is the relation of ego to *prakrti* (substance) and *pralaya* (dissolution)?

Answer: Ego arises from *prakrti*, all is dissolved in *pralaya*.

Question: Then all things arise from *prakrti*?

Answer: Only when the question is asked. These terms are for answers to questions.

In a discussion on Existence. Bhagavan: you ARE the screen whether there are pictures on it or not. Existence IS and IS your nature.

Question: What is the difference between one’s own individual nature and the *vasanas* that seem to arise?

Answer: They are the same. Without the *vasanas* there is no individuality, when they are obliterated there is nothing left; but your Real nature. That is found by *vichara*.

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Question: What is the most important thing to be gained from the spiritual life of meditation?

Answer: Why do you want to be spiritual and these other things and not just BE yourself as you are?

Question: Bhagavan has said: until realisation there must be 2 indispensable *sadhanas* – hold to the self and reject the extraneous thoughts.

Answer: They are the same, abiding as the Pure Self.

Question: Is this subtle mind?

Answer: It is the collection of impressions from which the gross mind arises as a reflection. But there is no distinction, it is all mind and thus not really a reflection.

Question: Is the subtle mind feeling and the gross mind thought?

Answer: In a sense, yes. But they co-arise (exist) and function as mind and cannot exist separately. The cinema must have darkness and light projected in illusory forms for there to be cinema.

Question: Bhagavan has said mind has 2 aspects, Veiling and Projection, light or darkness. Is darkness Veiling and projection thought?

Answer: Yes, it is mind, it is not the Reality.

Question: How then to realise that supreme reality?

Answer: Why do you call it supreme? It is your real Nature. There is really no realisation, there is only Being: that alone always persists by Itself when mind ceases as in deep sleep or in *samadhi*; as *Satchitananda*, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. That is the real 'I' and that is Bliss.

Question: Is that real 'I' what Bhagavan calls 'I-I'?

Answer: Yes. Abide only AS yourself. Be not afraid of that state, you will not cease to exist, for it IS Existence. All existence means knowing, knowing is becoming, becoming is Being.

Question: A question by an English lady doctor to Bhagavan: I know that I exist, how do I know that I existed before?

Answer: (In English) Past and future are mere imagination.

A Poem by Indian poet Laureate Dilip Kumar Roy (Pondicherry) on Maharshi, speaking as Maharshi teaching his Path:

Breath-taking things I never saw  
Nor gained what never I had –  
What simply happened was –  
My thoughts and ego left  
And there remained the Timeless  
Self of Peace in endless pause.

Maharshi answering questions of a French doctor Godel. 'I' is Being, Existence, Everpresent, without limits, is perfection. Ego is the I-thought, limited, imperfect. Do not regard the I-thought as 'I'. There will always be 'I', which never dies.

Realisation: giving up the I-thought and ever being 'I', i.e. giving up the unreal for the Real, what is ever there.

The 'I' thought persists because of habit. With arising of the 'I' thought all else arises. 'I' thought is ignorance (avidya) and does not really exist. WHO has avidya? 'I', I AM I. You ARE the Goal; there is no going, 'I' thought is the light that lights-up all the world, is darkness and is substratum of both. There really is no transcendence, there only IS, Existence. It always IS!

Question: How can this help one to love one's neighbour?

Answer: There is no neighbour – 'love your neighbour as yourself'. Self is Bliss, Love, God, One loves because one loves oneself.

Question: Answering the question 'what is the effort to realise the Self?'

Answer: The effort to realise the Self is the giving up of all other efforts.

Question: Bhagavan, what is Consciousness?

Answer: (In English): Awareness of what exists – of what IS.

Question: What is conscience?

Answer: (In English): It is mind, but pure mind, *sattwa*.

(In Tamil – translated): It is the purest state of mind bathed in purity. But still mind, an operation of mind. Without individuality the 'I' thought, there is no mind. Conscience is the inner voice, the voice of *Atman* – an inner urge or idea, persisting when ego is annihilated. It is still of the relative plane, but is the purest form of relativity. But whatever is going on there, the Light remains unaffected.

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Question: Is it dangerous to try to live the *karma* of another?

Answer: It is dangerous to try to live the *karma* of another. Just be yourself, as you ARE.

Question: What is fullness or perfection?

Answer: To remain without thought is fullness or perfection, Be still.

Be not like the train passenger who, after getting on and being seated on the train (self) puts his luggage on his own lap thus suffering discomfort. Put the luggage down on the train's floor and sit at ease – the train carries the weight anyway.

The wise man makes the sweetly sane adjustment to life and living.

The teacher and teaching are only the beginning, each ultimately makes his own way and path. ▲

## Just A Thought

Cheenu Srinivasan

Poets of paintbrush  
Explore different shades  
Wordsmiths of letters  
Chisel blank pages  
Decorators of silence  
Sing, play and dance  
All on mind's stage  
Their bountiful legacy  
To lift us all higher  
Amidst myriad intrusions  
Of bygone failures  
And future fears  
That fails to ask  
'Who am I?'

# HOW I CAME TO BHAGAVAN

## The Guru Finds Us

JUBIN MEHTA

“God, who is immanent, in His grace takes pity on the loving devotee and manifests Himself according to the devotee’s development.” — *Maharshi’s Gospel*, Book I, Chapter VII, ‘Guru and Grace’.

We often interpret the meaning of guru as a person, a physical embodiment; while this is true, it can also be misleading. As the Maharshi says, the true guru is within. And the role of the outer guru is just to point the devotee inwards, at the heart centre where all the magic happens.

*hṛdayakuhara madhye kevalam brahmamātram*

In the centre of the heart-cave Brahman alone shines in the form of the Self with immediacy as ‘I-I’.

The guru is the guru tattva, the guru is the essence of the teaching. No person can be a guru – someone or something becomes a guru (becomes the essence) when the ‘personhood’ is not there. He/she/it is a mirror that points the seeker within.

My journey to God began as an atheist. Growing up in a conventional Gujarati family, my mother’s side has been deeply into Krishna bhakti. In contrast, my father’s side has been a little more inclined towards jnana marga. At the core, there is no difference, all paths lead to the same thing, the same peace but for most of us, there is a journey.

During my college, while studying engineering, I was deeply into western philosophy and used to identify myself as an atheist and would

despise any kind of idol worship or symbolism. But there was an unrest, there was a quest to find something long-lasting. Due to this, I couldn't fit in anywhere – neither at a large MNC in a metropolitan city nor in a rural setting working for social causes. I tried my hands at several things in a decade-long exploration, but no amount of external searching gave me peace. The quest became all the more intense.

In hindsight, it was a spiritual quest, a quest to find a guru, a quest to find peace but at that time, it just seemed like an incessant struggle. I left my job in Bangalore and went through intense mountain treks in the Himalayas, explored Tibetan Buddhism, took up manual labour as a religion, and tried finding meaning in relationships and sanghas (communities) but all of it hit a dead end. Maybe because the search was external. I was trying to find meaning on the outside where there is none.

But as the Maharshi says, the guru appears as per the devotee's development. For me, the guru came as the Dhauladhar Mountain ranges in Dharamsala, constantly reflecting and forcing me to look within. Guru came in the form of the various people I met during the seven years in the Himalayas. The Guru came in the form of struggles I had to face in my relationships. It was all Arunachala's way of breaking the 'I', showing all that this person had to see before manifesting itself as the guru within where all questions drop, where the search ends, where the quest comes to fruition.

During my travels and pilgrimages across India, I first came to Tiruvannamalai in 2015 with a few friends. I had seen Maharshi's photo and felt a deep sense of peace but nothing life-altering. External weather was a major factor for me at the time, and the thought of leaving a life in the Himalayas and settling in blazing hot Tiruvannamalai (the *agnisthala*) wasn't an option. But little did I know that Tiruvannamalai would become my home in a few years from then. Such is the power of a guru. The guru completely turns the gaze inwards and all external circumstances stop mattering.

Since 2015, I came to Arunachala every year for a couple of weeks. I would just come, sit in the ashram, go to the caves, and go for a girivalam; I didn't read anything. It was only after a couple of years that I picked up a few books from the bookshop at Ramana Ashram, attended some book readings at the ashram and various talks on



YouTube. The inquiry slowly started flowering and Advaita started swallowing the world. The powerful Vedantic statement, “Brahman satyam, jagat mithya” (brahman alone is real, the world is an illusion) started becoming an experiential reality. No external turmoil or joy would affect the state within, the silence within.

The inquiry became so real that constantly while working or doing any other task, any emotion would arise, and in parallel, the question “To whom is this arising?” would lift its hood. The answer would come, “To me”. The following question would be – “Who is this me?” The answer would be “I”. “Who am I?” and the mind would instantly slide back into peace, its natural state, the heart centre.

And this entire process was self-guided in one sense. I didn’t have a teacher I could go to for asking questions. The Maharshi communicates in silence. Just going into the meditation room or the samadhi and sitting there, looking at the Maharshi, his grace flows. Did I find the guru? No way! It is the guru who was manifesting in different forms at different times pointing me inwards. The only question a seeker needs to ask oneself is what is the number one priority for oneself?

If the answer is Self-realisation (for lack of a better word), then everything else is the guru’s job. One only needs to stay absolutely true to one’s inner Self, the guru *tattva* and it’ll lead you in the right direction. Once, while at the ashram, a question of initiation arose. I went and sat in the meditation hall, looking at Bhagavan’s photo. For a few minutes, I couldn’t take my eyes away, I sat there as if transfixed. There was complete dissolution, there was no me, there was no world, and everything just was. I couldn’t distinguish whether a particular atom was a part of my body or external. Everything became one. There was no other.

After some time in the meditation hall, the world came back into existence and a question came – “Is this the Maharshi’s way of initiation?” I had read somewhere that the Maharshi initiates through the eyes in silence. Just when these thoughts were crossing my mind, a young brahmin boy from the Ashram Veda Patasala came running into the hall with a flower, put it at the feet of Bhagavan, prostrated, and left. I took that as a sign and my question on initiation was answered. The Maharshi initiates, in silence. His presence is as

strong as ever, he is the ever-effulgent Self manifesting as a guru in different forms.

In December 2020, the pull from Arunachala became so strong that I had to wind up everything else and move to Tiruvannamalai. The only directive from within was to spend one full year in the vicinity of the mountain and burn out the vasanas. The move was made in 2021 and life almost took a U-turn. One would usually think that moving to Arunachala would be giving up the external accumulations but in my case, it was about living through my prarabdha.

The Maharshi had three things in store for me – getting a full-time job, getting married, and buying land! Three things I'd have never thought I'd be doing but were necessary for me to come at complete ease with life and drop all the rejection. This is my prarabdha. I now live in Tiruvannamalai with a full-time job, a partner who is equally spiritually inclined (devoted to Shirdi Sai Baba), and quietly going about life. And this is how the guru found this person named Jubin Mehta and removed all inner conflict. The world is an illusion, Brahman alone is real. ▲

*Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya.*

## **Fragrance of the Rose**

Suresh Kailash

This I have come to slowly know,  
To settle like dust on the floor,  
To simply be resting at his feet,  
And not fear the wind that blows,  
For how can storms carry me away,  
From him who is the whole cosmos,  
My Ramana, only he is, not me,  
Knowing he is the all and its source,  
Now, even the thorns I step on,  
Carry the fragrance of the rose.

# The Mystery, Majesty and Sacredness of Arunachala

SANJEEV KUMAR NATH

**B**hagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi embodies in Him the ultimate teaching of Advaita Vedanta. Sri Bhagavan is, as the title of a book by John Allen Grimes describes him, “the crown jewel of Advaita”. Whatever Sri Bhagavan uttered by way of answers to seekers’ questions or by way of poetic expression of his *atmanubhuti*, is perfectly in tune with the logic of Advaita. At the same time, Sri Bhagavan embodied the pinnacle of devotion, *parabhakti*, thus confirming the oneness of the highest devotion with jnana. While Sri Bhagavan’s *mouna* is not mere absence of speech but the language of the Atman, his words are also always characterised by precision and clarity. So many devotees have recorded how Sri Bhagavan answered their questions with perfect clarity and logical precision.

However, along with the clarity and precision and logic, there is an element of extraordinary mystery in Sri Bhagavan and his ways. He has given us an account of his experience of “death” as a teenager at Madurai, but can we really penetrate into the mystery

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of that experience? We can understand how a spiritual aspirant may go through the struggles of his or her sadhana, but can we grasp the immensity of that experience which instantly transformed a sixteen-year-old Venkataraman to a Maharshi? In a sense, Sri Bhagavan's teaching is extremely direct, simple and easy to follow; in another sense, Sri Bhagavan is Himself an unsolvable mystery.

One aspect of that mystery involves Sri Bhagavan's relationship with the sacred hill, Arunachala. Sacred lore says the hill is Shiva. Kailas is the abode of Shiva, but Arunachala is Shiva Himself. Sri Bhagavan's words about the hill, His references to Arunachala in *Aksharamanamalai*, His practice of going round the hill, walking on the hill, living on the hill, and never leaving Arunachala since his departure from Madurai in 1896 all seem to suggest that for Him the sacred lore about the hill being Shiva is not mere story. The *upasana* aspect of Sri Bhagavan's teachings is anchored on the sacredness of Arunachala and the worship of Arunachala.

Arunachala is holy, sacred. Sri Bhagavan's devotees do not doubt this. With such ideas in my mind, I happened to walk on Arunachala one or two days before and after Sri Bhagavan's 143<sup>rd</sup> Jayanthi, when I noticed some things that made me think if, as devotees of Sri Bhagavan, we did not have our share of responsibilities for Arunachala. Living some 3000 kilometres away from Tiruvannamalai, and usually visiting Arunachala only once a year, every moment of my physical contact with Arunachala is precious to me. Watching the hill, my mind seems to stand still. Walking on the streets of Tiruvannamalai, I have to be extra careful not to be hit by some vehicle or not to bump into some passer-by because I'm constantly looking at the hill. Walking on Arunachala hill, I want to take in every moment of the experience so that all the sights and sounds remain there for ever in my heart... at least as much as possible.

I know Sri Bhagavan has said that Arunachala is the Self. When he was absorbed looking at the hill and someone asked, "Bhagavan, are you looking at Arunachala?", Sri Bhagavan replied, "No, I'm looking at my Self." Sri Bhagavan's great devotee, Sri Muruganar, while staying in Chennai for an extended period of time was asked by someone why he was staying away from Arunachala. Muruganar said that wherever he was, that was Arunachala. Again, so many,

many people seeking the proximity of Arunachala have descended on Tiruvannamalai, and so many have bought houses or made other arrangements to stay permanently, that the town is overcrowded now. Old timers in the Ashram may sometimes feel uneasy about the huge crowds of devotees milling around. Considering all this, it is perhaps wiser to be content wherever we are, and understand how Arunachala is not confined to Tiruvannamalai alone. I know all this. But I am not able to shake off my attachment for Arunachala. When I am away from the hill, as I am in most days of the year (except for the 10-12 days when we visit Tiruvannamalai) my heart doesn't cease to long for the physical proximity of Arunachala. It's like *viraha*, really, the lover's intense longing to see the beloved, painfully and intensely felt during separation.

So when I actually have the opportunity to be on the hill, I am inundated with joy. That was my state of mind as I was slowly walking towards Skandashram, stopping frequently just to enjoy being with Arunachala, just to make the contact with the hill as lengthy as possible. Two little girls were selling over-priced fruit juice. I sat near them, sipping the juice, observing their manners—both very clean and neatly dressed—and marvelling at their great fortune of being on Arunachala all the time. How do I dispose off the paper glass I have drunk from? The girls show me their waste-bin, and I put it there. But as I slowly walk further I notice that there are empty plastic bottles, glasses, wrappers of biscuits or sweets and so on, scattered here and there. I recall that at the beginning of the trail there is a signboard with the request for visitors to collect and dispose off what waste they may find on the hill. But how do I collect all this? I don't have a bag with me. Besides, I wish to sit in Mother Azhagammal's cave and Sri Bhagavan's cave (if at all I find the caves unoccupied despite the continuous flow of devotees towards the caves); what would I do with a lot of rubbish in my hands? Why do people throw rubbish here at all?

Late in the afternoon, when I descend downwards from Virupaksha cave, and I near the human settlements at the foot of the hill, I am appalled to see loads of dirty, stinking garbage along with lots and lots of polythene and plastic stuff. Scrawny chickens darted to and fro, hunting for worms and insects. Horrible! And the descent from the hill hasn't even ended!

