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

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The aim of this journal will be to set forth the traditional wisdom of *sanatana dharma* with emphasis on Vedanta, as testified and taught by the great sage Sri Ramana Maharshi, and to clarify his path for seekers in the conditions of our modern world.

Contributions for publication are welcome. They should be in English, original, and previously unpublished. Articles should consistently adhere to either British English or American English. They may include quotations from sacred texts in regional languages, provided complete translations are included. Google Noto Fonts should be used for texts in regional languages. Contributors are requested to send articles as email attachments in Word format.

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Mountain Path is dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

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Divine Names of Arunachala

35. ॐ त्रिपुरान्तकाय नमः
Om tripurāntakāya namaḥ
Prostration to the destroyer of the three cities

There is a very dramatic moment in the legend of Shiva and his manifestation as destroyer of the three cities. It occurs when the three cities, created as a boon to the demon Taraka's three sons who wreak havoc in the three worlds, are aligned so that they can be destroyed by a single mighty arrow[1]. "The triple city then appeared before the slayer of demons, the God whose form was indescribably fierce, whose energy was unbearable. The Lord of all the world drew his bow and released against the triple city the arrow which was the essence of the triple world. It burnt the band of demons and hurled them into the western ocean. Thus the triple city was burnt, and all the demons without exception were burnt by the Great Lord in his anger, for he wished for the welfare of the triple world."[2]

To believe that mythology is confined to the hoary past is a grave error. Today, is Bhagavan wielding his mighty *brahmastram* 'Who am I', coming to our rescue at the mere thought of him, any less dramatic? Consider this verse penned by Muruganar.

> *Attacking and vanquishing the cloaking delusion that was intent on its destruction, it [the grace of the Lord] will allow the Real to shine forth. Subduing the infatuated ego that hindered me and tried in its fury to destroy me, it ruled me at his holy feet, the grace of my Lord.*[3]

Embrace the grandeur of the epic and see its truth in your own daily life! That is what Bhagavan means when he says practise *atma vicara* **boldly**.

— BKC

---

[1] The war-chariot designed for Shiva was on a truly cosmic scale: The earth became the body of the chariot, while the Sun and Moon formed its wheels, with Brahma being the charioteer. As for the weapon for the single shot: Mount Meru formed the bow and the serpent Vasuki the bowstring, Vishnu the arrow, Agni the arrowhead and Vayu the feather fletchings.

[2] *Hindu Myths*, translated by Wendy Doniger, Penguin Books, 1975, pp. 136-137.

[3] Verse 1009 in *Sri Guru Ramana Prasadam* composed by Mukavai Kanna Muruganar and translated by Robert Butler, published by Robert Butler in 2008, p. 161.

Is Bhagavan's teaching compatible with work? What is "Summa Iru"?

Dear Devotees and Seekers,

Endeavoring to understand the essence of Bhagavan's teaching of 'Summa Iru' (Just Be) often leads to confusion, particularly regarding its compatibility with a life filled with work and activity. In this editorial, I aim to address this crucial question.

Is 'Summa Iru' idleness? Does it imply withdrawal from worldly activities?

Let's examine how Bhagavan, a *purna jnani* (fully realized Guru), lived his life and approached work. Bhagavan handled even the most mundane tasks with meticulous care and attention, thereby exemplifying the dignity of labor. He was very punctual and never deviated from his daily routine.

He would wake up early, often around 3 a.m., and proceed to the kitchen where he would chop vegetables, prepare chutneys, and provide instructions to the cooks. Afterward, he would listen to the *veda parayanam*, visit the *goshala*, have a bath, and be ready for breakfast. Throughout the day, he engaged in various activities,

including walks, reading the newspaper, proofreading and skillfully binding books, composing hymns, supervising construction activities in the Ashram, stitching leaf plates, attending to correspondence, addressing questions from devotees, caring for animals that sought his attention, and participating in the evening *parayanam* before dinner.

He took care of his mother in her last days as a dutiful son should. He practiced cleanliness and thrift in everything he did. He was also as normal as one can imagine. He delighted his devotees with his wit and keen sense of humor. He enjoyed a joke and was himself a great storyteller and gifted mimic. Therefore, just from studying Bhagavan's own actions, we can conclude that 'Summa Iru' does not imply being idle, shutting our eyes, or sitting in meditation for prolonged hours, closed to the world around us. Sri Bhagavan remarked, "Non-action is unceasing activity. The sage is characterised by eternal and intense activity. His stillness is like the apparent stillness of a fast rotating top (gyroscope). Its very speed cannot be followed by the eye and so it appears to be still. Yet it is rotating. So is the apparent inaction of the sage. This must be explained because the people generally mistake stillness to be inertness. It is not so."[1]

Could 'Summa Iru' then refer to the inner state that Bhagavan had attained and operated from, as the foundation of his actions? Let us look at two incidents from Bhagavan's own life to study this.

The first incident vividly illustrates how Bhagavan possessed no sense of personal doer-ship or ownership of the fruits of his labor.

Once, when a devotee asked Bhagavan about what *niskamya* karma was, Bhagavan remained silent. Later, that individual witnessed Bhagavan picking up a branch on his way to the mountain and sitting down to work on it. Diligently, Bhagavan cut away thorns and polished the surface, displaying no sense of haste. Eventually, he crafted a beautiful walking stick. Just as he completed this laborious task, a shepherd boy, tearful because he had lost his stick, appeared. Upon hearing the boy's plight, Bhagavan simply gave him the lovely stick he had just fashioned and then continued on his way. Without uttering a single word, offering any explanation, or giving advice, Bhagavan had exemplified the essence of selfless work and service.[2]

[1] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 599.
[2] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 118

The second incident involving a fabricated biography illustrates how Bhagavan remained unaffected by praise and censure, having transcended identification with his mind and body entirely.

Shortly after Kunju Swami arrived at the Ashram, a Malayalam visitor came to see Bhagavan. After a few days' stay, the visitor presented Bhagavan with a manuscript that he claimed contained a biography of Bhagavan himself. Since Bhagavan was proficient in Malayalam, he accepted the manuscript and began reading it. He went through it meticulously, occasionally pausing to correct grammatical or spelling errors. Upon finishing, he returned the manuscript to the author with a smile. This incident sparked excitement among the devotees as it was the first biography of Bhagavan they had seen. However, only Bhagavan and Kunju Swami could read Malayalam, and Kunju Swami was temporarily absent.

Upon Kunju Swami's return, he was immediately given the manuscript and asked to translate its contents for the assembled devotees. However, as he read through it, he was horrified to discover that the biography was mostly fictitious. It falsely claimed that Bhagavan was married, had three children, was a lawyer from Madurai, and listed numerous *siddhis* and miracles attributed to him, none of which were true.