Clearly, Tiruvannamalai town, like most places in India, needs a proper waste-disposal system. The people living in close proximity of the hill should also be encouraged to keep their environs clean. May be large waste bins can be provided to them, and the bins should be emptied regularly. Waste-disposal is a huge problem everywhere today. What I see in Arunachala hits me very hard, but it is the same story everywhere.

Years ago when I walked inside a sacred grove in Meghalaya, our guide told us that originally the sacred grove was a place of worship for the Khasi community. Most Khasis are Christians today, but those of them who had not converted to Christianity used to practise their old animistic religion. As a part of certain religious rituals, they used to perform animal sacrifices inside the sacred groves. Our guide showed us certain things such as stone slabs and stone seats that were associated with the rituals of sacrifice. While I listened carefully to know more about the past of that community, it was all just historical information for me, because as far as spiritual matters are concerned, it is only Sri Bhagavan's way that truly attracts me. However, something the guide told me was really interesting. He said that as a rule, no one was supposed to ever carry anything off from the sacred grove. I thought that that was a good idea to ensure that the grove remained protected from thieves and souvenir-collectors, but in Arunachala we seem to be more in need of what may perhaps be called the inverse of this rule: that no one leaves off anything in Arunachala, that no one litters sacred Arunachala.

But who will bell the cat? Who will make visitors comply to this "rule" that they must not leave off or throw any waste in Arunachala? I'm sure if local groups take up the task of cleaning up Arunachala and ensure that people living near it and visiting it do not litter there, others like us—Sri Bhagavan's devotees that do not live in Tiruvannamalai—can also join this project in some way or other. I'm sure many devotees like me would not stop merely with criticising the conduct of people who litter Arunachala, but would like to contribute to the task of keeping Arunachala clean.

*In Hindu temples, the temple grounds are often in the name of the vigraha, the presiding deity of the temple, but the vigraha is considered a minor, so that all legal matters are conducted by the*

THE MYSTERY, MAJESTY AND SACREDNESS OF ARUNACHALA  
*temple authorities on behalf of the vigraha. Arunachala, in all its  
immensity, is a sacred vigraha, and hence a minor. Devotees need to  
take care of the vigraha. This doesn't take away anything from the  
grandeur and power of Arunachala just as the infant Krishna is as  
powerful as the Vishwarupa Krishna.* ▲

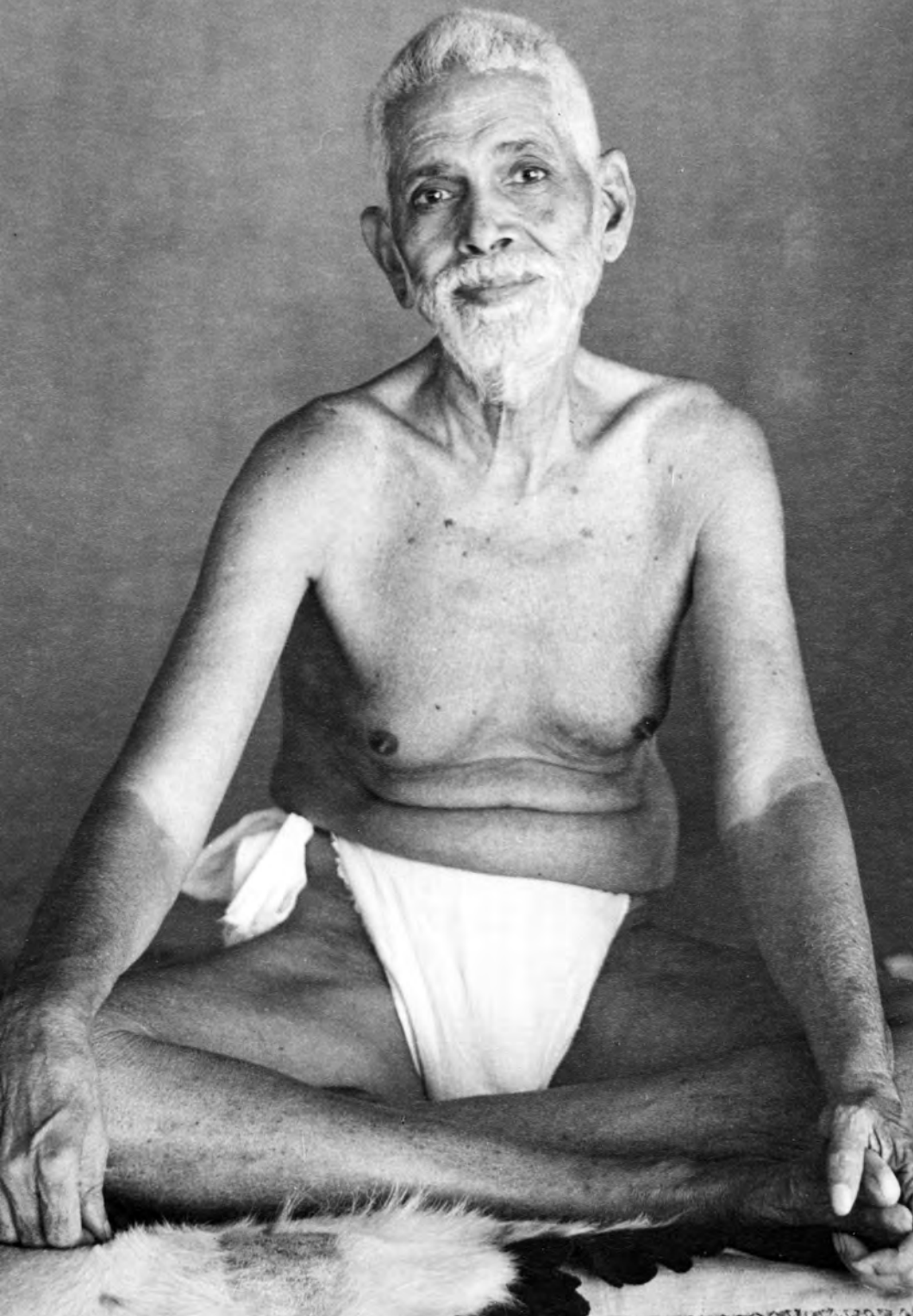
## Helen

Kevan Myers

When kids that I once taught come back to me  
it is their unchanged souls I meet  
with only vague impressions of their looks,  
and when I sometimes see  
a photo of their present beings  
playing the parts  
assigned by middle age  
it does not change for me  
that truth of who they are  
for flesh has always changed its form  
but this remains unchanged.

So now I'm shocked  
to hear that one, with sweet and gentle soul,  
that still, for me, remains forever young,  
has just now shed the human form  
that must have slowly changed,  
for those who still stayed close  
until this moment came  
where now it's gone.

But she of course  
will still be with me now and then.  
when she visits my heart,  
or speaks through this pen.





# Mokṣopāya: Kashmir's Treasure of Non-Duality

The Origins of the Influential Advaitic  
text, the Yoga Vāsiṣṭha

TIMOTHY CONWAY

*The following essay, published by Mountain Path, is from a stand-alone chapter from the author's India's Sages Source Book: Nondual Wisdom from Hindus, Buddhists, Jainas, Tantrics, Sants, Sikhs and Sufis, the first book in the author's 2-volume India's Sages history project (to be released circa 2025). The author extends his deepest appreciation to the remarkable Austrian Indologist, Prof. Walter Slaje, for his extensive insights, generous communications, and pioneering work in identifying the millennium-old Mokṣopāya text among Kashmiri sources.*

One of India's most influential tomes of *advaita* / nondual spiritual instruction is the so-called *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* (YV), an epic six-part Sanskrit creation of great importance and impact, and a longtime favourite of those drawn to the *jñāna-mārga*. It purports to be the sagely advice given by the ancient *ṛṣi*-sage Vasiṣṭha to his young disciple Rāma, not yet awake to his mission as a Divine Incarnation or *Avatār* and still angst-ridden over the evanescence and misery of the world.

Comprised of 27,687 couplet verses, the massive text — its name 'Yoga Vāsiṣṭha' not appearing in Sanskrit until the 17th century

at the earliest (later popularised under this title by some printing press editions) — has long baffled scholars in the subcontinent and abroad with the mysteries of its medieval provenance, authorship and classification. However, in recent decades the YV (under its diverse names) has been discovered to be obviously based on a well-attested and clearly-named older strand of text from the Kashmir valley in India’s far north. This latter strand (the closest we have to an *ur*-text), a relatively recent identification, is impressive for its uniquely styled and vigorously edifying qualities.

Thanks to the revolutionary findings of Austrian Indologist Walter Slaje starting with a 1994 landmark publication (in German), and work by his German colleague Jürgen Hanneder and others, it can now be determined that the beloved, bulky mega-book ‘*Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*’ was a deliberately, ‘tendentiously’ altered production derived from an earlier Sanskrit text of marvellous eloquence, originality, coherence and even greater length — the roughly 30,000-couplet (!) *Mokṣopāya*, ‘Means (*Upāya*) to Liberation (*Mokṣa*)’ (abbreviated MU). Also known as the *Mokṣopāya-śāstra*, ‘Treatise Giving Rise to Liberation’, this monumental source of pinnacle philosophy, prodigious poetry and spellbinding stories is “perhaps the largest philosophical composition the world has ever seen” (Slaje, 2001) and “probably the greatest philosophical poetic work of all times” (Helmuth von Glasenapp, 1953, cited by Slaje).<sup>1</sup>

Prof. Jürgen Hanneder, in his Editor’s Preface to a volume of scholarly articles in English and German on the MU, YV, and far shorter abridgements, speaks of the *Mokṣopāya*’s largely original philosophy (not to mention its poetic and narrative aspects):

... It now appears that the work propounds an idiosyncratic philosophy that is almost unique in the Indian sphere — by its

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Slaje’s discovery of the *Mokṣopāya* is reported in his ground-breaking seminal book, *Vom Mokṣopāya-Śāstra zum Yogavāsiṣṭha-Mahārāmāyaṇa: philologische Untersuchungen zur Entwicklungs- und Überlieferungsgeschichte eines indischen Lehrwerks mit Anspruch auf Heilsrelevanz*, Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994. (The German title translates as “From *Mokṣopāya-Śāstra* to *Yogavāsiṣṭha-Mahārāmāyaṇa*: Philological investigations into the development and transmission history of an Indian textbook claiming to be relevant to salvation.) In the years since 1994, Prof. Slaje provided numerous articles in further clarification of the MU’s provenance, history, themes and signs of redaction, which shall be noted below (these articles can all be downloaded at [Academia.edu](http://Academia.edu)).

contents, but also because it rejects the authority of any scripture or given philosophical framework. The fact that it nevertheless uses other doctrines in an inclusivistic way has tricked scholars into reading the most diverse [Hindu and Buddhist] philosophies into the text. In fact, the author of the *Mokṣopāya* seems to have conceived a non-dualistic system of his own — and elaborated it on an enormous scale.<sup>2</sup>

As for its poetry, back in 1931, Surendranath Dasgupta, widely read in all types of Indian literature, wrote in his multi-volume *A History of Indian Philosophy* about the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*:

The writer seems to have been endowed with extraordinary poetical gifts. Almost every verse is full of the finest poetical imagery; the choice of words is exceedingly pleasant to the ear, and they often produce the effect of interesting us more by their poetical value than by the extremely idealistic thought which they are intended to convey.<sup>3</sup>

Because of its heft, literally and metaphysically, neither the Kashmiri *Mokṣopāya* (written in Kashmir's Śāradā script) nor its redacted 'vulgate' version down on the Indian plains going by various titles (written in Nāgarī and other Sanskrit scripts, and finally printed

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<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Hanneder, 'Editor's Preface', in Hanneder, Ed., *The Mokṣopāya, Yogavāsiṣṭha and Related Texts*, Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2005, p. 3. See also Hanneder's essay within this volume, 'The Mokṣopāya: An Introduction,' pp. 9-19. And especially see Hanneder, *Studies on the Mokṣopāya*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006. In addition to reading (in German) a translation of the MU itself from the critical Sanskrit edition or the English-translated long *Vasiṣṭha-Rāma-Saṃvāda* core section of the YV, I recommend this volume by Hanneder as the single best English-language book to read for exploring the MU/YV's history, structure, themes, terminology and significance.

<sup>3</sup> Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, Cambridge, 1932, p. 231. Note that Dasgupta's analysis of the YV, arranged by topics, is a 44-page section (pp. 228-72) within this second volume of his 5-vol. work, which has a preface dated 1931. He has some useful things to say, also much that is now obsolete, and most crucially, he misses the profoundly positive, pristine, spiritual nature of the transcendent-immanent Brahman / Cit reality discussed in the YV (MU), regarding the YV's view of Divine Reality as a "very barren" conception (p. 271) of "a characterless entity," as Dasgupta repeatedly labels the True Reality. We beg to differ.

as ‘*Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*’) ever attained the wide familiarity of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. But its teachings and stories, heard either in full or in part – especially in one of the more easily found abstracts or abridgements – impressed and inspired numerous sages over time, starting up in Kashmir where the MU originated, down to the 13th century spiritual prodigy Jñāneśvar in Maharashtra. Several later Advaita Vedānta preceptors were impacted by the YV’s striking views, most notably the 16th century figure Prakāśānanda (c. 1550-1600), who was led by the YV’s radical doctrine of nondual illusionism to be a major dissenter on some scholastic points within mainstream Advaita Vedānta. In the 17th century, the open-minded Muslim Sūfī prince Dārā Shikōh (1615-59), the eldest son of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahān, commissioned a full translation of the YV into Persian, completed in 1656, such was the text’s hold on him — he learned some of its lofty teachings from two Persian distillations loosely rendered from the ca. 13th century *Laghu Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* abridgement of the YV made in 1597 for Mughal prince Salīm and in 1602 for Emperor Akbar. (Heike Franke reports that in Dārā’s preface, he claims Vasiṣṭha and Rāma visited him one night – expressly not in a dream – and that he joined Rāma as a disciple of Vasiṣṭha and received *prasād* sweets directly from Vasiṣṭha).<sup>4</sup> The *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*’s appeal and influence continued through the next centuries to inspire pre-modern and modern era luminaries all over India, including Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ram Tirtha, Hari Prasad Shastri, Ramana Maharshi and Nisargadatta Maharaj.

Many persons would have merely read or heard one of the abridgements of the YV, starting with the *Laghu Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*, a ~5,000-verse partial abstract of MU dating no later than mid-13th century, and only covering the first half of the sixth section (the last and longest), the *Nirvāṇa-prakaraṇa*. “According to the commentary it was composed by a ‘Kashmiri Paṇḍit’ who had travelled to the South.”<sup>5</sup> In turn the LYV served as a literary source for some medieval

<sup>4</sup> Heike Franke (2005), “Die persischen Übersetzungen des Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha” (Persian Translations of LYV), in Hanneder, Ed., *The Mokṣopāya, Yogavāsiṣṭha and Related Texts*, op. cit., pp. 113-30. My thanks to Prof. Walter Slaje for translating for me the gist of Franke’s reporting on this.

<sup>5</sup> Personal email communication from Walter Slaje, Feb. 20, 2022.

Minor Upaniṣads and also likely stimulated the much shorter YV abridgements such as *Jñānavāsiṣṭha*, etc. Up in Kashmir, a direct extract of the MU was made too, quite independently of the LYV, thus creating the *Mokṣopāya-Saṅgraha*, by removing all its longer stories, most of its shorter ones, and preserving only the more spiritual-sounding dialogues and monologues.

The full MU text (and YV redaction) is a remarkable work presenting nondual wisdom utterly sublime yet totally pragmatic, delivered with amiable wit and humorous perspective along with tender-hearted compassion and understanding, acute paradoxes to shatter any 'either-or' dualistic mental fixations, and dozens of richly narrated stories ranging from the touchingly poignant to the totally psychedelic, with a strong feminism expressed in the two lengthiest tales (about the enlightened queens Līlā and Cūḍālā). Every page contains 'quotable quotes' of such pithiness as to make you want to etch them across the sky for all to see.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike *Aṣṭāvakra Gītā*, *Ṛbhū Gītā* and certain other lofty advaita works, which can sound awfully stark to the hearing, verging on depersonalisation syndrome, *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* easily manages to be profoundly spiritual and yet also warmly human at the same time.

An extraordinary impact comes from sincerely reading or hearing the pan-Indian *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* and now the original Kashmiri *Mokṣopāya*. One is radically opened up and emptied out as intrinsic Freedom and Clarity. One is liberated from all manner of psychologically reifying or 'thing-ifying' a world, a personal self and its states, relationships and problems. The sense of what is solid, full and real magically shifts altogether away from these phenomena of personhood back to this *Supra-personal* true Self or Reality (*Ātman / Brahman*), intimately right *here*, right *now*, this Solid, Full, Pure, Infinite Consciousness (*Cit-ākāśa*, *Cidākāśa*), which is nondually manifesting the vivid but evanescent states of experiencing in worlds high and low.

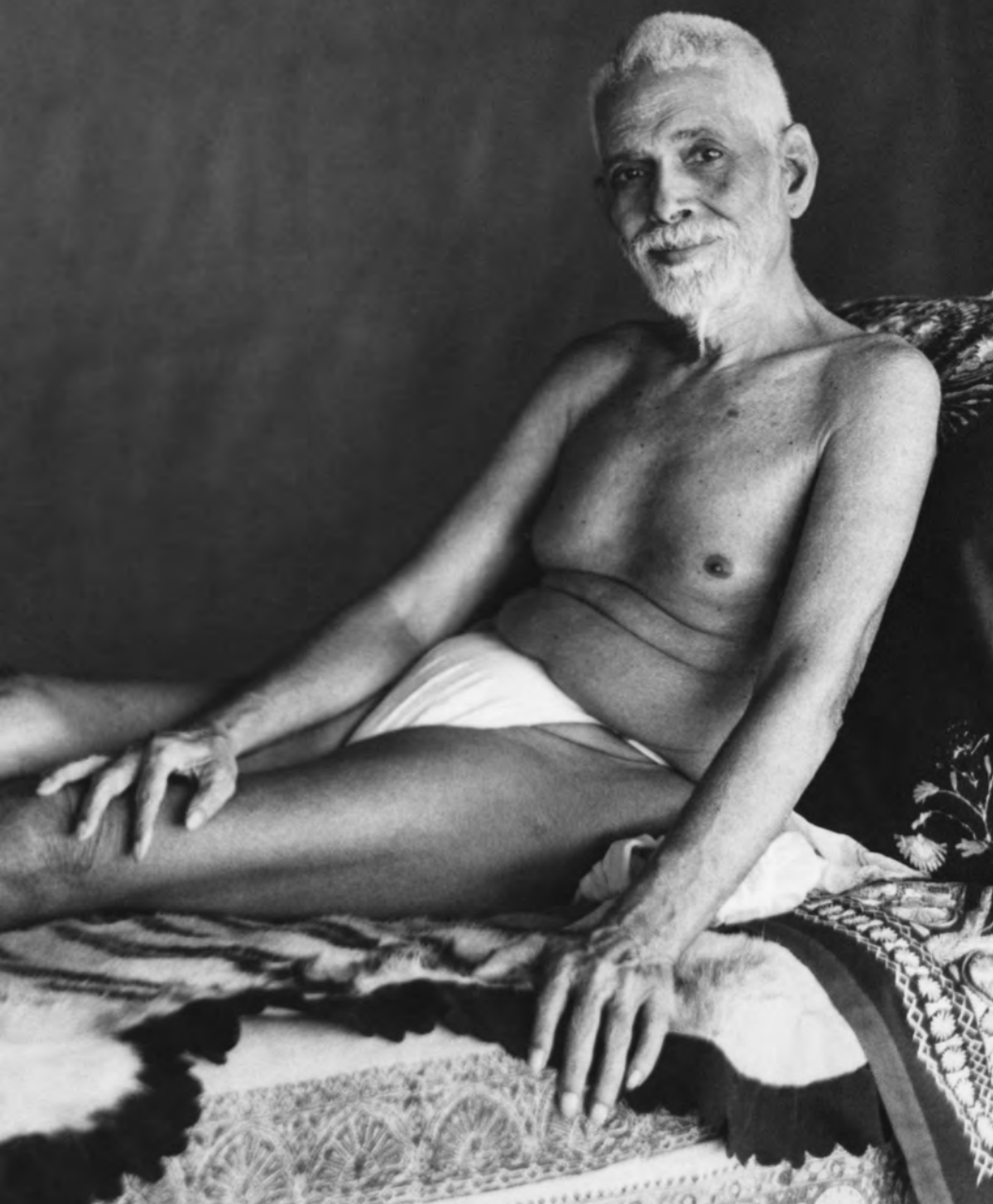
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<sup>6</sup> Disclosure: in 1981, I filled an entire 8.5x11" notebook with handwritten quotes and synopsis notes from reading Swami Venkatesananda's 2-volume English translation of the YV, *The Supreme Yoga*, S.Africa: Chiltern Yoga Trust, 1976; reprinted by SUNY in 1993 as *Vasiṣṭha's Yoga*, the translated text running to 725 pages, plus a 50-page index, but without the Swami's hundreds of select verses in transliterated Sanskrit from his original edition of the YV.

The *Mokṣopāya* presents the *ajātivāda* “doctrine of the unborn/unproduced eternal (*aja*) Absolute”: namely, the decisive teaching that Absolute Reality (*Brahman*) never *actually* gives rise to any worlds or beings, though these appear to exist (‘stand out’ in experience) due to Reality’s miraculous *Māyā* power to spontaneously play ‘as if’ these phenomena are vividly real. The empirically experienced worlds and beings are declared by the *Mokṣopāya* as lacking their own intrinsic reality and thus they are oft-said to be like the fancied ‘child of a barren woman’, the ‘horns on a hare’, the ‘three princes never actually born’, the ‘water in a mirage’, a ‘dream castle’ or ‘imaginary sky city’, and so on. Some of these metaphors had been used by the Buddhists and by the early Advaita Hindu sage Gauḍapāda — evidently one of the first to introduce this specific ‘*ajātivāda*’ doctrine, as we have seen earlier in the yet to be published *India’s Sages* volume. The fact that every arising moment is utterly vanishing (just try to hold onto it!), incapable of being clung to as solid, and that one’s time as a 10-year-old, 2-year-old, or person from a prior lifetime now feels unreal like a distant dream — are major clues to the truth of this *ajātivāda* view. Further supporting it are the explosively deconstructive revelations since the 1920s from the ‘new physics’ of quantum mechanics and then since the 1980s from the ‘new new physics’ (superstring theories / M-theory) — which find that matter is neither solid nor fundamental but rather a form of mysterious energy, that at the bottom “there are no such things as ‘things’” but only the ‘quantum foam’, that all material phenomena are fundamentally constituted by “loops and blobs of curved hyperspace vibrating in eleven dimensions” (superstring theory), and so forth.

The MU does not deny the *experience* of a world, rather it declares repeatedly that whatever is vividly experienced is actually the Divine *Brahman* or *Cidākāśa*, the unborn, undying, unchanging Spiritual Reality or Consciousness Space (the ‘Hyperspace’). Profoundly awakening to this Consciousness as true Reality (not as a mere glimpse) effectively sublates (*bādhā*) all phenomena as only ‘relatively real’ in the light of this Single Spiritual Reality, their Source and very Substance.

The early Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptural bundle, the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, repeatedly tells of the stunningly vast multi-universe of countless ‘perfect Buddha-fields’ engendered by innumerable glorious





Buddhas, all somehow interpenetrating (inter-dimensionally) and all permeated by the omnipresent Buddha-Nature. Something rather similar to this cosmological view is presented by the *Mokṣopāya*.

Prof. Walter Slaje describes the dazzling, mind-blowing ontology presented by the MU, worth reproducing in full to get a clearer intuitive ‘feel’ for this *Cidākāśa* Consciousness-Space and Its miraculous, spontaneous capacities to manifest a multi-level, multi-dimensional, multi-universe Kosmos as fractalising bubbles within bubbles or particles within particles of ItSelf:

A brief outline of Vasiṣṭha’s ontology helps to better understand the situation we find ourselves in within ‘our’ universe. Top down: There exists only space filled with objectless consciousness. Applying the often used simile of an ocean, its water is still calm. And so is consciousness. For no apparent reason and completely unpredictably, the water begins to move [pulse or vibrate, *spanda*]. A wave rises from the surface of the water. At this moment the wave understands itself in its new form as an identity independent of the surface of the water, although it is identical with it in essence. Transposed to consciousness, a Prajāpati [first-person creator] with I-consciousness has just arisen. Since activated consciousness must necessarily design thoughts due to its nature, every single ‘creator god’ – every single wave of the ocean – does exactly this. The first ideas that *involuntarily* appear in Prajāpati’s imagination at the same time as his self-identification as a ‘creator’ happens, become what we as his creatures experience as ‘natural laws’ in this world. The facts that the wind blows, that fire is hot, that rain falls down from above and does not fall up, that there are gods and demons, that laws such as *karman* and the Vedas (seem to) exist, etc., owe their emergence to a random idea that suddenly flashes up.

A neighbouring wave, i.e. a neighbouring Prajāpati – and there are countless of them, unaware of each other – might entertain entirely different ideas. They may have created worlds where unimaginable different ‘natural laws’ and creatures prevail.

This is not all. For, like a wave forms bubbles and foam, the creatures that a Prajāpati has created consist of course as much of consciousness as their creator, who is made of the mind-stuff of the *cit* like a wave is made of the water of the ocean. These little particles of *cit* (*cit-aṇu*) start thinking themselves and fancy all sorts of things



within the outer framework that the Creator God has fashioned for them, thereby creating – as for example in their dreams – new creatures made of mind-stuff, who, once brought into existence, in their turn start fancying and dreaming new mental entities.

That is the idea of infinity of ‘universes’, the subjects of which interpenetrate each other in a way that needs still to be explored in more detail.

Basically, however, they all exist in the same container (*ākāśa*) of the one *cit*. So ‘she’ (*cit* is feminine in Sanskrit) is of course aware of the colourful hustle and bustle of the particles of consciousness within her, as *cit* is sort of an all-embracing mother-consciousness. This hustle never ends, as an ocean never stops forever producing waves. This happens only temporarily. It can however stop for individual waves, that is, for single *jīvas*, when they, by seeing through reality, in the end manage to sink back into their primeval source and thereby lose their individuality [in the Divine *Cit*]. However, soon another wave will rise....

From this background, ‘rebirth’ is a concept limited to our present universe and was caused by this fanciful notion our Prajāpati had entertained in the unintentionally flashing first ideas of creation, which then develop into a ‘world’ where these ideas solidify as patterns of ‘natural laws.’ In this structure, these laws – and one of them is the law of *karman* prevailing in the wave of our Prajāpati – also form the apparently objective framework for all intersubjective relationships of the ‘mental particles’ [*jīva* souls] existing simultaneously within this network.

So actually, in Reality, there is no rebirth. We have inherited this idea from our creator’s framework. An individual who dies is so convinced about it that in the moment of death he or she immediately fancies another existence. The very moment an individual ‘dies’ s/he ‘awakes’ in another social environment. The conviction is so strong that the relatives of the deceased collectively mourn the dead body, which is thus kept in the presence of their eyes by their collective imagination. This makes it possible for the ‘deceased’ to return to the world of the former life and, by joining the imagination prevailing there, to watch the decaying body and grieving relatives. There are many parables in the MU dealing with such cases.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Email communication from Walter Slaje, Feb. 20, 2022.

We reiterate that the MU / YV's doctrine that "the world is notional, a dream in Consciousness" does not deny the pragmatic level of functioning. Though bodies, souls, karma and rebirth are denied any existence on the absolute level, they are certainly upheld on the conventional, experiential level, as Prof. Slaje has just outlined. In fact, many stories told in MU / YV are tales of rebirths occurring due to karmically-driven behaviour and intentions.

Slaje adds an edifying note:

The solution the MU offers for living our lives meaningfully under such circumstances, but with a prospect for a lasting escape, is the attainment of *jīvanmukti*. In the MU this means to continue living (*jīvan*) in our illusory world as projected by Prajāpati, permanently seeing through its true reality and, exactly on account of this realisation, loosening all affective ties (*mukti*) to a world, which, though it is mere appearance, yet is consciousness (*cit*) in essence. This state of emotion of a *jīvanmukta* is terminologically defined as 'cool' (*śītala*), meaning to say: all passions have calmed down in relation to the world. It's like being in a play, knowing that it's all just a big show with sets and costumed actors. It doesn't affect you personally. This is the way Vasiṣṭha encourages Rāma not to swerve from his duties as a *kṣatriya* – the role assigned to him for this life – and thus continue to rule his kingdom.<sup>8</sup>

Scholar Sthaneshwar Timalina has importantly clarified an aspect of the *Mokṣopāya*'s brilliance in how it teaches the old idea of the world's appearance or *ābhāsa* not merely in the traditional way as a faulty illusion or form of spiritual ignorance – a mistake or error – but in a very positive light as, verily, the Self-shining *Brahman* Reality:

A general agreement among the schools [of 'Hindu' Advaita and Mahāyāna Buddhism] applying the term *ābhāsa* [appearance] is that it is *māyā* [illusion] or *avidyā* [ignorance] that gives rise to duality. This, however, is not always the case, as shown by other instances of its occurrence in the MU. In some, *ābhāsa*

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<sup>8</sup> Email communication from Walter Slaje, Feb. 22, 2022.



is not caused due to ignorance, but it is consciousness (*cid* [*cit*]) itself and without any external cause. Following this understanding, the world in the form of time, space, and so on is compared to the momentary appearance of lightning, affirming that consciousness itself is momentarily appearing in the form of the external world. Along these lines, it is this ‘shining’ (*bhās*) and not ‘false appearance’ of the very solitary awareness free from beginning and end that gives rise to the concept of plurality.... In these instances, the application of [the word] *ābhāsa* is in order to confirm the existence of Brahman alone. The apparent discrepancy in [various streams of] Advaita literature, where the world is identified at the same time with ignorance as well as Brahman, needs to be explored in order to demonstrate how the MU reconciles this contradiction. If the world is identical to Brahman, then, *ābhāsa* does not explain illusory nature, as there is no illusion as such. However, the world cannot be the very Brahman shining, if the world is a false projection of illusion. The text demonstrates awareness of this contradiction. The MU distinguishes these two positions and confirms that the first position, the negation of the world identified with error, functions as a pedagogical strategy to confirm the higher position that there exists only Brahman. When *ābhāsa* is understood as ‘shining,’ or ‘illumination’, the world is perceived as identical to Brahman. This concept rejects any [distinct] origination and establishes *ekasattā*, the Advaitic stance that establishes a single degree of reality.... The world and Brahman do not posit two different degrees of reality....”<sup>9</sup>

This ‘single degree of reality’ is what allows the *Mokṣopāya* to convey such a striking sense of the *gapless immediacy* of the Divine *Brahman / Ātman / Cidākāśa*, the Absolute Truth that is always true and real, regardless of momentarily arising personal circumstances or experiential states.

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<sup>9</sup> Sthaneshwar Timalina, “The Concept of Ābhāsa in the Yogavāsiṣṭha,” in Christopher Key Chapple & Arindam Chakrabarti, Ed., *Engaged Emancipation: Mind, Morals, and Make-Believe in the Mokṣopāya (Yoga Vāsiṣṭha)*, Albany, NY: SUNY, 2015, pp. 64-5. I have eliminated Timalina’s endnote citations generously giving the corresponding Skt verses from the MU.

After groping, bungled early scholarly attempts to classify the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* over much of the 20th century, a close reading of the more authentic *Mokṣopāya* by Prof. Walter Slaje has revealed the text as decidedly non-Vedāntin — for it rejects the scriptural authority (*śruti*) of the Veda and Vedānta and traditional ways of philosophically interpreting those texts. (Such medieval hermeneutics got enmeshed in conundrums about whether the world is real or unreal, the precise nature of the ‘cause-effect’ that originated it, whether the locus of ‘ignorance’ is in the individual or in the Absolute, etc.) As Slaje has informed, the MU author “adopts a meta-position of all existing world views from which (*sarvasiddhānta-siddhānta*) he regards all traditions of thought inclusive of [alleged Divine] revelations as activities of the mind – for how else could philosophical systems and world explanations have been developed? – thus proving its superior position that only *cit* exists as the unconditional prerequisite of such fancies of the mind as are philosophical standpoints.”<sup>10</sup>

The MU conveys a pristine and refreshingly balanced Advaita by fostering a penetrating, direct, nondual experiencing and awakening to intrinsic Truth, free of any felt-sense alienation between subject and object, free of mental complications, and free of any unwholesome *vāsanā* personal tendencies. The MU emphasises the fully transcendent *and* fully immanent Infinite Consciousness (*Cidākāśa*) as the true Reality underlying and comprising phenomena, which are not-real-in-themselves (they have no *svabhāva* or ‘own being,’ as the Buddha and Nāgārjuna taught long ago, echoed by the MU). The *Mokṣopāya* aims to help listeners and readers realise the Pure Awareness-Consciousness before/beyond all phenomena yet inclusive of all phenomena, which are essentially Consciousness-only (*Cinmātra*) and thus not any kind of hindrance or problem when they experientially appear or vanish. One’s real nature as Consciousness freely permeates all beings and situations and spontaneously engages in diverse functions. An awake consciousness, a *prabuddha* or *jīvanmukta* (one liberated in life) or *jñānin* (sagely knower) or *ātmavid* (Self-knower), abides simultaneously as serene contemplation (like ‘lucid deep sleep’) *and* useful action (benevolent, appropriate functioning), free of any

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<sup>10</sup> Email from Walter Slaje, Feb. 20, 2022.

selfish sense of doership or drudgery, in the clear knowing that all doings and beings are ‘like a dream’ or mirage or rainbow or magic show in the stupendously rich-yet-transparent Divine *līlā*-play of the *Cidākāśa* Consciousness-Space.