Kunju Swami hurried to Bhagavan and asked, "Is all this true?" Bhagavan looked at him quietly for a while before responding, "Is all this true?" (pointing at the world) "Is this alone false?" (pointing at the manuscript).[3]

When we examine ourselves, we can see how far we are from operating like Bhagavan. For us, the world and people around us are very real. We slip into an agitated state so quickly if we face criticism or if we are denied a promotion at work that we believe we deserve, or if our children act against our wishes. When things go well, we are filled with pride, taking complete ownership of the outcome and attributing success to our own skill and genius.

The reason we are unable to operate like Bhagavan is that we function from a wrong standpoint. We give reality to our limited selves (mind and body) and operate within this identity. Bhagavan, on the other hand, functioned as the limitless Self every moment of

[3] By Sadhu Om from the April 1982 edition of *Arunachala Ramana*, a monthly magazine.

his life. He did not merely possess a theoretical understanding that the Self was operating through him and that he was not the doer or the enjoyer of the fruits of his actions. He *knew* this to be the case, and every action of his demonstrated that he was the Self, acting as Ramana Maharshi. In verse 5 of chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says: "*Verily none can ever remain even for a moment without performing action; for everyone is made to act by the gunas or qualities born of prakriti (nature), in spite of himself.*"

A devotee asked Bhagavan, "What if one meditates incessantly without karma?" Bhagavan replied, "Try and see. The *vasanas* will not let you do it. Dhyana comes only progressively with the gradual weakening of the *vasanas* by the Grace of the Master."[4]

We all know this to be absolutely true. Our *vasanas* and temperament compel us to act even when we wish to remain in meditation. Therefore, we must achieve a shift in the standpoint from whence we perform actions. Following Bhagavan and his teachings ultimately boils down to invoking his grace to achieve this shift in standpoint.

Bhagavan has clearly elucidated the method. He taught us that it is the wrong identification with the mind and body that entangles us in this world. At the root of this misidentification is the 'I' thought - our conception of an 'I' that is the doer and experiencer. We should systematically dissociate the 'I' thought from all its adjuncts - such as 'I am a man,' 'I have three children,' 'I am well-respected at work,' 'I suffer from diabetes,' and so on - by asking ourselves, 'Who is this I?' Once we methodically strip away all notions and isolate just the 'I' thought, Bhagavan instructs us to investigate the source of this 'I' thought. Through dedicated enquiry, we are led to the heart center. Gradually, we come to *realize*, not merely intellectually, but experientially, that there is no 'I' separate from the Self. As this realization becomes firmer and more certain, we begin to operate like Bhagavan – with the foundational understanding that we are the Self, and we perform actions anchored in this awareness.

Bhagavan beautifully explains: 'Other thoughts may come and go like various notes of music, but the 'I' continues like the fundamental *shruti* note that underlies and blends with all other states. Whether

[4] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 80.

the body is engaged in talking, reading, or any other activity, I remain centered on the 'I'.'[5] Thus, our focus remains on the fundamental 'I' note while carrying out work in the world. In this way, the work allotted to us based on our *prarabdha* karma is discharged naturally and efficiently.

To a question by a devotee on why God places us in difficulties, Bhagavan replied, *"*Does God come and tell you that He has placed you in difficulties? It is you who say so. It is again the wrong 'I'. If that disappears there will be no one to say that God created this or that. That which IS does not even say 'I am'. For, does any doubt rise 'I am not'? Only in such a case should one be reminding oneself 'I am a man'. One does not. On the other hand, if a doubt arises whether he is a cow or a buffalo he has to remind himself that he is not a cow, etc., but 'I am a man'. This would never happen. Similar is the case with one's own existence and realization."[6]

With repeated practice of his teachings, we come to enjoy inner peace by resting in our Heart. The mind naturally loses its inclination to wander outward, and we automatically turn inward more frequently. Thus, on the plane of actions, the gradual transition from desire-prompted action to selfless action takes place in us, and eventually, we only engage in actions that present themselves to us without any *sankalpas* of our own, for the basic upkeep of the body and for the betterment of the world. Following Bhagavan's teachings, this transition is smooth and natural. The only 'desire' remaining is to abide in the Self and experience peace as frequently as possible throughout the day. In that state, we experience the true essence of verse 17 in chapter 3 of the *Bhagavad Gita*: *"He who rejoices solely in the Self, is gratified with the Self and contented with the Self, has no duties whatsoever."* Bhagavan translated this verse into Tamil (verse 38 of his *Bhagavad Gita Saram*). That is 'Summa Iru'.

In humility and devotion,

Venkat S. Ramanan

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[5] Bhagavan's description of his death experience.
[6] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 197.

DEATH EXPERIENCE OF
At the Age of
When SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI realized the Self he was a lad of sixteen, still at school. He took a single step and reached the goal.
MAHARSHI himself described how this happened...
"It was about six weeks before I left Madurai for good that the great change in my life took place. It was quite sudden. I was sitting alone in a room on the first floor of my uncle's house. I seldom had any sickness, and on that day there was nothing wrong with my health, but a sudden violent fear of death overtook me. There was nothing in my state of health to account for it and I did not try to account for it or to find out whether there was any reason for the fear. I just felt 'I am going to die' and began thinking what to do about it. It did not occur to me to consult a doctor or my elders or friends: I felt that I had to solve the problem myself, there and then.
The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words: 'Now death has come: what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies.' And I, at once dramatized the occurrence of death. I lay
Guy Gonyea

Exploring Consciousness in Vedantic, Shaakta, and Shaiva Traditions

S. Ram Mohan

Introduction

Consciousness, or Brahman, is the source from which all creation springs. It is the substratum on which everything is based.

The opening verse (1-1) of the *Kenopanishad* poses a crucial question: "By whose will directed does the mind proceed to its object? At whose command does the *prana*, the foremost, do its duty? At whose will do men utter speech?"

The answer is Self. In *Tattva bodha*, Sri Shankara succinctly explains the Self through a chain of questions and clarifications and concludes "*chit kim? ananda-svarupah*" i.e., the nature of the Self is Consciousness-Bliss. He asserts, "*evam sacchidananda svarupam atmanam vijaniyat*" — "The nature of the Self is Being-Consciousness-Bliss."

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* elaborates this concept based on a dialogue between Janaka and Yagnavalkya, illustrating how the

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luminous Self, when identified with intellect, assumes a semblance of cognition and motion. Shankara's commentary on this verse expands it further. "Just as emerald or any other gem, when placed inside a container filled with milk to facilitate its validation imparts its hue to the entire milk in a trice, even so does the consciousness impart effulgence to the intellect, the sense organs and the body by unifying them together.'

Maya, or *avidya*, stands as the catalyst for the manifestation of pure consciousness in the world, and this maya exists in a subtle realm wholly reliant on that foundational consciousness. Whether termed God or *jiva*, both embody the essence of pure consciousness.

Advaita Vedantins consider the nature of consciousness from two perspectives viz., from the perspective of the phenomenal world as well as from the trans-phenomenal viewpoint. They assert the supreme reality of *Bhuma* (Supreme Consciousness) while recognizing the finite consciousness, veiled by limiting adjuncts, as a mere reflection.

Ramana Maharshi[1] cautions against mistaking *vritti* for consciousness, delineating between the unbroken experience of Self-Realization and the fragmented nature of *vritti*. The inquiry into consciousness extends to the faculties of *chetana*, *chittham*, *buddhi*, and *ahankara*, persisting across the empirical states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. He says[2], "The pictures are unreal and the screen is real."

This profound analogy, reminiscent of the imagery found in ancient philosophical texts, paints a vivid picture of the nature of consciousness. Like a timeless canvas upon which the ever-changing scenes of existence are projected, consciousness stands unwavering, unaffected by the transient fluctuations of the world. It is the unchanging backdrop against which the drama of life unfolds, transcending the fleeting manifestations that dance across its surface. In this portrayal, the essence of consciousness is illuminated as the singular reality that underlies all phenomena.

Bhagavan's directs us to probe the source of the 'I' thought and discern the true nature of our being. Through introspection and contemplation, the illusory nature of the ego is revealed and this

[1] *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 68.
[2] *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 446.

phantom dissipates upon the realization of the Self. This resonates with the timeless proclamation, 'I am Brahman.' Thus supreme consciousness is the reality. When that consciousness is associated with limiting adjuncts (*upadhis*) you speak of reflected-consciousness.

Here, the essence of consciousness is underscored as the ultimate reality, transcending the limitations imposed by individual identities or external constructs. Whether perceived as the boundless expanse of cosmic awareness or the intimate presence of self-awareness, consciousness remains the unifying thread that interconnects all aspects of existence. Even amidst the veils of ignorance or the constraints of self-perception, the inherent reality of consciousness persists, illuminating the multifaceted tapestry of the universe.

According to Sri Ramana, Cosmic Consciousness is the same as Absolute Consciousness, encompassing the entirety of creation before the dawn of egoic differentiation. Analogous to the illuminating light that reveals the myriad images on a screen, Cosmic Consciousness permeates every facet of existence, illuminating the universe with its radiant presence. It transcends the boundaries of individual perception, encompassing all phenomena within its boundless embrace. It is the formless essence of 'I' that eternally shines in the heart, guiding seekers towards the realization of their true nature as pure consciousness.

In the teachings of Kashmir Shaivism, consciousness emerges as a dynamic and creative force that drives the process of creation and dissolution. *Pratyabhijna* emphasizes the recognition of divine sovereignty, liberating the soul from the constraints of ignorance and karma, while *Spanda* delves into the vibrational essence of consciousness, pulsating at the heart of existence.

According to Kashmir Shaivism, consciousness exists autonomously; it is an eternal reality independent of the mind or body. This viewpoint is shared by both Shaivites and Vedantins. Consciousness is not merely a passive observer (*sakshi*), but actively engages in conscious activity (*chit kriya*), creating and absorbing the universe in each cycle of creation. This autonomy, termed *svatantrya*, is the sovereign power (*aishvarya*) of consciousness, making it the sole governing force of the entire universe. The Supreme Lord's governance arises from His unique eternal nature as the pure agent

(*kartrta*), with His essence being the divine pulsating radiance (*sphurana*) of consciousness. This dynamic and creative power is known as *spanda* — the vibration of consciousness which forms the basis of Shiva's divine sovereignty. Indeed, *spanda* embodies Shiva's essential nature, without which He would not be recognized as God.

In *Shaakta* texts, consciousness is revered as abstract intelligence, self-luminous and boundless, transcending the limitations of finite perception. The tantra's interpretation of maya extends beyond the realm of gross manifestation and views it as an intrinsic aspect of reality that ultimately resolves into pure consciousness, the essence of absolute truth.

Tripura Rahasya further elucidates the nature of absolute consciousness, metaphorically likening it to the unchanging essence amidst the shifting states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. This text emphasizes the realization of pure intelligence as the ultimate liberation, transcending the veils of illusion to unveil the timeless reality of consciousness.

"I embody the Abstract Intelligence from which the cosmos springs, within which it thrives, and where it ultimately dissolves like reflections in a mirror. Those lacking in understanding perceive me as the tangible universe, but the wise recognize me as their own pristine essence, forever shining within as 'I-I.' This profound realization dawns only in the serene depths of thought-free consciousness, akin to the tranquil sea devoid of waves." This description of absolute Consciousness as elucidated in the *Tripura Rahasya*, a tantric text, is echoed by Gaudapada's teachings in the *Mandukya Karika*.

In conclusion, across Vedantic, *Shaakta*, and Shaiva traditions, consciousness emerges as the timeless essence pervading all existence. Contemplation of Brahman, or ultimate consciousness, is central to all these philosophies. It involves deep meditation and self-inquiry to transcend individual ego and perceive the unity of all existence. This contemplation dissolves the illusion of separateness, revealing the non-dual nature of reality. Such profound awareness fosters inner peace, equanimity, and a direct experience of the divine, guiding one to live in harmony with the cosmos and all beings within it. ▲

Everything Is Within

V. Krithivasan

Bhagavan: The world is not external. Because you identify yourself wrongly with the body you see the world outside and its pain becomes apparent to you. But they are not real. Seek the reality and get rid of this unreal feeling.[1]

Sri Bhagavan says that our entire life is just a dream in our long sleep of Self-forgetfulness. Due to this Self-forgetfulness, we experience ourselves as finite relative beings, as individuals. This individual seems to exist now, seems not to have existed before his birth and will not exist after death. Sri Bhagavan says that we are in essence only pure Consciousness. Everything that we know or perceive appears within the mind, which is a distortion of this pure Consciousness. Our essential consciousness 'I am' is the fundamental *adhara* (base) that supports the appearance or disappearance of the mind, and everything known by it. Though the world now perceived by us is experienced within our own mind, we imagine ourselves to be a particular body, one among many objects in the world.

Sri Bhagavan asks, "Can we at any time prove that the world exists independent of our mind?" The answer is 'no'. Except for the experience of 'I am', which is our essential Consciousness, everything else is a product of our mind. Everything that is experienced as the 'other' is, in actual fact, experienced within. In fact, Sri Bhagavan says that there is no basic difference between the dream world and the waking world. In "Who am I?" he says, "To the extent that *vyavaharas*

[1] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 272

(occurrences) that happen in the waking state appear to be real, to the same extent the *vyavaharas* in dream state also appear at that time to be real. In both the states, thoughts and names and forms occur simultaneously." The relative reality of our experiences in dream and waking states cannot be correctly judged from either of these two states. After waking up, the dream appears unreal. Just as we correctly judge the reality of a dream by stepping out of the dream, we should judge the reality of the waking state only by stepping out of it into some state that transcends it.

Death is the ending of the dream called life; it is the temporary suspension of the mind. After we have rested for a while in death, the mind rises in another state of activity in which some other body is imagined to be oneself. Rebirth is therefore not real; it is also just a dream. It is an imaginary event occurring repeatedly in a long sleep of apparent self-forgetfulness. Until we know our real nature, we will continue to experience one dream after another. In each dream we will imagine ourselves to be somebody. There is a beautiful story in *Yoga Vasishta*, the story of Queen Leela, that explains this concept.[2]

The story of Queen Leela

Sri Rama asks sage Vasishta: How are sentient and insentient objects created?