This all-enlivening, all-illuminating supreme Consciousness or *Cit* intimately knows, feels, pervades and *is* – by way of a self-transformation (*pariṇāma*) of the *Cit* into these mental forms – each of the apparently separate inorganic things, organic bodies and personal consciousnesses (*jīva* souls, or *cit-aṇu* infinitesimal particles of the *Cit*), just “as a tree perceives its own leaves, flowers, fruits, etc., with the eye of its consciousness...” (VI.219.7a-c), or “as the infinite ocean is aware of all its living creatures, waves, swirls and foam...” (VI.219.8a-c).<sup>11</sup>

Some scholars call this omnipresent, all-permeating Consciousness ‘pan-psychism.’ It is spectacularly communicated in a climactic section of the text wherein the MU’s sagely author, under his pen name ‘Vasiṣṭha’, vividly describes his epiphany of what it is to permeate and consciously *be* an entire range of animate and inanimate beings constituted by the major elements or *mahābhūta* – earth, water, fire, air. (See Christopher Key Chapple’s excellent discussion of this superb eco-vision, highly relevant for our modern era of eco-catastrophe).<sup>12</sup>

The *Mokṣopāya* was composed primarily for non-ascetic listeners and readers by an anonymous Kashmiri author of tremendous poetic, literary and philosophical-metaphysical prowess who delighted in mixing profound wisdom aphorisms and brilliant elucidations with many dozens of *upamā* / similes and illustrative *ākhyāna* ‘event reports’ in the form of stories, parables and anecdotes. These are often quite humorous and frequently involve transpersonal and/or paranormal elements such as tales of rebirth, cosmic travel, remote viewing, wondrous appearances and bodily transformations. The author-composer’s literary figure ‘Guru Vasiṣṭha’ zaps young Rāma and we listeners/readers with lightning bolts of penetrating *advaita*

<sup>11</sup> Email from Walter Slaje, Feb. 20, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> A fine discussion and new translation of this important section can be found in Christopher Key Chapple, “Liberation into Nature: Vasiṣṭha’s Embrace of the Great Elements,” in C.K. Chapple & A. Chakrabarti, Ed., *Engaged Emancipation*, op. cit., especially pp. 273-84.

revelation. Alternatively, in an ancient stylist convention, our Vasiṣṭha uses one of his story-characters as a mouthpiece for the revelation of Absolute Awareness-Consciousness as the sole Reality. Whoever is doing the talking in this scripture, spiritual Truth sounds forth clearly, consistently and convincingly. Regarding the stories, back in 1984, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty described several of the MU/YV tales as “long, baroque, elaborately poetic renditions of complex adventures.”<sup>13</sup> Writes Jürgen Hanneder in his important, in-depth 2006 volume *Studies on the Mokṣopāya*,<sup>14</sup> “Some of the *ākhyānas* are true masterpieces of Old Indian story-telling and their conscious employment in expressing philosophical ideas is executed in a most intriguing manner.” Certain events reported by the *Mokṣopāya* author, including quite mind-boggling ones, he claims to have directly witnessed or experienced, either through ordinary perception or via a purified higher knowing.

Slaje has persuasively shown that the author wrote and preached the contents of his *Mokṣopāya* during or just a few years after the reign of the learned, eloquent, brahmin-caste Hindu king Yaśaskara (r. June 26, 939 to July 27, 948 CE) in Kashmir's capital city of Adhiṣṭhāna (Śrīnagar). The MU author adopted the spiritual pen-name ‘Vasiṣṭha’, hearkening back to the ancient Vedic sage Vasiṣṭha, the legendary family guru of King Daśaratha and his sons in Ayodhyā, especially Prince Rāma — Lord Viṣṇu's renowned *avatāra* revered in pious Hindu devotional tradition as hero of the Sanskrit epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa*. With customary ‘poetic license’, the MU purports to be Vasiṣṭha's spiritual instructions to a young, disillusioned, dispassionate and disengaged Rāma before he awakened to Divine Truth.

We can be fairly certain that a single author must stand behind the MU because of numerous cross-referencing comments voiced by ‘Vasiṣṭha’ that occur within the text. These comments, declares Hanneder, constitute evidence “that the didactic plan involved in this work [MU] is elaborate and is more likely caused by a single author [rather] than in a long phase of textual growth,” involving work by many hands and minds over an enormous, unwieldy text. “The plan of

<sup>13</sup> Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusion and Other Realities*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984.

<sup>14</sup> Jürgen Hanneder, *Studies on the Mokṣopāya*, op. cit.

the work and its use of others' ideas seem well calculated and this tight construction and the narrow time frame for its production suggests that it was written or at least substantially redacted by a single author."<sup>15</sup>

The *Mokṣopāya* was clearly referenced by name in subsequent Kashmiri literature and preserved in numerous ms. copies, redactions and distillations, so any doubts about the existence and primacy of this text underlying the *Yoga Vāsiṣṭha* can be obviated at the outset. There is a formal commentary on it, too — the *Mokṣopāya-tīkā*, by Bhāskaraṇṭha of Kashmir, his *Tīkā* dating to between 1725-75, and obviously referencing the source-text's original name, not the artificial title '*Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*' of a later era down on the plains.

The Mokṣopāya Project, consisting of a scholarly team under the direction of Prof. Slaje at the Institute of Indology at the Martin Luther University of Halle in Germany, from 2011 to 2019 completed the major feat of publishing a critical Sanskrit edition of the 6-part *Mokṣopāya*, based on Bhāskaraṇṭha's commentary and on over 30 manuscript copies ultimately stemming from the 10th century MU text, including two complete mss. of the MU and two dozen other mss. containing one or more of the six *prakaraṇa* 'book' divisions — these mss. are scribed in Śāradā, Nāgarī, Grantha or Telugu scripts. (The endeavour was early on described by Slaje in three status-report articles in different periodicals, 'The Mokṣopāya Project [I, II, III],' published in 1996, 2000, and 2005; available, like all his articles, at Academia.edu. The 1996 report contains the most interesting discussion of the significance of the MU; the two later reports are mainly update notes about new mss. and fragments becoming available for study.) Sanskrit scholar Judit Törzsök, in her 2017 review of the project thus far completed by that point, declared, "The task of editing the *Mokṣopāya* may be called a truly heroic exploit in philology, a task comparable to editing the *Rāmāyaṇa*, for the *Mokṣopāya* even surpasses the epic in length [by 25%]. [This critical edition] successfully reconstructs a text that is arguably the closest possible version to what the Kashmirian *Mokṣopāya* was in the tenth century." ▲

<sup>15</sup> Hanneder, "The Mokṣopāya: An Introduction," in Hanneder, Ed. (2005), *The Mokṣopāya, Yogavāsiṣṭha and Related Texts*, op. cit., pp. 18-19.



# Knowing and Being

## Just Being on the Path of Bhagavan Ramana Compared with Searching by Carl Jung

WASYL NIMENKO

The more you know  
The more you are in your grave  
Knowing is not being

Carl Jung was considered by many to be one of the most important thinkers in the world and he still is by some. Jung was so highly respected that on the two occasions he had dinner with Winston Churchill, Jung was specifically invited to sit beside Churchill.<sup>1</sup> One of Jung's most important contributions was psychologically introducing Western man to Eastern thought and Eastern spiritual disciplines. In 'Psychology and Religion East and West'<sup>2</sup> Jung devotes a chapter, 'The Holy Men of India,' to evaluating spiritual masters. The one who Jung focuses on the most is Sri Ramana Maharshi, who was regarded

<sup>1</sup> Letter from C.G. Jung to Earnest Andres 22 September, 1946, and from C.G. Jung to Victor White, 6 November 1946, C.G. Jung: *Letters*, ed. Gerhard Adler (Princeton, 1973), Vol. I, pp 442-43, 448-49.

<sup>2</sup> *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol 11 (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1969),

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as having immersed himself in the atman ‘the Self.’<sup>3</sup> Sri Ramana’s essential message was to practise Self-enquiry and to ‘just be.’ This is understood to be a state of consciousness where the Self has displaced the ego, where the mind no longer eclipses the Self. Sri Ramana like Jung is also still highly respected.

The point of comparing the two is to show that Carl Jung and Sri Ramana’s lives took entirely different paths leading to two very different outcomes. Jung’s path of ‘knowing’ and Sri Ramana’s path of ‘just being’ resulted in them giving two very different messages to mankind. Hopefully shining a light on these differences may encourage some people on the path of Self-enquiry but it might also act as a caution to those who are too vulnerable to walk this path and to look elsewhere.

Jung ‘borrowed’ his fundamental idea of ‘the Self’ from the east and especially the from Upanishads,<sup>4</sup> of which Sri Ramana was a living exemplar, so he could hardly avoid writing about him in ‘The Holy Men of India.’ However, Jung’s writing in ‘The Holy Men of India’ was ambivalent because he almost certainly saw himself as being too vulnerable to meet Sri Ramana when he was in India because of his mental state. Jung almost certainly had a psychotic illness as a young child,<sup>5</sup> he was later sexually abused by a friend of his family<sup>6</sup> and then he had a severe and prolonged psychotic illness after his split with Freud which lasted for five years.<sup>7</sup> These left him damaged and vulnerable<sup>8</sup> and he didn’t think he was personally able to take on board the teachings of the East by meeting a living exemplar such as Sri Ramana, without risking a further catastrophic breakdown.<sup>9</sup>

Jung’s coping mechanism for his loss of belief in religion and fellowmen was to create his own version of reality, his secular form of salvation, which is essentially an intellectual psychological way of

<sup>3</sup> *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol 11 (Princeton: 1969), Para 958.

<sup>4</sup> *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol 11 (Princeton: 1969), Para 140.

<sup>5</sup> Vincent Brome, *Jung: Man and Myth* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 301.

<sup>6</sup> The Freud – Jung letters, edited by William McGuire (Princeton)

<sup>7</sup> *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* by C.J. Jung, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffe (New York: Vintage Books, 1989) p.199.

<sup>8</sup> *Feet of Clay: A Study of Gurus* by Anthony Storr. (HarperCollins, 1996), p.91.

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Countess Elizabeth Klinckowstroem L2, p.121 C.G. Letter, Volume 2, selected and edited by Gerhard Adler in collaboration with Aniela Jaffe (Bollingen Series: Princeton:1953).

perceiving oneself and the world. It was his attempt to replace religion and his own lack of faith with a synthesis of knowledge, but it was also a way of understanding and healing himself. His attempt was an intellectual substitution for religion, when for millennia religion has been understood as a path involving belief, hope and faith.

However, for those who have suffered mentally it can seem easy to identify with what Jung said in his approach because he spoke from the position of one who had gone through great distress in a severe and prolonged psychotic illness, but most especially because Jung had survived and was able to intelligently articulate his experiences. Jung remains popular because he tried to show a different way of how to understand the mind. This might be helpful in trying to understand, survive, and come to terms with severe psychological illness when we appear fragmented, lost and out of control. When someone has had a severe breakdown they can sometimes use Jung's map to survive, to understand themselves and continue to live their story because Jung encouraged us to look at our own stories in our own way using his in-depth language. But fundamentally although his secular form of salvation is an important contribution to thinking and psychology, it is actually another belief system based on a doctrine of knowledge, another dogma and it is not for everyone.

Just as Jung's theory comes from his own story and is a map for us to follow, Sri Ramana's teaching also originates from his practical life experience. Sri Ramana described a path on a map which shows the way to the inner Self. It is not a map showing understanding of the mind like Jung's. It is a map of the atman, 'the Self' which Jung said could not be differentiated from the mind by psychology, because psychology lacks the competence to do so.<sup>10</sup> Because it is beyond understanding by the mind, this makes it slightly more difficult for those people who are very much 'thinkers' to actually understand this map and find a way into practically experiencing it.

Jung wrote a great deal about using thinking to interpret almost everything and he helped us to understand some things better. However as already stated, Jung was too frightened to meet Sri Ramana and to explore the Self in the way in which Sri Ramana lived his life. Even though Jung could write very intelligently around the subject of the

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<sup>10</sup> *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol 11 (Princeton: 1969), Para 957.

atman ‘the Self,’ unfortunately he thought he was too vulnerable to actually practically look inwards and discover it. The importance of this is that it points the way to show why it is not unusual to have difficulty trying to practice Sri Ramana’s Self-enquiry of ‘just being.’ Why should this be so? There are probably at least two explanations.

It seems that a large proportion of people are unable to actually practise Self-enquiry or ‘just being’. It also seems that some people, and Jung is a good example, avoid the actual practise of Self-enquiry or ‘just being’ because they are too frightened. So it seems there are those who are unable and those who are unwilling to practise ‘Self enquiry. Both can result in what looks like someone getting stuck over-thinking about it without being able to get on and do it. It looks like they are hovering over the literature on the subject and circling around the facts and guidance without actually being able to put them into practice. It is just like talking about riding a bike but never actually getting on a bike to try and ride one.

Let’s look at over-thinking or being over-intellectual first. There is the very real possibility of being over-intellectual about a subject which the mind lacks the competence to understand. There is a level in us the atman ‘the Self’, which is different from the mind. Jung said that psychology lacks the competence to differentiate the mind from the Self and so the mind is not the best instrument to see it. It is a level of conscious awareness which is usually obscured by the mind. ‘Just being’ is a much more subtle level than the mind. Both are not equally open to our consciousness because one is simply obscured by the other; the Self by the mind. The atman ‘the Self’, can only be seen when the mind is barely working. Only practice reveals this covering up of the atman ‘the Self’ by the mind because the atman ‘the Self’ has to and can only be experienced practically to be seen and grasped. At some stage this requires a leap from thinking about Self-enquiry and thinking about ‘just being’ to practically trying to experience ‘just being’. To just be and shut down thinking requires effort and practice.

Over-thinking or being over-intellectual about something may result from being conditioned to think all of the time at home and in education, and it is very common. Those who mainly seem to see things intellectually can be prone to getting blocked and stuck on an intellectual level. This can happen when trying to understand anything,

but especially when trying to understand something like Sri Ramana's path of 'just being.' This form of mental constipation is not only getting stuck and blocked in thinking, it is also blocking any practical progress along the inner path. This is common especially in the more bright clever type of person, perhaps because of over-conditioning. Are there people who are more 'thinking types' and much more intellectual? Jung's mind is an interesting example to observe.

In 'Psychological Types'<sup>11</sup> which was published in 1921, Jung was one of the first modern psychologists to suggest a useful way of classifying the various personality types and his theory is still widely used commercially today. Jung probably borrowed the idea of his Four Functions of Thinking, Feeling, Sensation, and Intuition from a Greek physician, Galen's (c.190AD) Four Humours of Sanguine, Melancholic, Choleric and Phlegmatic. Galen had taken these from Hippocrates' (c.370BC) original idea of the Four Temperaments of Blood, Phlegm, Yellow Bile, and Black Bile. These were the ancient Greeks way of classifying the different temperaments or personality types and also astrology's way of dividing the twelve signs of the Zodiac into the Four Elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water to reflect the nature of the four fundamental personality types.

Jung was of course a very keen disciple of astrology and the four ancient traditional basic types, are obviously pre-Jungian. In his volume 'Psychological Types,' Jung researches the four basic types outlined above at extraordinary length. He uses the first 329 pages of the 608 pages to look at their origins and history! Without meaning to be critical of Jung, he either appears to have an astonishing lack of insight to actually think that the four psychological types are his new original idea or he believes that in over-thinking about something in the way in which he researched the four psychological types that they have become his. In the words of the American Playwright Wilson Mizner, 'To steal ideas from one person is plagiarism; to steal from many is research.'

It is worth exploring this a little further just to illustrate Jung's complete obsession with thinking. This shows that Jung had what can be described most generously as a 'lifelong unresolved obsession about not being a plagiarist.' During the 1959 BBC John Freeman

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<sup>11</sup> *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol. 6, Psychological Types (Princeton: 1969).

interview titled, 'Face to Face with Carl Jung,' Jung's anger is dramatically displayed when Freeman asks him about his education. It is worth watching this on the internet because Jung becomes animated, not only losing his composure, but he gets irritated and hits the table thirty to forty times in anger when just talking about being accused of plagiarism which happened 60-70 years earlier. It is as if all his wounds from his childhood remained unhealed and as fresh as if they had just happened because Jung gave no sense of having come to terms with himself in old age.

'And did you, when you decided to become a doctor, have difficulty getting the training at school and passing the exams?'

'I particularly had a difficulty with a certain teacher who didn't believe that I could write a decent thesis. I remember one case where the teacher had the person happily discuss the paper written by the pupils and he took the best first and he went through the whole number of the pupils and mine didn't appear and I was badly troubled and worried. I just thought well it is impossible that my thesis could be that bad. And when he had finished he said, 'There is still one paper left over and that is the one by Jung. That would be by far the best paper if it hadn't been copied. He has, he has just copied it somewhere, stolen. You are a thief you, and if I knew where you had, have stolen it you, you, you, I would fling you out of school.' And I, I went mad and I, I said. 'This is the one thesis where I have worked the most because the theme was interesting in contradistinction you know to other things which are not at all interesting to me.' And then he said, 'You are a liar and if I can prove that you have stolen that thing, so then you get out of school.' Now that was a very serious thing to me because what else then? You see and I hated that fellow and that was the, the only man I could have killed you know if I had met him once at a dark corner. I would have shown him some, something of what I can do.'

'Did you often have violent thoughts about people when you were young?'

Of course you can overanalyse this, but it is astonishingly clear that even in his eighties, Jung had completely unresolved issues about his thinking, knowledge, power and violence. However, the point here is that Jung's years of looking outside for knowledge failed to change him and make him happy.

Now to return to Jung's model. Although Jung suggested that a person was either Introverted or Extroverted, essentially Jung's model of personality is based on a person making decisions by either being a Thinking or a Feeling type and also gathering information by either being a Sensation type or an Intuition type. Jung suggested that each person has one of each pair of these qualities dominant in their personality.

The reason for mentioning all of this is that Jung shows us what we have known for thousands of years, which is that a large proportion of people are like the element of air and are probably thinking types, whereas others are the opposite, water or feeling types. This can partly explain why so many people who are the more 'thinking types' seem to get blocked in trying to follow the path of getting in touch with the atman 'the Self,' as described by Sri Ramana. This is so because in uncovering the atman 'the Self,' the mind has to be completely relegated. This is more difficult for the 'thinking types' because their minds are so used to being the most important functioning aspect.

Returning to the Freeman interview. Freeman asks Jung a direct question which yet again reveals the extent of Jung's over-thinking and that he was characterised by being obsessed with thinking rather than with any of the other ways of seeing things.

'Do you believe in God?'

'Now? Difficult to answer. I know. I don't need to believe. I know.'

This was a very unusual thing to say which drew some interest from the public. Although Jung spent most of his life trying to create a substitute for religion from his vast textbook knowledge about religion, most practicing monks would almost certainly say that it is extremely unlikely that facts from books would enable anyone to say in relation to God that I know. When Jung said he didn't need to believe, this was not correct because he spent most of his life searching for knowledge to create a system of thought that he and others could believe in. Perhaps he was simply using thinking and knowing to avoid what he terms 'the unconscious,' which for him was a terrifying part of him just beneath the surface. But for others whose thinking is not such a potential area of loss of control, there is the potential for 'just being' the atman 'the Self.'

\* \* \*

When Freeman asked Jung about himself, Jung confirms exactly what sort of person he was.

‘Have you concluded what psychological type you are yourself?’

‘Naturally I have devoted a great deal of attention to that painful question, you know.’

‘And reached a conclusion?’

‘Well you see the type is nothing static. It changes in the course of life but I was most certainly characterised by thinking. I always thought from early childhood on. And I had a great deal of intuition too, and I had a definite difficulty with feeling and my relation to reality was not particularly brilliant. I was often at variance with the reality of things. Now that gives you all the necessary data.’

But what of the damaged? First of all let’s simply accept that we are all damaged, and anyone who sees themselves as not damaged, but as ‘holier than thou’ should reflect on ‘Let he who is without sin throw the first stone.’ Being damaged is being human. But there is damage which we can cope with and there is severe damage which can threaten us so much it makes us very scared. Severe damage can make us so scared that it can actually direct our whole lives. We can live in fear of a repeat of more damage taking place...a recurrence of the pain of the past which some know only too well.

In Jung’s case he retreated into the intellect and used this haven to create a whole new more acceptable world for himself. He also used this world of encyclopaedic knowledge to defend himself from further episodes of psychotic illness. Late in his life he admitted that looking at the Eastern way of seeing the atman ‘the Self’ was a treat to him while experiencing a further breakdown. This is worth looking at because I don’t think he is alone in avoiding practically finding and experiencing the atman ‘the Self.’

What if Jung had met Sri Ramana? Perhaps as he thought, he may have had another psychotic breakdown. We can only speculate. What if he recovered from this whilst staying at Sriramanasramam? Would he have found himself and finally called off the search and spent the last quarter of his life immersed in the atman ‘the Self.’ This would have been very unlikely, for in India Jung would not have had the safety net of intense support from his family and friends which he had in Europe, after he and Freud parted company.



Either way Jung should be respected as the best judge of himself in not exploring the atman ‘the Self,’ because he probably would have had another severe illness on top of all of the other illnesses which he had survived. He may have known it was not worth the heavy price he might have had to pay again but he may have also been aware that it could have destroyed him.

One danger is that if you have an unstable, unpredictable thought system, for example being prone to psychotic thoughts, shutting down the mind could damage the fragile systems which support and preserve insight and consciousness and there might be a catastrophic breakdown. Knowing that Jung’s relation to reality was not ‘particularly brilliant’ and it was his own personal reason for not delving into Eastern spiritual disciplines, perhaps reveals and emphasises his reason for warning western man from dabbling with Eastern things which he describes as yoga.<sup>12</sup>

I would not advise anyone to touch yoga without careful analysis of his unconscious reaction. What is the use of imitating yoga if your dark side remains as good a medieval Christian as ever? If you can afford to seat yourself on a gazelle skin under a Bo-tree or in the cell of a gompa for the rest of your life without being troubled by politics or the collapse of your securities, I will look favourably upon your case. But yoga in Mayfair or Fifth Avenue, or in any other place which is on the telephone, is a spiritual fake.

Jung’s understanding and advice about trying to find the atman ‘the Self’ seems to be driven almost entirely by his own fear of being overwhelmed by the unconscious by delving into the East.

Surprisingly after his evaluation, he generalises in applying this to all westerners. He does seem to have exaggerated this much more than is now known but it is easy to understand why he did so. His warning comes from years of personal experience of being terrified of having a repeat of his five year long severe psychotic illness. The warning absolutely applies to vulnerable people like himself who have had severe psychotic illnesses, but vast numbers of healthy people have delved into the Eastern spiritual disciplines before and since Jung. Western and Eastern monks have for thousands of years arrived at

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<sup>12</sup> *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol 11 (Princeton: 1969), p. 500, Para. 802.

similar but not so direct a path as Sri Ramana and have experienced shutting down thoughts and tuning into the atman ‘the Self. This is basically best seen as shutting down the mind and displacing the ego to reveal ‘the Self.’<sup>13</sup>

However, Jung is absurdly wrong in his perception that the more technology man has the less he is in touch with his spiritual side. Jung’s attitude here is not only surprisingly pompous and dogmatic but also authoritarian instead of enquiring. His conclusion would be amusing if it wasn’t so embarrassing. Today Jung would have to conclude that the Dalai Lama and the pope are spiritual fakes because they carry mobile phones. So where does this come from in the previously impoverished ‘Jung’ John Freeman noticed leading a lavish lifestyle as a famous psychiatrist?

Jung was brought up in a household, whereas when he was a poor medical student he suddenly became the sole breadwinner supporting his sick mother and sister after his father died. As a result of extra money he earned as a student, as a junior assistant in a medical laboratory and as a locum doctor, Jung installed a telephone in his mother’s house in the late 19th century.

Jung was only able to retire very early from full time work as a doctor seeing psychiatric patients because he had married extremely well into a fabulously wealthy industrialist family. Again, going back to the John Freeman BBC interview of 1959, Freeman’s first question is particularly poignant because he seemed to notice the importance of Jung’s lavish surroundings.

‘Professor Jung, How long have you lived in this lovely house by the lake at Zurich?’

‘About fifty years.’

Jung had the luxury of being able to sit in his study for fifty years without being troubled by work, politics or the collapse of his securities. Jung probably spent years thinking and writing in ‘his study’ about what he could not actually be, not simply because he was able to but because he had so much to lose if he was otherwise.

Jung’s idea about the atman ‘the Self’ soul or what he actually terms ‘the unconscious’ is at variance with what most people would conclude, except perhaps if they had been severely ill like he had been.

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<sup>13</sup>*The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol 11 (Princeton: 1969), p.581, Para. 958.

Jung speaks from the extreme view of immersion in the atman ‘the Self,’ and says that anything else is actually fake. Surprisingly, Jung doesn’t seem to have much grasp of the East at all and particularly the middle way of Buddhism. When asked by an elderly gentleman about the role of the householder, Sri Ramana was much quite specific about not giving up an ordinary day to day lifestyle.<sup>14</sup>

D. : How Does a *grihasta* (householder) fare in the scheme of moksha (liberation)?

M. : Why do you think you are a *grihasta*? If you go out as a sannyasi, a similar thought (that you are a *sannyasi*) will haunt you. Whether you continue in the household, or renounce it and go to the forest, your mind haunts you. The ego is the source of thoughts. It creates the body and the world and makes you think you are a *grihasta*. If you renounce the world, it will only substitute the thought sannyasi for *grihasta* and the environments of the forest for those of the household. But the mental obstacles are always there. They even increase in new surroundings. There is no help in the change of environment. The obstacle is the mind. It must be got over whether at home or in the forest. If you can do it in the forest, why not in the home? Therefore why change the environment? Your efforts can be made even now – whatever environment you may be.

The path described is simple and most individuals understand it and can follow it, turning more inwards. However, I would not advocate this path to everyone for the same reason Jung tried to describe. Vivid descriptions of Jung being overwhelmed by his unconscious appear throughout his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. He was constantly trying to escape this by searching, right up until his last few days<sup>15</sup> but even then he was still having visions.<sup>16</sup> This is tragically described in the beautiful book: *Carl Jung: Wounded Healer of the Soul*.

Sri Ramana’s further advice on not being extreme and renouncing being a householder or discharging one’s duties was asked and was recorded by a man I knew in Tiruvannamalai; Annamalai Swami.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§54.

<sup>15</sup> *Jung and Hermann Hesse: A record of two friendships* by Miguel Serrano (Taylor Francis Books Limited), p.112.

<sup>16</sup> *Carl Jung: Wounded Healer of the Soul*. An Illustrated Biography by Claire Dunne (Continuum, 2000), p.203.

<sup>17</sup> *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk§530.

The following is taken from the diary of Annamalai Swami, a good devotee of Sri Bhagavan and resident of Sri Ramanasramam:

### **The Teaching of Sri Ramana Maharshi**

(1) That man who is active in the world and yet remains desireless, without losing sight of his own essential nature, is alone a true man.

This was in answer to the Swami who wanted to retire into a cave for practising meditation.

(2) He asked about sannyas. Should not a man renounce everything in order that he might get liberation?

M.: Even better than the man who thinks “I have renounced everything” is the one who does his duty but does not think “I do this” or “I am the doer” Even a sannyasi who thinks “I am a sannyasi” cannot be a true sannyasi, whereas a householder who does not think “I am a householder” is truly a *sannyasi*.

We can conclude that Sri Ramana was obviously aware that some people may not be healthy enough to follow the inner path when he mentions that someone must be fit.<sup>18</sup>

### **25th November, 1938**

588. To an Andhra seeker, Sri Bhagavan said: *Sannyasa* is mentioned for one who is fit. It consists in renunciation not of material objects but of attachment to them. Sannyasa can be practised by any one even at home. Only one must be fit for it.

Perhaps when Sri Ramana mentioned ‘being fit’ he was referring to not identifying with the ego. He is not talking about physical fitness but about being in good mental health. Even though he talks about being mentally well positively, it is still a warning that it is only for the mentally fit, which Jung wasn’t able to point out in a positive encouraging way.

Living in a supportive environment such as an Indian temple can be just as healing as standard psychiatric treatment for many psychiatric illnesses.<sup>19</sup> However this is entirely different from taking the direct path of looking inwards for the atman ‘the Self.’ Looking at the atman

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Talk§588.

<sup>19</sup> Traditional community resources for mental health: a report of temple healing from India by R Raguram, A Venkateswaran, Jayashree Ramakrishna and Mitchell G Weiss, BMJ 2002;325:38-40 (6 July).

‘the Self’ involves relegating the mind, the ego, so that it becomes virtually non-existent. If a person has traumatic psychological problems from the past which are unprocessed, their only coping mechanism may be to rely solely on a damaged and very fragile ego.

Because we still have so little understanding of what causes and cures severe mental instabilities such as psychosis, where there seem to be obvious mental problems, it would seem unwise to attempt the direct path to the atman ‘the Self.’ Of course the atman ‘the Self’ can be explored whilst trying to work through one’s conditioning and mental difficulties but it is very important not to delve into Eastern spiritual disciplines simply to avoid working through mental difficulties, because catastrophe can result as... ‘What is not resolved will be repeated.’ ▲

## Ashram Dawn

Upahar

Sandals and dreams left at the gate;  
 a nearness, familiar, sublime.  
 The silence is wearing a garland of songs.

A deep, invisible welcome;  
 who now is host, or guest?  
 To whom does this breath belong?

Before anyone enters the Hall,  
 after everyone has left;  
 still, always, This.

How could a Love so fathomless  
 have made this foolish heart  
 its natural residence?

Revealed in gathering light,  
 transcending all expression ,  
 earth mounts quietly to heaven.



# Shri Atmananda (Krishna Menon)

## An Notable Teacher of Advaita Vedanta in the 20th Century

PHILIP RENARD

It is a pity that until this day the great Advaita teacher Shri Atmananda (Shri Krishna Menon, called *Gurunathan* by his disciples) remains a rather unknown figure to many people. With this article I hope to contribute to the recognition of the importance of him as a Source for direct understanding of ultimate Truth.

Two small books written by him, *Atma-Darshan* and *Atma-Nirvriti*, form together in fact a modern Upanishad. Upanishads are classical texts that have been added to the Vedas as concluding parts since about the eighth century BC. The term *Vedānta* (*Veda-anta*) indicates this; it means ‘the end (*anta*) of the Vedas’, and is a reference to the Upanishads.<sup>1</sup> A modern Upanishad is a collection of statements so definite that the Vedanta tradition begins again, as it were. Not a commentary on something existing, but a text that has emerged from current, ‘ever fresh’ Consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Vedas are religious hymns from India, created between 1500-500 BC. They form the basis of many of the Indian religions and philosophies. Veda also means ‘knowledge’ or ‘knowing’; then Vedanta is ‘the end of knowledge.’ Advaita Vedanta, the non-dual way of Shri Atmananda, is the way of immediate seeing, or recognising — ‘the direct way.’ *Advaita* means ‘non-duality’. The term Upanishad means ‘to sit at the feet of a teacher and listen to his words.’

Shri Atmananda was born P. Krishna Menon on December 8, 1883, in Peringara, near Tiruvalla, in Travancore (in the present-day Indian state of Kerala). He passed away on May 14, 1959 in Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala. In the course of his life he has been a true Teacher (a so-called *Karana Guru*) for many people, including a number of westerners. It is true that some western intellectuals who approached him were critical of his teachings, but a number of western seekers have come to the end of their quest at his feet. For example, the Englishman John Levy wrote:

“I sought the truth and found my Lord and he showed me my self. Seeing his form, hearing his words and feeling his touch, I found my self. (...) Not by wisdom alone was I shown the truth but by endless love, for such is my Teacher, Shri Atmananda.”<sup>2</sup>

This text shows the completeness that Atmananda passed on. To express this completeness he often used the well-known expression *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, often translated by him as Existence, Knowledge and Peace – in other words, living, thinking and feeling in their essential nature, as the aspects that make up the complete Reality.