Sage Vasishta: There is no such thing as 'creation'! Nothing exists except the Self. All perceptions are due to *'sankalpa'* or modification of Chitta or mind. When *sankalpa* rises, the manifest Universe and objects are experienced. When *sankalpa* subsides, the Universe subsides. The Universe is a mere aspect of *sankalpa.* When the mind is stilled, the experience of the universe ceases.

Sri Rama further asks Vasishta, "If this were to be so, who is the regulator or controller of all this?" The sage answers that Pure Consciousness is the base of the universe; its power appears to be manifested as life. Nothing else has been created. In its manifest mode, it has assumed various forms. This primordial modification or *prakriti*, conducts all things according to their roles. Prakriti is of the nature of *sankalpa.* Just as a rope in darkness is taken as a snake, the illusory universe is experienced as real, on account of ignorance.

[2] *Spiritual stories as told by Ramana Maharshi,* Sri Ramanasramam.

It is one's own idea that transforms a rope into a snake. So is the case of the perceptible universe that has not been 'created'. Vasishta continues, "Oh Rama, after prolonged spiritual discipline and '*Atma vichara'*, your delusion will disappear. This delusion exists because of the activity of your mind. When the mind becomes still, the delusion vanishes. This shows that Pure Consciousness is established, and nothing else exists. Just as a dream world is only mental, has no independent existence, and is not experienced on waking up, so is this universe. When you awaken in *Atma*, your delusion will go and you will realize *Brahma-sakthi* in diverse forms. Listen to this story:

"Once upon a time there was a king named Padma who was virtuous in all respects. His wife, Leela was a lady of exceptional merit and a great devotee of the Goddess Sarasvati. The king and queen had immense love for each other. Unfortunately, during a battle, the king was killed. His body was brought to the palace. Sitting by the side of her husband's body, the grief-stricken queen started meditating on Goddess Sarasvati. Sarasvati appeared in a vision and told her, 'O queen, all that you see is a delusion. Do not despair taking this tragedy to be real but try to be at peace.'

Leela asked Sarasvati where her husband was, what had happened to him, and requested a meeting with him. The goddess then explained to her, 'There are three types of *akash,* or space, namely, *bhootakash* (elemental space or physical space) *chittakash*, also known as *mano-akash* (mental space), and *chidakash* (conscious-space).

चित्ताकाशं चिदाकाशमाकाशं च तृतीयकम्।
द्वाभ्यां शून्यतरं विद्धि चिदाकाशं वरानने।। — (Yoga Vasishta 3-17-10)

cittākāśaṃ cidākāśaṃ ākāśaṃ ca tṛtīyakam |
dvābhyāṃ śūnyataraṃ viddhi cidākāśaṃ varānane ||

Oh beautiful lady! There are three types of space: the mental space, the physical space, and the infinite space of Consciousness. Of these, the most subtle is the space of Consciousness!

Bhootakash (physical space) is sustained by *chittakash,* (mental space) which in turn is sustained by *chidakash* (Conscious Space). Having abandoned *bhootakash,* your husband is now staying in *chittakash*. Because *chittakash* is sustained by *chidakash,* when you

attain to *chidakash*, you will experience the entire cosmos. You will experience all creations as shadows in *chidakash*. The cognitive potency in the *chitta* (mind) transmigrates from one place to another in an instant. When you have abandoned all *sankalpas* or ideations, what remains thereafter is *chidakash*. When you attain to *chidakash*, you will see your husband. O Leela, I grant that you will soon attain quiescence and will be free from ideation."

Saying so, the goddess disappeared. Abandoning *chittakash* by intense meditation, the queen attained the non-ideational state and, like a bird, she flew into *chidakash*, where she could 'see' the king in his new surroundings in another world. To her amazement, she saw that everything was as on earth and from his new capital he was ruling another land! 'Is it that only the king had died, or has his capital too died and transmigrated with him?' she asked herself. The bewildered queen descended from *chidakash* to her palace. Overtaken with amazement, she came to where the dead body of her husband was lying and tried to meditate on the goddess. Instantly, she had the vision of the goddess. Bowing down to her, Leela asked the goddess what was the nature of the two worlds of the king- one she saw during her flight to *chidakash* and the other that existed here – and which of the two was real and which unreal.

Goddess: The world presently experienced by your husband is mere formless space. It is just an ideation.

Queen: If it were so, even this world in which I live must only be an ideation or *sankalpa*, right?

G: Now you understand rightly. I, you, this universe, is all of the nature of *akasha*. It is experienced on account of an illusion, but has not been created.

Q: How did my husband who was in a subtle and formless state acquire a body or form and how did he experience the universe?

G: Both worlds are illusory. I will tell you now about you and your husband: in the supreme *chidakash*, there lived a Brahmin priest by name Vasishta. He was highly religious, but had not acquired *jnana*. Once, when the Brahmin was seated on a hillock, he happened to see a royal couple on a safari in the jungle. Instantly the Brahmin was seized with the desire that he and his

wife Arundhati too must enjoy a princely life like the royal couple he saw. This *sankalpa* for a princely life continued throughout his life. Soon his end approached. As a result of his previous, strong *sankalpa* for a princely life, the Brahmin visualized after his death that he was a great monarch. Your husband and you were formerly this couple Vasishta and Arundhati. Now listen carefully. The sky, the hills, earth, oceans, the three planes that you are visualizing here, are located in a corner of Brahmin Vasishta's house. Only eight days have passed since Vasishta died; you also gave up your body thereafter. Your family has not yet completed the final rites. But here you are, enjoying the royal life for many, many years. All this manifestation is illusory. The world you are perceiving now is an illusion arising from another illusion. The world being not real, how can its memory be real?

Q: I am puzzled by your statement that you, I, these mountains and rivers, the vast expanse before us is located just in a corner of the Brahmin's house. How is it possible?

G: That is the truth! All the events are just like the experience of the vast expanse of three dimensions by a person in a dream state, who, after the dream, finds himself lying in his bed and the three dream-dimensions have vanished. Death too is like this. The subtle body of the *jiva* is transformed into *akash* at the place where he dies, and thereafter he experiences a universe according to the strength of his desire and *sankalpa.* This universe is established in his *chitta* according to his *vasanas* and *sankalpas*, and is experienced with various names and forms. Like an image seen in a mirror, the universe is perceived in *chittakash*. Consider the universe a dreamland. Just as a person dreams and has a further dream within a dream, so too has this illusion of a universe appeared to you. This world is an aspect of Atman. Where there is consciousness, the universe also exists, because the universe is an aspect of Atman. The illusory universe is experienced as though real. Therefore, abandoning ideation of the unreal universe, you should always be established in Atman.

Q: How is it that you say that only eight days have passed since the death of Vasishta, but here we have spent many years during that very period?