“I am not one who exists, but Existence itself (*Sat*).  
I am not one who knows, but Knowledge itself (*Chit*).  
I am not in peace but Peace itself (*Ananda*).”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John Levy, *Immediate Knowledge and Happiness*; 1st ed. p. 41, 42; 2nd ed. p. 69, 70. Levy’s second book, *The Nature of Man According to the Vedanta*, has contributed to the fact that the approach of Atmananda has become known in the West.

<sup>3</sup> *Notes on Spiritual Discourses of Sree Atmananda* [hereafter mentioned as: *Discourses*] no. 1083 (p. 349); the order of the three terms in the text has been changed here to arrive at the usual order. Dutch teacher Wolter Keers writes in a note about *Sat-Chit-Ananda* somewhere: “These three words essentially mean exactly the same thing: the deepest and uninterrupted I-experience (not to be confused with the personality, ego or I-sense), denoted in terms which respectively indicate the background of living, thinking and feeling. It is like the description of one room by three people, looking in through different windows.” *Ananda* is usually translated Bliss or Happiness; Atmananda often translated it Peace. On the difference between the two terms, he said: “Happiness uninterrupted is Peace. Happiness is the first ebullition or sensation of Peace” (*Discourses* no. 654, p. 232). In other words, he regarded peace as the most essential designation of the



Everyone is used to dealing with objects. ‘Object’ is a term for anything that presents itself to the senses; but thoughts and emotions are objects as well. We have been brought up being habituated with objects; this is so self-evident that hardly anyone wonders whether something is being skipped. We constantly are fascinated by a certain story, a shape, a subject, a memory, an idea, and so on. Those are all objects. Objects of something that itself is not an object at all. This ‘something’ is not a something, but to indicate it you must of course try to find a word for it, hence ‘something’ in quotation marks. All things that we experience or know, to which we give our attention, are the object of Knowing, or Consciousness.

Atmananda in his teachings constantly pointed out the relationship between ourselves and the objects, that is, between the Knowing and the objects of Knowing. For example, he once answered the question ‘What actually happens when you see a thing?’ as follows:

“When you say you see an object, you see only the dead part of the object. The Consciousness part, which alone is live, can never be seen.”<sup>4</sup>

The Consciousness part is that which *bestows reality* to an object – hence it can be called alive. An object is only given reality and life when experiencing or knowing it.

“Therefore, the real ‘I’-Principle alone lives. The ignorant man believes that either the body or the mind lives, while in fact each of them dies at the end of every perception or thought. But the ‘I’-Principle continues unchanged through all thoughts and perceptions, lighting them up as well.”<sup>5</sup>

The living is *you*. It is profound how Atmananda links your presence in the world with ‘bestowing life’, namely bestowing life and reality

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(Cont. from p.100) feeling aspect (in *Discourses* no. 1335, p. 446: “Something called ‘Peace’, which is the source of all happiness”). In no. 740 (p. 258) Atmananda even introduces an improved version of the ancient expression, namely *Sat-Chit-Shanta* (*shanti* means peace; and *shanta* something like ‘come at peace; still’).

<sup>4</sup> *Discourses* no. 483 (p. 181).

<sup>5</sup> *Discourses* no. 43 (p. 19). The term ‘I’-Principle was Atmananda’s way of denoting the essential nature of ‘I’ — synonymous to him with the well-known term *Atma*, the ‘Self.’ In chapter 2 of *I is a Door*, I pay specific attention to Atmananda’s use of the term ‘I’-Principle.

to the objects you are experiencing *right now*. He does not bow to the generally held habit of making the objective the most impressive, the grandest of what is called ‘creation.’ No, he praises the fact that *you* are now experiencing this creation, and you yourself are bringing it to life. If you did not experience this creation now, the whole ‘creation’ would remain an abstraction. Now you are experiencing objects, for example this article, the meaning of the previous sentence, the ‘I’ as a person who briefly appears as an apparent ‘subject’, the shape of these letters, this paper or computer screen, possibly the hand holding this paper, and so on – all objects.

But actually what is an object? Atmananda says:

“An object is there always pointing to the Consciousness (of the perceiver) as ‘You! You! You!’ – meaning thereby ‘I am here merely on account of you.’ But the moment you stand as Consciousness and turn back to the object, the object vanishes – in other words the object commits suicide.”<sup>6</sup>

True life remains, which means Consciousness manifesting itself. Forms continue to emerge in this, but no longer as separate, self-contained realities, which could exist without Consciousness.

Everything in Atmananda’s teaching may come down to the fact that the forms that present themselves to us are a praise to the actual Experiencing of them. All those forms derive their existence from Experiencing. Form-in-itself does not actually exist. Form has a temporary existence or ‘life’ that lasts as long as form is known. The Experiencing or Knowing is never absent, and is therefore that which temporarily ‘gives life’ to the present object.

Objects are not an obstacle at all, Atmananda always emphasises. They seem to distract us, but they only exist *because of* Consciousness, because of Knowing. Without being known they would not exist. Attempting to devote himself entirely to abiding in Pure Consciousness, Atmananda was once, in his years of training, distracted by the sound of a horse-and-carriage. He found it disturbing, and decided to sit somewhere else in order to devote himself more fully to recognising Consciousness. But suddenly the thought occurred to him:

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<sup>6</sup> *Discourses* no. 1402 (p. 476). The ‘committing suicide’ of the object refers to dissolving into Consciousness itself, or giving way to an entirely new object. Objects are not connected to each other.

“Well, what nonsense! Is it not a means? What am I meditating upon, what am I contemplating? ‘I am pure Consciousness!’ Is it not so? And when that is so, even the noise that is heard there, does it not point to Me? (...) The noise that emanates from the horse-and-carriage helps me, points to Consciousness. (...) So then: ‘Come in, come in, come in! All disturbances: come in, come in! Quite all right! Help me, help me!’ So you see, nothing was a disturbance after that.”<sup>7</sup>

However, Atmananda in his teaching and writing does not only use the phrasing just described, wherein the objects, thoughts, sense perceptions, etcetera are seen as pointing to Consciousness, or even ‘nothing other than Consciousness’, he often says that objects are completely *different* from Consciousness. This might be confusing to a reader. If you for instance read the chapters of his book *Atma-Darshan* one after the other, you can see that Atmananda seems in a way to dance between the two approaches, between differentiating and *looking through* the apparent difference. Sometimes even in the same chapter he dances to the other approach, with a logic that sometimes resembles a witticism. See, for example, how in *Atma-Darshan*, after emphasising the distinction in chapters 3, 6 and 7 and the oneness in 1, 4, 5, 8 and 9, he says in verse 10 of chapter 10:

“It must be clearly understood that Consciousness is different from its object and that, while objects vary, Consciousness remains constant”; after which he declares in verse 26 of the same chapter:

“Objects of Consciousness can never be separated from Consciousness itself. They have no independent existence. They are therefore nothing other than Consciousness.”

And so it goes on, in a sense, throughout the book. Is this confusing? At first it may seem so, but by really reading what the teacher says, really understanding what the meaning of the distinction is, and what is true in the *ultimate* sense (which means not being able to separate anymore because the ‘substance’ that makes up the objects being noticed *as such*), you will be able to see the value of this dance. If you never have noticed consciousness itself (often rightly capitalised as ‘Consciousness’) because it is never an object, it is very useful that you are being pointed out that consciousness itself

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<sup>7</sup> *Atmananda Tattwa Samhita*, p. 186.

can indeed be recognised and realised. Without being pointed out, it is possible that you keep *looking over* consciousness itself because of your habituation to objects. Atmananda himself says the following about the apparent two approaches:

“During the period of preliminary investigations in the study of Vedanta, you are asked to try to *separate* body and mind from the ‘I’-Principle. It is only to make you understand the relative values of the terms. Such a separation is not really possible; because, separated from the ‘I’-Principle, the other two do not exist at all. Therefore they are really nothing but the ‘I’-Principle. Vedanta asks you only to recognise this Truth.

From the position of Consciousness one can say that everything else is not. But from no position can you say that Consciousness is not. Because one has to be conscious of the Truth of that very statement before making it. Therefore Consciousness stands as the background of even that statement.

Hence even the statement that ‘Consciousness is not’ only proves that Consciousness IS. Therefore Consciousness is self-luminous and permanent.<sup>8</sup>

Training discernment is what this is all about. “While objects vary, Consciousness remains constant,” was just said in *Atma-Darshan*. That, in a way, is the first lesson in this enquiry: the discrimination between the changing and the unchanging. Recognise that all objects to which your attention is drawn, no matter how subtle they may be, always give way to the next object. They ‘change’ – you also can say that they dissolve to make room for the next object. You yourself make no room for anything else. You yourself turn out to be left without any change, and you notice that the previous object is no longer in your attention, and possibly that a current object seems to demand attention for a moment. This recognition of difference, this discrimination, is very important. This clearly shows that objects are in fact continuously passing through you, fleeting objects, *and* that something remains that is not an object at all, that is not fleeting. This simply remains the case regardless of the *content* of thoughts and feelings. It is not

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<sup>8</sup> *Discourses* no. 390 (p. 147).

affected or weakened by that content; it just keeps on ‘illuminating it’ or ‘giving it light’. This is constant Knowing.

The fleeting as it is here called, is that which is described as ‘not real’ from Atmananda’s point of view. No matter how serious an object is to us, no matter how sensitive it is, from this point of view it is called unreal. Reality is something else.

“The test of the Reality is whether it disappears or not. According to this test, the only thing that never disappears is the ‘I’-Principle or ‘Consciousness’.”<sup>9</sup>

So only the immutable is real. Everything else, anything that can be destroyed, is considered non-existent by Atmananda. Statements such as “*Atma* is the only Reality. Body is quite unreal” (*Atma-Darshan* chapter 10, verse 13) and “Therefore the world is not, has never been and is never going to be” (chapter 14, verse 4) could have an effect as if everything that the reader considers real and valuable is in one fell swoop wiped out as being ‘non-existent’.

In this respect Atmananda was more radical than most teachers from the Advaita Vedanta tradition, at least from the ‘scholastic’ tradition (the non-scholastic tradition, with texts such as *Yoga Vasishtha* and *Ashtavakra Gita*, shows a radicality comparable to that of Atmananda<sup>10</sup>). Shankara, the eighth-century founder of the Advaita, was much more moderate in this respect, despite the fact that for many people he has become something of a symbol of the concept of *maya* – ‘illusion’. In fact, for Shankara and most of the later teachers, *maya* was a term for something inexplicable; it means, according to them, ‘neither being nor non-being’.

Atmananda considered this *maya* view to be only for people who have not yet seen the real ‘I’, the real Subject. People who are established in the real ‘I’ have a ‘subjective standpoint’, by which he meant that the world is viewed exclusively from the changeless Consciousness, and that the world is recognised *as* Consciousness. For example, he said:

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<sup>9</sup> *Discourses* no. 48 (p. 22); see also no. 1055 (p. 339).

<sup>10</sup> Atmananda quoted repeatedly from both texts. One of the few texts of the scholastic tradition from which he frequently quoted is the *Pañchadashi*, of the fourteenth-century by Bharati Tirtha-Vidyaranya.

“But when one comes a step down from the subjective standpoint, some sort of an explanation may be needed for the world that appears there. It is in this way that the *Maya* theory has come in.”<sup>11</sup>

People who have difficulty with the *Maya* view of ‘neither being nor non-being’, and especially with the view that the world ‘does not exist at all’, would do well to realise that we can never, in fact, escape Consciousness. No matter how you look at it, Consciousness is the condition for every aspect of our existence. It is therefore understandable that Atmananda’s enquiry does not go further into the question of what the material world actually is. His enquiry is only concerned with the question of what *Reality* is – and liberation from the idea of ‘unreality’. With his direct approach, he helps you to see the main point about liberation, which is the fact that Consciousness is always already free – and liberation in a deeper sense does not even exist because freedom is always already the case. This directness saves you all kinds of detours, all kinds of search movements. See, for example, how right away in the first chapter of *Atma-Darshan* Atmananda points to the ever-present, in the form of ‘water’, to show the immediacy of liberation. In that equation he says: “Waves are nothing but water. So is the sea” and “When water is realised, wave and sea vanish. What appeared as two is thus realised as one.” So one can see clearly that every method whereby a limited ‘I’ is seeking peace (like ‘waves seeking peace in the sea’) is completely *indirect*.

“Water can be reached straightway from wave by following the direct path. If the way through sea is taken, much more time is needed.”<sup>12</sup>

Despite his radical stance in which ‘the world is non-existent’, Atmananda for many years simply fulfilled a function in the world of law enforcement. One should therefore not consider Atmananda’s standpoint as an attempt to deny or explain away something difficult. Dealing with the world and its objects was a very natural and justified matter for him.

“The Truth about this world is that the Reality, which is imperceptible to the senses, appears *as* this world when looked at

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<sup>11</sup> *Discourses* no. 129 (p. 59); see also no. 1392 (p. 472).

<sup>12</sup> *Atma-Darshan*, chapter 1, verse 8 (and verses 4 and 7).

through the senses. (...) The object of Vedanta is not to help you not to perceive the appearance, but to help you to see the essence even when perceiving the appearance through the senses.”<sup>13</sup>

How can the seeing of this essence remain? Is it a matter of once seen, always seen, or is something like a so-called *sadhana* still needed? In general, Atmananda emphasised that a traditional *sadhana*, a preparation through all kinds of abstinence and so on, is not necessary. He himself had undergone such training, in the form of *bhakti* and *raja yoga*, but he often said that this is not really useful. The only advice that does contain a valid way of training is the direction he gives to repeatedly let the Truth sink in over and over again, to make direct understanding happen again and again. In other words, even if you have once really realised that Consciousness is constantly the case and that you yourself are nothing but That, in most cases there is still a need for a gradual infusion by this immediate understanding, just until it is irrefutable.<sup>14</sup>

It feels appropriate to give a personal testimony at the end of this article. As is well known, books can in most cases only provide a stepping stone to the realisation of Reality. However, the repeated reading of *Atma-Darshan* and *Atma-Nirvriti* at a certain moment at the end of 1987, helped me to such an extent that from that moment on my life took on a different centre of gravity. At that moment I got to know *doubtlessness*. While reading a specific chapter of *Atma-Nirvriti*, containing the sentences “I am pure happiness. All the activities of the sense-organs and the mind aim at happiness. So all these activities are a tribute (*puja*) to Me”,<sup>15</sup> the bottom fell out of my belief in being a person, out of the belief that there is *someone* who could be set free. I have experienced that a text can have such an effect that after

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<sup>13</sup> *Discourses* no. 1114 (pp. 365, 366). Italics mine, PhR.

<sup>14</sup> I consider the distinction between these two forms of training important. What I call here ‘traditional *sadhana*’ is a preparation for something in the future, and thus it acts as a condition. However, truth is without conditions and without time. Truth is instantly noticeable, always available. It is nevertheless necessary to ‘establish’ yourself in this again and again, because most people’s inclinations are filled with fascination and imagination, which obscure the Truth. “You have only to sense the Absolute through that eye of knowledge as often as possible, until you are securely established in the Ultimate” (*Discourses* no. 1065, p. 341).

<sup>15</sup> *Atma-Nirvriti*, chapter 19, verse 1.

reading it you are never the same as before. Real clarity was bestowed to me, irreversibly. The living instructions of my teacher Alexander Smit (who had been a pupil of Atmananda-disciple Wolter Keers) had nourished me for a year and a half, especially with regard to the approach to Atmananda. And now I experienced Reality showing itself, without any reservations. Living itself remained, as Myself, and proved to be constant, even though the objects later sometimes took the form of doubt and fear again. The tilt of the centre of gravity is not a tilt in person, form or manifestation. There is no one who has Understanding. The gratitude is what remains – eternally beginner, because nothing has ever been acquired, and nothing can ever be acquired. Thank you Gurunathan! ▲

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# Tamil Siddhas

## Part Ten

### Idaikkadar: A Scientist to the Core

P. RAJA

The siddhas were positive thinkers. Their primary aim was to make the people shed all their sufferings and ailments, so that peace and harmony would pervade their lives. They believed that the human body was a blessing for the soul and if the body was not properly cared for and allowed to wither, then the poor soul could not find shelter.

A body without a soul is inert or a soul without a body cannot function in this world. A soulless body becomes a corpse. A bodyless soul becomes an unseeability. Hence, a body is necessary for the invincible and invisible soul. The siddhas probed into the mystery of the body. Their quest was not personal. Yet they did it for the welfare of the public. They wanted to find out the biology behind the growth of the body. They wanted also to find out what sustains the body. They also wanted to know how the once-strong muscles in the body weaken. What makes the nerves tire? What makes us look old? What turns our pitch-dark hair into silvery grey? Why do we develop wrinkles all over the body when we grow old? Why this 'sans eyes, sans teeth, sans everything'!

The siddhas volunteered to find out the various reasons for these posers and finally succeeded in conquering three things in life – Disease, Ageing and Death. It must be said in passing that every siddha aspired to find out the remedy for the three things in his own way, but divulged the secret in enigmatic terms to the public.

They discovered the herbs, minerals, salts, and all the poisonous stuff. They identified their ingredients to put them to proper use

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and thereby safeguard the body. Having mastered the eight yoga siddhis and having made their body very strong with the help of their discoveries, they were able to attain godhood.

Siddhas were, in fact, human beings who through their austerities raised themselves to godhood. Several such siddhas crossed the borders of human territory only to make their abode in space and become invisible to human eyes.

Only the Divine knows how many such siddhas are in the heavens, but nine of them were known by a common name – navanadha siddhas. These nine<sup>1</sup>, it is said, are equal to nine crore siddhas. Moreover, when they travel in the sky, some people who have already risen to certain levels of siddhahood feel the vibrations in their body. These nine siddhas together have taken up the mission of helping men who aspire for siddhahood.

One of the navanadha siddhas, while travelling in the sky was taken aback at what he saw down below. He stopped, very much wanting to come down to earth. The next moment he was in his desired place. “Oh, Siddha”, he called someone standing on his feet, supported by a stick and looking at the void.

Siddha Idaikkadar turned back to know who distracted his attention. In front of him stood a god-realised soul. “I am Gorakkanadhar. People know me by the name Gorakkar. I was travelling in the sky. Your posture pulled me down. Tell me what are you looking at? With whom are you conversing? What is your relationship with that invisible object?”

Idaikkadar moved eagerly towards the celestial visitor and welcomed him with wide-stretched arms. He offered him goat milk. Immensely pleased with Idaikkadar’s hospitality Gorakkar thought that his host deserved his advice to reach his goal. The unlettered goatherd for the first time realised that his skull was full with wisdom.

Having imparted the knowledge and the accumulated experience of generations, the aerial siddha flew back home, leaving Idaikkadar to the great unknown. “Make use of the knowledge you have gained for the welfare of the public”. Those were his last words and that inspired Siddha Idaikkadar to sing:

All the Heavenly circles, one thousand and eight,  
Have I seen only to realise that I stand in one.

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<sup>1</sup> These nine are known by the name: 1. Satyanathar, 2. Sadhoganathar, 3. Aadhinathar, 4. Anadhinathar, 5. Vagulinathar, 6. Madhanganathar, 7. Matchendiranathar, 8. Gajendranathar, and 9. Gorakkanathar



All the Earthly circles, one hundred and eight,  
Have I seen and got cleared of all my doubts  
That sprang forth from my mind sluggish.<sup>2</sup>

That was the result of having a conversation with a realised soul. Tamil literary historians invariably write that Idaikkadar sang innumerable songs of wisdom and even a computer would lose track of his works. His knowledge of astrology was astounding. He became well-versed in herbal medicine, alchemy, yoga, bhoga and gnana. Astronomy was his forte. His songs of prediction couched generally in obscure and enigmatic terms, brought the author a great reputation. The fact that a prophetic song of his finds a predominant place in almost all the Tamil almanacs even today only shows how reliable his words are even after so many centuries. The song that every almanac feels proud to carry in its pages is about the ‘vegudhanya’<sup>3</sup> year:

The all-life giving rain is not bound to come down in time in the vegudhanya year. The floating clouds, tired and exhausted, may shed a few negligible drops only to make reeds and bamboo sprout; famine will flourish. Cotton and salt will be scarce.<sup>4</sup>

How true his words are even in today’s economy! One cannot but appreciate his prophetic words.

Idaikkadar with his knowledge of astrology and astronomy found out that a famine was on its way. He wanted to save his goats and himself from death for he knew full well that to survive a famine would be next to impossibility. He began to feed his goats with erukkam<sup>5</sup> leaves, the shrub of which grows without rain or shine. To feed himself he opted for kuruvaragu.<sup>6</sup> He mixed the millets with mud and built the four walls that supported a thatch of his house. He lived in that hut which he called his palace and, of course, with his goats.

The goats that fed on erukkam leaves experienced an unpleasant feeling on their skin. They began to scratch their backs against the mud walls and the millet began to spill from the walls. Idaikkadar made use of them in preparing kuruvaragu porridge whenever he felt hungry. He thereby was ready to face the famine. He alerted the

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<sup>2</sup> *Idaikkadar paadalgal*: verse 25

<sup>3</sup> The twelfth year of the Hindu cycle.

<sup>4</sup> S.P.Ramachandran, *Siddhargal Varalaru*, Thamarai Noolagam, Chennai, 2002, p.111.

<sup>5</sup> A coarse milky shrub, the charcoal of which is used in making gunpowder. ‘calotropis gigantea’ is its botanical name.

<sup>6</sup> A kind of millet, known by its botanical name—*paspalum frumentaceum*.

public but like the poor Noah of the ark fame in the Bible was jeered and booed at. He had no way but to leave them to their fate.

As predicted by Idaikkadar, the gruesome famine came. People lived as long as their store of food lasted but after that, there was disaster and death. While the entire village turned into a wasteland, Idaikkadar and his goats survived the famine.

Unable to believe that Idaikkadar was a titanic force in the history of famine survival, the navagraha<sup>7</sup> (the nine planets) joined hands to meet the siddha and probe into the matter. The very presence of the navagraha in his hut made Idaikkadar jump for joy. He gave them goat milk and roasted kuruvaragu bread to appease their hunger. The food was so tasty that they ate a lot and fell asleep. Idaikkadar made use of the opportunity to set the navagraha deities in their proper position to bring down rain.

The expected rain came. The village, so far a desert, covered itself with greenery now. The navagraha deities opened their eyes only to see what had happened both inside and outside the hut. They quickly realised the greatness of Idaikkadar, blessed him and bestowed several boons upon him. Siddha Idaikkadar put them to proper use, for the good of all humanity.

Siddha Idaikkadar became so famous that people from many quarters thronged to meet him and get their doubts cleared. Once, according to a legend, the devotees of Lord Vishnu approached him and asked, “Vishnu is known for his ten avatars. Which one of these ten has to be given importance while praying to the Lord?” Idaikkadar said enigmatically, “The poor, the cowherd, and the wide-mouthed,” before he moved away. It took a very long time for the people to decipher the words of the siddha. They understood that the siddha referred to Rama avatar as the poor, for Rama though born in a royal family led the life of a poor man in a forest. The cowherd referred to Krishna avatar and the wide-mouthed to Narasimha avatar. The common people were all praise for the mystic knowledge of the siddha.

Siddha Idaikkadar, some say, belonged to Idaikkadu, a place east of Madurai. Some believe that he belonged to Idaiyanmedu, a little village in Thondai Mandalam. He was a goatherd by profession and so found enough time to meditate upon the divine. His works are popularly

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<sup>7</sup> According to Hindu astrology, the nine heavenly bodies, and deities that influence human life on Earth are Sun (Suriya), Moon (Chandra), Mars (Mangala), Mercury (Budha), Jupiter (Brihaspati), Venus (Shukra), Saturn (Shani), Ragu and Ketu (North and South nodes of the moon respectively).

known as the ‘Upanishad of Idaikkadar’. His ‘Gnana Soothiram 70’ pays tributes to Gorakkar, Kamala Muni and Bogar as his gurus. His songs are replete with cows, goats, and flutes. They deserve to be sung to the accompaniment of music. He was the one who knew the nook and cranny of Tiruvannamalai, both the mountain and the forest. He divulged the great secret of the mountain to the common folk. His masterpiece is a long song of 130 *kannis*.<sup>8</sup> It is a spiritual treatise wherein two divine characters, Thandavakone (Lord Siva) and Narayanakone (Lord Vishnu) involve themselves in a conversation.

Thandavakone expresses the idea:

All worlds, all lives, all matter can be caused  
By the word of Lord Siva, the all-powerful one.<sup>9</sup>

Narayanakone replies by singing the glory of Lord Vishnu and calling for renunciation. Together they extol God-vision. They then go on instructing the people to be aware of their moral duties to give up all the earthly attachments so that they can look up to the amiable and amicable God, as Vishnu and Siva are one. They invariably stress that man himself is God and He need not be sought elsewhere. They conclude:

Even if one says he has everything in life,  
but fails to seek the blessings of the Lord,  
then his ‘everything’ is equal to ‘nothing’.<sup>10</sup>

Siddha Idaikkadar made use of the common man’s language only to produce a very powerful effect on his listeners. Even more striking than Siddha Pambatti’s verses, they are free from egoism. Pitched in a tone of sublimity and realism, the stanzas carry an appeal to all and sundry to have complete control over the senses and meditate upon the divine.

It is difficult to pinpoint the place of his Samadhi. Some say that siddha Idaikkadar has his grave in Tiruvannamalai. Some say that his grave exists in Thiruvilai Marudhur. Yet the readers who sing and dance with him in an exalted mood know pretty well that he exists in their hearts.

(All references to verse numbers are to C.S.Murugesan’s edition of *Periya Gnanakovai* Pub: Sankar Pathipagam, Chennai, 2008. All the translations from the Idaikkadar songs quoted in this essay are free renderings done by the author.) ▲

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<sup>8</sup> A stanza of two lines with the same number of metrical feet, often set to be sung.

<sup>9</sup> *Idaikkadar paadalgal*: Verse 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Idaikkadar paadalgal*: verse 37.

MAHA BHAKTA VIJAYAM

# The Blessed Life of Sant Jayadeva

## Chapter Eight

### Death of Padmavathy

NABAJI SIDDHA

Continuing with the narration, Sant Nabhaji, the great lover of saints said, “O dear friends revelling in the bliss of the Self! The noble Sant Jayadeva reigned supreme in the hearts of the king and the citizens of Krauncha. Now, listen to yet another amazing incident that took place in the life of Padmavathy, the most praiseworthy among all auspicious women!”

The glory of Jayadeva Swami resounded in every part of the city. One day, the queen approached Padmavathy, the noble consort of Jayadeva Swami and prayed, “O mother! I am ignorant. Will you not guide me on to a path that will uplift me and make my life blessed? Please bestow your mercy on me.”

Padmavathy replied, “O fortunate queen! Your life is already sanctified since you are married to the great king of Krauncha. You are a worthy partner to him. I am not enlightened enough to be your guide or direct your life. However, I will share with you whatever little I know of leading a life of Dharma. For a woman, the husband is her supreme Lord, he is the Lord of the universe, he is the Lord

bestowing liberation. He is her Lord and Master. There is no greater worship for a woman than serving her husband and compliance with his wishes is the gateway to mukti. Chastity is her precious ornament. Repeating the name of her husband is her contemplation on the Absolute; giving up her life on the death of her husband is the divine union and her instant death on this occasion is the secret of ultimate liberation.

“Such a woman is the epitome of chastity. A faithful wife is a woman of excellent virtues, undoubtedly eligible for liberation. While such a woman is like the wish-fulfilling cow, a disloyal wife is like an ass; the former is like the goddess Lakshmi, the latter is lower than a prostitute. A faithful wife need not engage in any spiritual practices for her upliftment, whereas even the righteous acts of a disloyal wife are mere Karmas that will inescapably trap her in bondage. The earth is fixed unswervingly in its axis because of the fire of chastity of faithful ones in the world. The Trinity themselves are frightened of the fire of purity of a faithful woman. Stories of the incredible power of unsullied women are galore like Savitri restoring life to her dead husband, Chandramati changing the very nature of fire from heat to coolness, Brinda cursing the Lord himself who came disguised as her husband, Anasuya roasting the grains made of iron like popcorn and transforming the Trinity into babes and Nalayini stopping the sun from rising at dawn for seven days.

O queen! Women who had inadvertently swerved from purity, even if they had higher birth, were subjected to a miserable existence like Ahalya, whereas Arundati, though low-born, was exalted to the status of a star because of her purity and unwavering devotion to her husband. Even great siddhis are easier to master than remaining steadfast in purity in thought, word and deed. Chastity is comparable to the feat of bringing the fickle mind under control by the Brahmajnanis. A woman whose mind is fixed only on her husband needs no other sadhana to be liberated from the cycle of transmigration.”

Listening to the wise counsel of Padmavathy, the queen humbly protested with both palms joined, “O mother! Implicit obedience to one’s husband, serving him wholeheartedly, revering him as the Lord and Guru and protecting one’s purity may be easy for many women to practice in letter and spirit. However, to give up one’s life at the very



instant of the husband's death is not possible. Such a high standard of devotion can exist only in words, not in practice.”

Smiling at these words of the queen, the virtuous woman said, “We have learnt from the scriptures about the highest standard of devotion in women like Sita Devi and Mandodari. At the plea of Sita Devi, didn't earth split open and the Mother Earth receive the Devi on her lap? Even the female birds die grief-stricken on seeing the death of their mates. Are human beings any less? The scriptures say that she who dies instantly on the death of her husband belongs to the superior category, she who joins her husband in the funeral pyre is of the middle category and she who survives after her husband's death is of inferior category. I believe in the truth of the scriptural definition.”

When the queen reached her quarters, she told the maids, “Once we watched a woman weeping miserably upon her husband's death and following the bier to the cremation ground to join him in the pyre. Padmavathy who was also with us exclaimed, ‘What a hard-hearted woman she is to keep her life even after the death of her husband! I can never survive such a fate’.”

The queen added in a derisive tone, “O maids! Padmavathy thinks too high of herself, bragging thus about her devotion to her husband. One may lay out great ideals for others. Can she live up to such standards? She is indeed very pretentious.”

The maids replied in flattering tones, “O queen! In these times, even women who ascend the funeral pyre with their husbands are very rare. It is easy to advise others. When it comes to oneself, one will surely bite the dust.”

Extremely annoyed at Padmavathy for holding out an uncompromising ideal of a faithful woman beyond one's conception, the queen thought of a ruse to test Padmavathy's character. She told the maids to kill a bird and soak a piece of cloth in its blood. And then taking it to Padmavathy, they should inform her that while in the forest, Jayadeva Swami was killed by a tiger and the cloth belonged to him.

The maids hesitated and said fearfully, “Suppose, some mishap takes place. We will be in great trouble.”

“Nothing will happen. Did great women like Kousalya, Sumitra or Kunti die of grief on their husband's death? A woman may love her husband dearly, but she loves her own life more. If Padmavathy is

really earnest, why didn't she die when she saw her husband mutilated? How could she bear such a tragic sight and live through it? Have you ever heard or seen any such case of a woman belonging to the superior category? Even when Sita heard that Rama and Lakshmana were killed in the battlefield and she was taken to see them lying lifeless in the battlefield, she didn't give up her life. Nor did Mandodari die instantly. Scriptures extol Sita for accompanying her husband to the forest, Damayanti for burning the hunter with her look when he approached her with lust, Savitri for restoring life-force to her husband and Chandramati for jumping into the blazing fire which cooled down immediately; but we have not heard of a single account of any woman dying instantly on her husband's demise."

Some of the maids said, "There might have been some women who died instantly but we may not know about them."

The queen said assertively, "Even the above-mentioned women born into the clan of Kshatriyas, who did not fear death, didn't give up their lives. Will this woman who stretches out her hand in front of us for alms to fill her belly resort to such heroic death? I don't think so. Is it a joke to give up one's life? Even if she feels the pangs of separation intensely, she may seek to kill herself with a sword or by consuming poison but not die at the very thought of her husband's death.

"Now, listen to me. When you tell the story of the Sant's accident in the forest, if she hastens to kill herself, you must somehow restrain her. I will follow behind you closely and disclose the truth. I will tell her that it was only to test her that I concocted the story. I will humble her pride. If she remains angry with me, I will pacify her by offering jewellery and silk. Go ahead and carry out my instructions."

The maids demurred and said, "We have heard that she is a sublime person, well established in her dharma of single-pointed devotion to her husband. She remained wearing the same clothes during the whole year of Jayadeva Swami's absence till she rejoined him. The auspicious signs on her person reveal that she is a woman of unsullied glory."