G: यथैतत्प्रतिभा मात्रं जगत्सर्गावभासनम्।
तथैतत्प्रतिभामात्रं क्षणकल्पावभासनम्।।

— (*Yoga Vasishta* 3-20-29)

yathaitatpratibhā mātraṃ jagatsargāvabhāsanam
tathaitatpratibhāmātraṃ kṣaṇakalpāvabhāsanam ||

Just as the world and its creation are mere appearances, a moment and an epoch are also illusory.

Just as a vast space appears in a small space on account of ideation, a long duration is experienced within a short period. Space and time are illusory and appear real on account of *sankalpa*. This illusion is very powerful and can do anything. Nothing exists except Brahman/Atman. The experience of one's own death in a dream is not real and this experience occurs on account of ideation in the mind. Presently you are seized with the conviction of a gross body; you must abandon the illusion of the gross body. When you can still the mind and stop ideation, and establish yourself in Atman, you can reach wherever you like and see whatever you like as I am able to do.

Q: If there is nothing else except Atman, why have I been wandering around all this time?

G: It is due to non-contemplation or *avichara*. *Vichara/avichara*, *jnana/ajnana* are all modes or states in you. When you choose *vichara*, delusion will go. Just as the illusion of a snake goes with awareness of the rope, illusion of the gross will go with awareness of Atman. You should therefore undertake to realize Atman, so this illusion of the universe can go. As soon as the true Self is realized, the feeling and memory of the gross body vanishes. With the ceasing of the *vasanas*, the subtle body also vanishes. Such a jiva is liberated while still alive. He is a *jivanmukta*. He may be overtly participating in daily routines, but he is always established in Truth."

Concluding the story of Leela, Sage Vasishta said to Sri Rama, "Following the instructions of the goddess, Queen Leela realized the non-existence of the body and was firmly established in Atman.

O Rama, all embodiments are the forms of *chitta*. The *chitta* is like a mirror; as is the firm ideation, so is the reflection in the *chitta.* He who is firmly established in the gross does not experience the subtle. Experience is the result of firm conviction in the mind. When a person forgets his true nature, he experiences the variegated universe."

Here is another story on this topic and this one is narrated by Bhagavan himself:

The Story of Appar

Umadevi, a Polish lady had travelled in Kashmir and brought some photos which were shown to all in the old hall. Bhagavan humorously remarked, "We have seen those places without the trouble of travelling." A devotee thereby said, "I wish to go to Kailas." Sri Bhagavan said, "One can see these places only if destined. Not otherwise. After seeing all, there will still remain more – if not in this hemisphere, may be in the other. Knowledge implies ignorance of what lies beyond what is known. Knowledge is always limited." After some time, Sri Bhagavan related the following story.

"Appar was decrepit and old and yet began to travel to Kailas. Another old man appeared on the way and tried to dissuade him from the attempt, saying that it was too difficult to reach there. Appar was however obdurate and said that he would risk his life in the attempt. The stranger asked him to dip himself in a tank close by. Appar did so and found Kailas then and there. Where did all this happen? In Tiruvayyar, nine miles from Tanjore. Where is Kailas then? Is it within the mind or outside it? If Tiruvayyar is truly Kailas, it must appear to others as well. But Appar alone found it so. Similarly, it is said of other places of pilgrimage in the South, that they are the abodes of Shiva, and devotees found them so. This was true from their standpoint. *Everything is within. There is nothing without."* ▲

Guy Gonyea

The Maharshi: The One as All

PART THREE

KAYS

Muruganar's declaration that "He arrests the speed of the flood of misfortunes" was more than proved in the case of Rangan.[1] Bhagavan averted all the misfortunes waiting to befall Rangan by keeping him in his presence during a time in which astrologers had predicted Rangan's great suffering.

A mere application of Bhagavan's *vibhuti* cured a daughter of Rangan of her loss of memory and restored back to life another mentally imbalanced daughter who fell into a well and died. A mere wave of Bhagavan's hand cured the back-pain of Rangan's wife.

Severe dyspepsia that caused sleepless nights, gripping pain, and a restless mind, rending a continuous torture to Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer. He once asked Bhagavan. "Jesus and great souls like Him come to earth to save sinners like me. Is there hope for me?" Coming close to him, Bhagavan said in a quiet voice, "Yes, there is hope." Bhagavan said this thrice and in English, which was rather rare.

One day, Bhagavan made Manavasi Iyer partake in a sumptuous feast, saying, "Eat." He obeyed, and the next day with dyspepsia gone he woke up like a fresh flower. In addition, out of boundless mercy, Bhagavan made the spring of poesy well up in him.[2]

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[1] *Ventuyar vēgam taḍuppāṉ* – Decad on Annai, v. 23.

[2] *Ramana Smrti*, page 229.

The case of N.R. Krishnamoorthy Iyer is yet another. When tonsillectomy with asthma worsened, and allopathic, siddha and ayurvedic medicines proved fruitless in rendering relief, he declined to sit for lunch. But Bhagavan said, "Having come here to get rid of all your ills," thus implying that the lunch was the medicine, and it was.[3]

Is he not "the Blissful companion who seated forever in the hearts of devotees removes their misfortunes."[4]

Instances of devotees or their relatives being pulled away from the jaws of death are galore indeed.

Divine Love perfumed with perfection does not seek love anywhere but recognises it everywhere. Everything in the cosmos is but a reminder, a symbol and reflection of God, for the whole sun is reflected in every dew drop. True religion is to love all things great and small. Bhagavan became a lark of Parabrahman hymning His symphony. Abidance in the oneness of creation makes one perceive ever 'That' and every tree, flower and bush wears a halo.

The still sweep of his Grace and the aura of his serene peace and splendor of Love embraced, all and even the inherent animosity of wild animals was conquered. They readily accepted him, flocked to him and obeyed his commands. Wild animals, at his word, would move away lest the devotees should be frightened. Blackie, the dog, at his bidding, would take new devotees up the hill to all important places and bring them back. A dog of a visitor unknown to Bhagavan came seeking Bhagavan's company while its master was searching for it all over. Monkeys would come to him to display their newborns. They shared their joys and sorrows with him. When some devotees tried to drive them away, Bhagavan would say that these monkeys, with no thought of morrow, are the true sannyasins, for they have no house and store no food. A peahen always used to sleep in Bhagavan's lap and would not even accompany the peacock when it called.[5] A pair of pigeons, when placed on the lap of Bhagavan – an offering by a devotee – were petted with affection. At once closing their eyes without moving this way or that, they went into samadhi.

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[3] *Power of the Presence*, Part I, page 141-4.

[4] *Aṉbaragattu nāḷum amarndu agalādu iṉiduṟaindu tuṉbamagaṯṯrum tuṇaivaṉ* - *Ramana Puranam*, lines 111-2.

[5] Suri Nagamma, *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 24th August 1948.