Though the queen was angry at their hesitation and their high praises for Padmavathy, she restrained herself and said, "Don't worry. I will be there with her when you break the news."

Then, hastening to Padmavathy, the queen said in an agitated tone, “O mother! News has come that a ferocious tiger attacked the king and your husband in the forest. I am worried about their fate. I begged them not to go. Jayadeva Swami would have been totally helpless without his limbs and unable to protect himself. I have sent the maids to the messengers who brought the news to us. We will come to know the details in a moment.” Feigning anxiety and grief, she caused apprehension in Padmavathy’s mind.

Believing the queen’s words, Padmavathy started weeping. At that time, the maids entered the chamber with the blood- stained cloth. The maids were frightened to utter the cruel lies before the noble lady who appeared radiant and verily like a divine being. They were worried that their horrid lies would kill her instantly and they would be subjected to capital punishment. They started crying in a helpless state.

The queen, seizing the cloth said loudly, “Oh! it looks like Jayadeva Swami’s garment. What we heard must be true that the Swami has been killed by the tiger.” She made fierce gestures to the maids to speak out.

Fearing the queen’s anger, the maids stammered, saying, “Yes, it seems Jayadeva Swami was attacked and killed by a tiger.”

The moment these words fell on her ears, Padmavathy let out a shrill scream and fell flat on the ground. Rolling on the floor like one possessed, she let out heart-rending cries, “O supreme among men! Lord of my life! Virtuous one! My intimate friend! How does life still remain in my body even after hearing this? Time and again, I have made the mistake of not accompanying you and consequently had to suffer the fire of separation. You are regal in nature and unshakeable and intrepid. How come you met your end in the hands of an inconsequential creature? You have left me alone in this world. No, I won’t stay on this earth even for one more moment. I am joining you, my lord!” Calling out loudly the names of the Lord, the virtuous lady gave up her life.

In front of their very eyes, they witnessed a light emanating from her body and disappearing in space. Brahmins and sadhus who had gathered there were astounded. The maids were stunned and lost consciousness. Needless to describe the state of the queen! Wailing loudly, she lamented in a pitiable voice, “O what have I done? What

will I do now? What a divine being she is! What is the use of my recognising her greatness now? It is like practising *surya namaskar* after losing one's eyesight. One who has the habit of stealing from others does not trust his neighbour. Being myself of a mediocre standard, I doubted her words. I have reduced all the righteous acts of the king to dust. Which hell will accept me? How will I face the Mahatma? How will I answer the king? He will surely kill me for this misdeed." Out of sorrow and fear, she fainted.

The servants rushed to the queen. Seeing their state, they feared that both women were dead. They became angry with the queen for having caused the disaster and putting their lives in danger of the wrath of the king. However, they hastened to the queen and tried to revive her with rose water. Recovering from her swoon, the queen wailed again, "O, I have brought about the downfall of the king and the kingdom. What dishonour I have wrought on myself by causing the virtuous woman's death. Let me take poison and commit suicide." The maids restrained the queen with great difficulty.

At that time, some of the brahmins said, "O queen! The Mahatma has the power to restore the noble lady's life. When he reaches here, you confess everything to him, everything. If you are frank and humble before him, his heart will melt. Bringing back life to a dead person is not a big feat for him. He is compassionate and he will protect you from the sin."

Deriving some comfort from their words, the queen preserved Padmavathy's body in a room and awaited the return of the king and the Sant with a trembling heart. ▲

# BOOK REVIEW

BEAUTY AND THE SAINT: SANKARA'S SAUNDARYALAHARI  
by I.S. Madugula. Motilal Banarsidass. 2022. HB 650, PB 350. pp.  
264. ISBN-13: 978-9393214980. naraina@mlbd.in, www.mlbd.in

ॐ नमो भगवते श्रीरमणाय  
शङ्करांशशमीशानशङ्कराचार्यमाश्रये।  
शेषुषीगलितं यस्य शान्तिदं शश्वदेजते॥

The book *Beauty and the Saint* under review is Dr. I. S. Madugula's third book in the series dedicated to the subject of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and his works. The book's preamble reveals the author's boundless devotion to Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. The three books of the author are the fruit of his meticulous study with such a steadfast devotion.

Some scholars doubt Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's authorship of the entire hymn of *Saundaryalaharī*, considering the apparent hiatus between the first 41 verses which is known as *Ānandalaharī*, and the rest of the text. Dr. Madugula is emphatic that Ādi Śaṅkarācārya alone could have authored both the *Laharīs*.

In an analysis of the poetic styles of the Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's works, the author, in a later section of the book, explains why the two *Laharīs* could only have been Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's creations.

As Śāstrivarya says, "The inescapable conclusion after reading the whole book, tantra, and prayer, is that the devotee is lost in the dazzling brilliance of poetry, forgetting both himself and the goddess. That is real prayer, real devotion, real liberation. And only a Śaṅkarācārya could be that kind of a hypnotic poet." One cannot but admire his boundless reverence to Śaṅkarācārya and enthusiasm for the subject. Also, one cannot fail to observe the suitable excerpts from Śaṅkarācārya's other literature across the book, which again reflects the author's devoted study of Śaṅkarācārya's works.

Thanks to the author's systematic and analytical explanation of terms like *sat*, *chīṭ*, *ānanda*, *Brahman*, *māyā*, *bhakti*, *mukti*, etc., while dealing with the all-important concept of Śakti, which is the heart of *Saundaryalaharī*, the readers are prepared to move into the main subject. Affirming that Śakti herself is *Māya* drawing support from an account from Śrī Ramakrishna and showing how an insubstantial Śakti (*Māya*) was the object of fervent worship for an *advaitin* turned

*mahabhakta*, namely Ādi Śaṅkarācārya, the author reminds us that *bhakti* is indeed the mother of *jñāna*.

As there is no unanimous conclusion regarding the authorship of the text, the author has titled the second section of the book as ‘The Problem of *Saundaryalaharī*.’ In this section, the author throws light on the concepts of *bhakti*, *jñāna*, *mukti*, *śraddhā*, etc., quoting from the utterances of liberated souls like Bhagavān Ramaṇa. Though the author’s main focus in this present work is on the art of poetry of *Saundaryalaharī*, many essential details such as *Tantra*, *Śrīvidyā*, *Śrīcakra*, *Brahman*, etc., are succinctly explained using selected quotes.

Keeping in mind the small circle of the central triangle of Śrī Cakra whose presiding deity is Tripurasundarī, who embodies the dual power of Śiva and Śakti, the author has aptly titled the relevant section as ‘The Circle at the Centre’. His reference to the androgynous form of Śiva in this context harks back to one of the lines of Ādi Śaṅkarācārya’s *Umā-maheśvarastotram*, viz. ‘parasparāśliṣṭavapurudharābhyām’, that is, “to those embodied in form locked in mutual embrace.”

In the penultimate section ‘A Hymn Sui Generis’, Śāstrivarya says: “Understood in context, there is no scope to interpret any of the descriptions in any other way than as tokens of beatitude.” This is an important message from the author for all the readers of spiritual fervour. The author also adds that the transcendental beauty of Śakti is delineated by way of exquisite poetry by Śaṅkarācārya, thus:

“Beauty is the highest of all these occult influences.

The quality of appearances that thru’ the sense

Wakeneth spiritual emotion in the mind of man.”

The last section ‘The Finale’ through the narratives of great spiritual leaders, culminates in the author’s English translation of the *Brahmasūtra*. This accentuates the purpose of the book *Saundaryalaharī* as follows: The attributeless *Brahman* makes itself accessible in *Śakti* form to grace the *samayācārins* and worshippers.

There are three appendices: first is the alphabetical index of the thousand names of Lalitā; the second is: A glossary of technical terms; and the third is the ‘Index of First Lines’ of the text *Saundaryalaharī*.

The fourth appendix ‘Applied Tantra: Schemata and Rituals’ is valuable for sincere seekers who would want to refer to this book as often as possible for this profound ritualistic information.

— Dr. Kāśīviśvanāthaśarmā Upādhyāyula





# ASHRAM BULLETIN



### **Cow Lakshmi Day**

The worship of Cow Lakshmi took place on 30th June, at her Samadhi located in the Ashram. Devotees worshipped Lakshmi by performing special pujas at the specially decorated Samadhi and *venpas* composed by Bhagavan, a song composed by Manavasi Ramaswamy Iyer and songs composed by devotees specially for Lakshmi were sung.

### **H.C. Khanna Day**

The *Samadhi* day of Sri Hari Chandra Khanna was held on the 23rd July. *Aksharamanamalai Parayanam and Pujas* were held at his Samadhi. Khanna was remembered with devotion by the devotees. This wonderful devotee was blessed with the grace of Ramana Maharshi, the sun of Wisdom. Khanna is one of the few rare devotees who are blessed to be buried within the ashram premises.

### **Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni**

The *Aradhana* of Kavyakanta Ganapati was held on the 25th July, in a grand manner. The event was conducted in the New hall with the chanting of *Ramana Gita*, a work written by him. Ganapati Muni was born on 17th November 1878, in Kaluvarayi near Bobbili in Andhra Pradesh. Sri M.P. Pandit said, “Vasishta Ganapati Muni was a luminary of the first magnitude on the spiritual firmament of modern India. He was a versatile genius whose contributions in the many fields to which he turned his attention are yet to be fully assessed.” The Muni passed away in Kharagpur, West Bengal on the 25th July 1936.

### **Kunju Swami**

Kunju Swami's *Aradhana* was held on the 7th August at his *samadhi* located in the Ashram. There was *abhisheka* over the *samadhi* linga, while devotees recited *Aksharamanamalai*. As a child Lord Siva appeared in his dream and recited the *Panchakshara Mantra* in his ear. Kunju Swami served as one of the Maharshi's attendants from 1920 till 1932. Kunju Swami lived a simple and austere life at or near Sri Ramanasramam, rendering the invaluable service of sharing his experiences with the seekers until the ripe age of 95.

### **Events in Delhi**

Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan gave a series of talks in Delhi during the first week of August, one at an annual conference of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, one at the Delhi Ramana Kendra on 3rd August, and on Friday the 4th August, a talk at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (now renamed as Prime Minister's Museum and Library Society)



entitled, ‘Contributions of Sri Ramana Maharshi to National Awakening and to India’s Spiritual Heritage’. The Ashram President outlined the Maharshi’s impact on major 20th century luminaries and historical figures involved in India’s freedom struggle, including Gandhiji. The Ashram President quoted the poetess Sarojini Naidu, who once made a remark about ‘the two *Mahans*, namely, the Maharshi who gave us peace, and the Mahatma who would not let us rest one moment in peace — both working for the spiritual regeneration of India’.

### **Governor of Tamil Nadu**

On 10th August, Ravindra Narayana Ravi, the 15th Governor of Tamil Nadu, came to Sri Ramanasramam. President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan and Smt. Nitya Ramanan were on hand to receive the Governor and his entourage. Sri. Ravi had previously served as Governor of Nagaland (2019-21) and Governor of Meghalaya as additional charge (2019-20).

### **Independence Day**

The Independence Day was celebrated in a grand manner in the Ashram. The President hoisted the flag and sweets were distributed.

The events that occurred on the 15th August 1947 are described below: “On that day the spiritual Ashram wore the festive look of patriotism. Bhagavan hoisted the flag on that day atop the dining hall hoisted by His own sacred hands and there were tears in his eyes when he hoisted the tricolor flag that was stitched by his own hands.”

### **Event in Jaffna**

On 20th August the Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan and Ashram Manager Sivadas Krishnan celebrated the centenary of Sri Ramanasramam at Ramanalayam, in Tellippalai, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. The Ashram President gave a bilingual talk, alternating seamlessly between Tamil and English on the essence of Bhagavan’s *Atma Vichara*. He began his talk by remembering Jaffna’s own, Yogaswami and the swami’s connection with Sri Bhagavan.

### **Muruganar Day**

The Ashram celebrated the *Aradhana* of Muruganar on the 14th September. Muruganar was born in Ramnad district in August 1890. Throughout his life, the source of Muruganar’s poetic inspiration was always Ramana’s presence and teachings. Muruganar’s poetry flowed like a perennial river, sometimes overflowing with exceptional beauty and wisdom. More than thirty thousand poems were composed by him. Muruganar spent years in Sri Ramana Ashram listening to

Ramana answer questions from devotees. He summarised many of the answers into four line verses which were then edited by Ramana Maharshi. Muruganar's writings have been published in two books: *Guru Vachaka Kovai* and *Padamalai*. Muruganar was absorbed into Arunachala in August, 1973.

### **Advent Day**

On the 1st September 1896, Venkataraman, a boy sixteen years of age, came from Madurai to Arunachala in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, where he lived until his *Mahasamadhi* in 1950 — all of fifty-four years. In his *Aksharamanamalai*, verse 97, Lord Ramana says:

“From my home Thou didst entice me, then stealing into my heart didst draw me gently into Thine, (such is) Thy grace, Oh Arunachala!”

### **Obituary: Smt. Vijaya Ranganathan (1944-2023)**

Born at Coimbatore, Smt. Vijaya was the youngest of six sisters and three brothers. In 1968, she married Sri Ranganathan who had as a child learned of Ramana Maharshi through his grandfather Swami Premananda. Vijaya and Ranganathan shared a deep devotion towards Bhagavan, and their lives were characterised by a quest for the Truth. In 1974, Vijaya had the divine experience of initiation via a Ramana photograph. Shortly afterwards, in 1975, they started to regularly visit Sri Ramanasramam in Tiruvannamalai and in 1994, settled there. They warmly hosted family, friends, and devotees alike. Vijaya helped the sick, the poor and needy, and all those who needed a listening ear.



From the very beginning, Vijaya's devotional life became centred on the Ashram. With full dedication and humility, she participated in the Ashram's daily activities, not least of all, chanting and recitation. She never missed Tamil *Parayana* or the monthly *Punarvasu* chanting and regularly assisted in arranging and practising the raga program. Vijaya fell ill about six years ago and could no longer attend Ashram activities. Ranganathan took care of her selflessly during her final years. She peacefully merged at the Feet of Arunachala on 6th August 2023, her glowing smile present until the very end. Her natural dignity, gentle, and warm-hearted nature will be remembered by all who had the honour of knowing her. ▲

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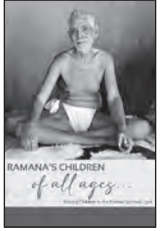
**Sri Ramaṇa Maharishigal Sonṇa Āṇmigak Kadaigal (Tamil)** compiled by L. Sivasubramanian. Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, pp. xvi+250. ₹130. ISBN: 978-81-8288-304-8.

Ramana Maharshi was a master chef who provided a divine feast for his devotees. Timeless parables and epic tales came alive with his gracious words and inimitable dramatizations.

“Such was the attraction of these stories,” said Kunju Swami, “that when we heard Sri Bhagavan beginning a story, even if we had heard it numerous times before, we would literally stop whatever we were doing and run to his side to hear it again!”

Various illustrative stories told by Bhagavan have been published in the Ashram publications. The collection was first published as a book in English. In keeping with the long-standing wishes of Tamil-speaking lovers, its Tamil version is now being released with the addition of sketches by Ghovi, as part of the centenary celebrations of Sri Ramanasramam.

May the seeker find both inspiration and guidance, entertainment and enlightenment in these classic stories as retold by our beloved Sadguru.



**Ramana's Children of All Ages...** by Dr. Carlos Lopez. Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, pp. 92. ₹420. ISBN: 978-81-8288-305-5.

The title ‘Ramana's Children of All Ages’, is meant for all. The title may seem slightly mischievous, for this is not a ‘Children's book’. Young children may peruse it and enjoy the pictures; older children may dance playfully with the words. Adults will want to imbibe these words, slowly but surely, one paragraph at a time. Ramana is THAT which dwells in the Heart of all beings. Thus we are all Children of Bhagavan Ramana.



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D: What is the reason for the absence of mental strength?

M: The means that make one qualified for enquiry are meditation, *yoga*, etc. One should gain proficiency in these through graded practice, and thus secure a stream of mental modes that is natural and helpful. When the mind that has become ripe in this manner, hears about this enquiry, it will at once realise its true nature which is the Self, and remain in perfect peace, without deviating from that state. To a mind which has not become ripe, immediate realisation and peace are hard to gain through hearing about enquiry. Yet, if one practises the means for mind control for some time, peace of mind can be obtained eventually.

— Sri Ramana Maharshi, *Self-Enquiry*, Section 20

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