They were like a pair of yogis, and Bhagavan, with his eyes fixed on them, himself went into samadhi.[6]

Aṉbar silar niriyāṇa kālattut
taṉ padumak-karam avar neñjat-talattu
uṟutti aṉṉār uyir uḷattiṉ nīṅgādu
niṟutti aṉṉārkkuḍaṉ niṟaipadam nērndum.[7]

"At the time of the final moments of some devotees, placing his lotus hand on their hearts so that their *jivatman* may never again come forth, he granted them Selfhood."

This act of boundless grace bestowed on Mother and Palaniswamy. This was vouchsafed as well as to Cow Lakshmi, Valli the deer and the crow. Bhagavan avowed to Mudaliar that "It is not true that one must attain realisation from being a man. Even an animal can." No one can know how many peacocks and monkeys gained realisation through him.

The black cow of the Goshala, while in its last throes of death, was favoured with a look of deliverance from bondage. The *jiva* remained in the body only for five minutes after his holy and benign look.[8]

Muruganar reveals, "My Father shines as the Eye of the exalted nature that harms no beings."[9]

The ocean of Love (*karuṇā-pūrṇa-sudhābdhe*) that he was, he reprimanded Echamma, who aimed to fulfil a vow of performing puja with a lakh tulasi leaves. "Why don't you pinch yourself and do the puja?" was his admonition.

And to Lakshmi, who started collecting beautiful flowers, he remarked, "You who neither watered nor helped the tree to grow in any way do not want to let others enjoy the beauty and hence deny it."

Bhagavan, the Holy Flame of Love, was divine compassion incarnate. His mere presence exuded the fragrance of heavenly peace, embraced all and led to divine healing. His mere presence proved to be a balm to a bereaved and bruised heart. His eyes – vehicles of grace – rained compassion and all the worries and wounds of the world simply faded

[6] Suri Nagamma, *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 17th January 1946.

[7] Muruganar, *Kīrttit Tiruvagaval*, lines 139-141.

[8] Suri Nagamma, *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 27th April 1946.

[9] *Uyirkku uṟukaṇ ceyya oruppaḍāc cemmai iyaṟku oru kaṇṇāi ilagum endai* - Muruganar, *Ramana Puranam*, lines 107-8.

away in his presence like ice melting before sunlight. Greater things are wrought in his presence than are dreamt of in all the philosophies. Chroniclers have provided snippets of those songs of Heaven and the silent whispers that stirred the hearts of many. The unheard melodies still continue, and many devotees will bear witness to it. Refreshing peace is the greatest miracle. Maharshi, the possessor of that peace, bestows peace on all. The all-conquering love emitted by the radiant glow of his eyes turns bitterness, anxiety and negative feelings into Love.

When a devotee turned to him in prayer assailed by raging tempests or arrows and slings of fortune, they were answered. Difficulties and sickness went away. When this was not possible, the spirit of fortitude and submission was gifted. A bereaved parent or a spouse full of anguish was provided peaceful repose deep within and timely anchorage, for "he was the warmth of their joys, salt of their tears and essence of their being, the Self of all."[10]

A woman from North India who married a man she loved very much against the wishes of her parents went to the seaside after marriage. One day, right in front of her eyes, he was killed by a shark. Two years of travelling through India visiting various Ashrams and holy men brought no peace of mind to this distraught widow. Her one question to all was, "If there is a God of Justice why should it happen?" She was aggressively angry and very unhappy. When she came to Tiruvannamalai and stayed with the Osbornes, the task of taking her to Bhagavan's Hall fell to Kitty, Arthur Osborne's young daughter. Kitty found it difficult to stay in the same room with the widow. Leaving her in the Hall, Kitty disappeared and came back only to collect her at lunch time. But the change that had come over her was unbelievable. The woman later disclosed that when she sat down in the Hall, Bhagavan just looked at her; she felt her question was no longer important. Not a word transpired, but Peace reigned in her heart. His smile, the bloom of the flower, Grace often bathed one in a lustrous glow of light and love.

One day, a man flung himself face down before Bhagavan in a paroxysm of weeping. But Bhagavan, seeming indifferent, turned his head aside and said nothing. After some time, the violence of the man's grief subsided and he became quiet. None spoke and he, rising reverently, made a deep salutation. Bhagavan, turning his head, smiled

[10] G.V. Subbaramaiah, *Sri Ramana Reminiscences*

upon him. It was as if all the flowers of the world had poured their fragrance in their midst.[11]

The words emanating from his divine tongue were simply *Vak Gita*. The parables from holy texts narrated with his skill as a raconteur transmuted the sufferings of the devotees into the solid awareness that we are not the body.[12]

The infinite Self that he was, to him there was none else. He was in the state where 'I alone am. No one belongs to me; Nor do I belong to anyone. I see none who can claim me as his. There is also none whom I claim as mine.'[13]

Yet, the still sad music of humanity did not go unheard, and tears were not passed over in silence. The poem of Manivachakar. "Thou bereft of pain and pleasure yet who hath both"[14] befitted him perfectly. Though beyond the magic of dualities and slumbering in sacred peace, he did sport a mind. Weeping with the weeping, he proved to be a saving God of Love and still proves to be so. This simultaneous abidance in the static state of unruffled Bliss as well as in the dynamic state of moving with perfection in the transactional world with all-embracing Love and Grace is a divine paradox indeed.

Bhagavan himself declared that his compassion for the suffering is beyond the ken of human comprehension. He, by way of assurance to a lady-devotee, wanted Mudaliar to translate two verses from Muruganar's *Sannidhimurai*. "Ramana bears upon his head because it is His fate, the burdens of all those who throw themselves at his Feet and regard him as their sole Refuge and peace comes naturally to all those who live with Him; whatever dangers may threaten His devotees they need have no fear."[15] He, the *bhavaroga vaidhya* (the physician for the ills of birth) also provided succour and relief from temporal ailments.

"He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness."[16] This vicarious suffering – owning the sins and sufferings of others as his – out

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[11] M.A. Piggott, *Fragrant Petals*, p. 266.
[12] Kanakammal on Mahalakshmi, *The Mountain Path*.
[13] *Devikalottaram*, v. 49.
[14] Iṉbamum tuṉbamum illāṉē uḷḷāṉē - *Shivapuranam*, line 70.
[15] Devaraja Mudaliar, *Day by Day*, 24-6-46.
[16] Gabriele Ebert, *Ramana Maharshi: His Life A biography*.

of infinite compassion is hailed by Muruganar: "He, by owning all the horrific sins of the devotees as his, becomes simply skin and bones."[17]

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa exclaimed that he felt his body was being trampled on when somebody walked over the grass while Vallalar felt himself withering away at the sight of a withering plant. When attendant Krishnaswamy beat monkeys that ran away with fruits on the sly, Bhagavan said, "It is not the monkeys that receive your beatings. It is I. The suffering is mine."[18]

Be it a pain in the finger of Sundaresa Iyer or the headache of another devotee, in the presence of Bhagavan they found themselves relieved of their pain but beheld Bhagavan holding his finger or head in his hand.

Bhagavan was totally detached from the body. However, his body was so pure and delicate that any kind of violent handling would leave a mark. Like Paramahamsa, he too experienced pain when some came near him, and once, he revealed that when some bowed to him he felt as if he were physically being beaten. Once when, before leaving, a party from Pandarpur, hugged him one by one, his body went red. Yet, the access to him was open to all.[19]

Once, supervisor (Manavasi) Ramaswamy Iyer took ill suddenly and lay dying with violent palpitations of the heart. The Maharshi, when informed, hastened to the place and sat near him, placing his hand on his head. Within five minutes, Ramaswamy Iyer got up looking quite normal. But the Maharshi sat on; he did not get up even after an hour. Kapali Sastri rubbed some almond oil which he had with him on Bhagavan's head. Later, when questioned as to what had happened then, Bhagavan said, "Well, Ramaswamy got up and I sat down. I was conscious when the oil was rubbed; it was pleasant and I sat on."[20]

One moonlit night, a devotee wept bitterly before Bhagavan, declaring himself to be a horrible sinner guilty of all the deadly sins. Though he was frequently in Bhagavan's presence, he regretfully

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[17] *Aṉbartam pollā ariṣṭam aṉaittum ēṯṯru eṉbu tōlāt tirumēṉi iḷaittum. - Kīrttit Thiruvagaval*.

[18] Roda MacIver, *Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 303.

[19] Rangan, *Power of the Presence*, Part I, p. 26.

[20] Kapali Sastri, *Maharshi*, p. 82-3.

admitted that he had registered no improvement in himself. He said that, once out of the precincts of Bhagavan's presence, he became a beast. His remorse and repentance were genuine and total. Bhagavan, the crown of compassion, and normally tender to people torn by their sense of guilt and regret, simply asked him in a dry tone, as if devoid of compassion, "What is there between us that you should come and weep in front of me?" Hurt and pained even more with heart-breaking sobs, the man declared that Bhagavan was his last refuge and he had nowhere else to go. Bhagavan watched him for some time. He, who never perceived the distinction between Guru and disciple, spoke in the same dry tone. "Am I your Guru that I should be responsible for your salvation? Did I ever say so?" Amidst pitiable sobs, the man emphatically stated, "If you are not, who else is? You are my Guru, my guardian angel, you will pity me and release me from my sins."

What follows is the most poignant part of the incident, filled with wonder and mystery. Mysteries are the means of Grace. He wept again, but Bhagavan, alert and to the point, demanded, "If so, what is my *dakshina* (offering given to a Guru)?" The man was at a loss. He told Bhagavan all that he had was his. Bhagavan wanted all the good that he had done in this world to be made over to him whole-heartedly. That having been done, Bhagavan dropped a bombshell, saying "It is not all you have. Give me all your sins as well." Alarmed and terror-stricken, the man cried that if only Bhagavan knew what he was asking for, he wouldn't ask, for if he took over the man's sins, his body would simply rot and burn. The man wept again. He almost beat a retreat from the deal, but Bhagavan would not budge. The ultimatum was that either the man gave both, or Bhagavan was not his master.

The visitor's scruples broke down, and when he made over his sins also to Bhagavan, he was told, "From now on there is neither good nor bad in you. You are just pure. Go and do nothing, neither good or bad. Remain yourself, remain WHAT YOU ARE." A great peace fell over the man. None knew what happened to the visitor, for he was never seen again in the Ashram, and probably the need was no longer there.[21]

[21] *Ramana Smrti*, Article by Krishna Bhikshu, p. 267.

Jnanis poised firmly in "*Nithya vibhuti*" place themselves in vicarious identity with the suffering humanity out of infinite compassion. This is purely an act of Shakti, *Nithya* in *Leela*. This vicarious suffering is not merely for human beings, but includes the nation also. Once, Bhagavan averted a national disaster by taking it vicariously on himself. On his way up the hill, he saw a dog chasing a squirrel on his path and interposed his walking stick to prevent the attack. The stick slipped and Bhagavan fell down. This accident synchronized exactly with a momentous political event, namely the sudden retreat of the Japanese fleet from the Madras Coast owing to the countermanding orders from the home government. Many devotees saw a profound significance in this coincidence and concluded that this time his vicarious suffering was but to save the nation.[22]

On Bhagavan's 60th Jayanti, Subbaramaiah read out a verse he had composed wherein he prayed that, since the fortune of the entire universe was in Bhagavan, he, taking on the lives of all devotees, may have the greatest longevity. Even as it was being read, Bhagavan shook his head and snapped his fingers as if to snuff out the sentiment. This act, as later incidents proved, acquired prophetic significance, for he did just the reverse of the prayer. In order to add to the length of others' lives he seemed to have cut short His physical existence.[23]

It was generally believed that the cause of Bhagavan's terminal illness was the assumption of this vicarious suffering. Even Ramakrishna Paramahamsa explained away his fatal disease of cancer as the result of the accumulated sins passed on to him by his devotees. Bhagavan appears to have remarked once, when a lady devotee pleaded to him to share his physical suffering with the devotees in the same way he insisted on sharing everything else that came his way, "Who do you think gave me these illnesses in the first place?"[24] Bhagavan's life itself is the most divine parable, and the last phase, providing the thrust of his quintessential teaching, is the most moving, glorious and beautiful poem.

Once, N.R. Krishnamurthy Iyer queried Bhagavan as to whether Bhagavan's body would not suffer on the account of taking on these sins and illnesses. Bhagavan replied in English, "Yes and no." He

[22] G.V. Subbaramaiah, *Reminiscences*, p. 111.
[23] G.V. Subbaramaiah, *Reminiscences*, p. 67.
[24] N.R. Krishnamurthy, *Power of the Presence*, p. 173.

further clarified, "The *Mukta Purusha* (liberated being) does not need his body once he has realised the Self. However, so long as he stays alive he has the power to drain off devotees' illnesses into his own body. Hence his body suffers for the time being. This is what is meant by yes. If he retires into solitude and remains in *Kevala Nirvikalpa Samadhi* completely oblivious of the body-world complex, the disease received in the body gets dissipated. When he returns to body consciousness the body is cured and restored to original health. Here the duration of the samadhi should be in adequate proportion to the seriousness of the disease concerned."[25]

After Bhagavan came down the hill to reside in the Ashram, countless numbers of people approached him daily, and he dealt with all of them with infinite compassion, which was his nature. In turn, the volume and nature of the vicarious suffering he assumed can well be imagined from the fact that almost every other visitor contributed towards the suffering of his body.

The excruciating pain he suffered was for the sake of the world. This explains his refusal to cure himself. In spite of the lacerating pain, he, with no awareness of the body, looked cheerful. His assurance "I am not going away, where can I go?" is indeed a boon for all eternity, more than keeping the miracle of his human frame alive for a few more years in the mortal world.

The teachings administered by Bhagavan provide perfect guidelines for a fruitful life on an empirical plane, while instructions on spiritual life read like scripture. His advice is, "Your duty is 'to be'; and not to be this and that. 'I AM' sums up the whole truth."[26]

"Namaskar or prostration means subsidence of the ego."[27]

"The highest form of Grace is Silence."[28]

"Divine Grace is essential for Realisation. But such Grace is vouchsafed only to him who is a true devotee, who has striven hard and ceaselessly on the path towards freedom.[29]

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[25] N.R. Krishnamurthy, *Power of the Presence*, p. 172.
[26] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 363.
[27] *Ibid*.
[28] *Ibid*., Talk 518
[29] Talk 29.

"Remaining firm in one's own state is the real seat or Asana."[30]

or

"Abidance in God is the only true posture."[31]

When two devotees were upset over the death of a king, "Whoever dies or is lost what is that to you? Die yourself and lose yourself, becoming one with love."[32]

"*Atma Sakshatkara* (Self Realisation) is thus only *anatma nirasana*. (giving up the non-Self)."[33]

"Grace is found by practice alone although it is here and now."[34]

"Even a single effort to still at least a single thought even for a trice goes a long way to reach the state of quiescence."[35]

"Happiness of solitude is not found in retreats. It is in the Self."[36]

"Pray to God and finish with 'Thy will be done'. Recognise the force of the Divine will and keep quiet."[37]

"The thought of God is Divine Favour. He is by nature Grace. The Master is the same as God."[38]

"The service of purifying your heart is alone the highest service."[39]

"The enlightening words of instruction that come from Guru's own Self-Realisation are *Ucchishtam* (prasad)."[40]

"Eat without thinking of the ego. Then it becomes Bhagavan's Prasad."[41]

"Brahmacharya means meditation on Brahman. It does not mean remaining celibate."[42]

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[30] *Ibid*, 574.
[31] *Ibid*, 234.
[32] *Ibid*, 236.
[33] *Ibid*, 565.
[34] Talk, 354.
[35] *Ibid* 609.
[36] Talk 459.
[37] *Ibid*, 594.
[38] *Ibid*, 29.
[39] Natanananda, *Power of the Presence*, p. 116.
[40] *Ibid* 119.
[41] Talk 228.
[42] Natanananda, *Power of the Presence*, p. 122

"Be still and know that I am God." But Bhagavan added a rider, "The Lord said 'know' and not 'think'."[43]

"The 'I' sense is the greatest *mantra*."[44]

"The purpose of creation is to know the enquirer."[45]

The advice to T.K. Sundaresa Iyer's son is worth recalling.

"Don't spend in excess of your income. You must be thrifty. Even a drop of any of – Fire, debt, sense objects and poison – is capable of destroying us."[46]

"You should be capable of making use of even straw while at the same time should also be ready to reject the entire cosmos as mere dust."[47]

When someone had spoken disparagingly of the Master, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer did not retort and wanted to know from Bhagavan the penalty for his failure to defend Bhagavan.

"Patience, more patience, tolerance, more tolerance," was the answer.[48]

"Self-reform automatically brings about social reform. Confine yourself to self-reform. Social reform will take care of itself."[49]

"Become envious of anyone lower than you. You must become very small. In fact, you must become nothing. Only a person who is nobody can abide in the Self."[50]

"*Maha Sunya* can be grammatically resolved as '*Maha asunya*' which means the Great Being."[51]

"The Self is the Real Book. You can glance anywhere. Nobody can take it away from you."[52]

To a social worker who wanted to go about setting right the world "You are like a starving beggar offering a feast to all comers,"[53] and to another devotee, Bhagavan asked "Do you think you would be a better administrator than God?"

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[43] G.V. Subbaramayya, *Power of the Presence*, Part III, p. 114.
[44] *Ibid*, p. 129.
[45] *Ibid*, p. 123.
[46] Annamalai Swamy, *Living by the Words of Bhagavan*, p. 71.
[47] To Viswanatha Swamy.
[48] Talk 235.
[49] Talk 282.
[50] Annamalai, *Living by the Teachings*, p. 126.
[51] Ibid, p. 115.
[52] Madhava Tirtha, *Power of the Presence*, p. 234.
[53] Krishna Bhikshu, *Power of the Presence*, Part III, p. 97.

"Stability in the Self is the Real Posture. The Real Book is the Self. The aim of all practices is to give up all practices. If you keep yourself still you will get spiritual help."[54]

One cannot be born again unless one dies. It is the death of *jivahood* – the reflecting medium of *samskāras* – that ends the nightmare of the ego and the night of sorrow. The body emptied of the ego becomes the shrine of God. We are of God and to Him we return. "A bird, however high and long, may roam and fly in the sky; it can have no place of rest other than earth. In the same way the *jivas* who rise from God and wallow in the illusory mire of life have to turn inward, retrace the path they came by and merge in Him."[55]

With eyes "an ocean of compassion that rain cool and nectar-like grace like those of a Mother"[56] and in silence blessing in an ethereal voice, He bears like a mighty pillar the welfare of devotees.[57] His words were born out of compassion, though they came from one who was where there are no words - they were flowers of jnana, the fragrance of which, when followed, leads one to a divine destination. His sermons in silence wrap those around in heavenly Peace. They are still on, and it is up to us to receive them.

The Guru is the best kin, the best donor. He wakes up the dormant divinity, provides a glimpse of the Infinite, peels off the layers of Maya, and leads one to Light. Bhagavan is One in the words of Jagadeeswara Sastri, "By paying obeisance to whose Lotus Feet, the abode gets transformed into Heaven, the wicked person of demerit becomes meritorious, the foe speedily becomes a friend, one with the ephemeral pleasures of a sovereign becomes liberated, Lord of Death who is His slave becomes a physician and saviour, and the greatest abuse turns into laurels." [58] ▲

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[54] Ibid.

[55] *Arunachala Ashtakam*, v. 9.

[56] *Taṇṇār aḷisēr dayām pudiyām tāyē – Ramana Puranam*, line 336.

[57] *Pēṇiyār vāzhap pizhaipaḍā vāgāya – Ramana Puranam*, line 91.

[58] *Tārāvali Stuti Shloka 18.*

How I Met the Maharshi

By Louis Hartz

I met Arthur Osborne in an internment camp in Bangkok during the second world war. At first I had little contact with him because he was very reserved. After some time, however, I approached him. I had a craving to understand and asked him point blank what is Truth. What sticks in my memory is how, sitting beside his bed in the common dormitory, he said: "I will tell you one truth—Infinity minus X is a contradiction in terms because by the exclusion of X the first term ceases to be infinite. You grant that?" Yes, I granted that.

"Well, then," he said, "think of God as Infinity and yourself as X and try to work it out." When I asked for more explanation he just said: "Think this over and come tomorrow at this time and tell me what you make of it."

I returned to my place in the dormitory, which was only some eight or ten steps distant, and suddenly it flashed upon me that he was right, that you cannot take anything away from the Infinite, and that I was not apart from it, only I had not known.

The thought made me so happy that I could hardly wait to speak to him the next day, but I did not like to disturb him earlier.

From that time onward, he started to instruct me, and after a few weeks, he showed me a photograph of the Maharshi. There was an urgency in his voice as he spoke of him, and he handled the photograph with reverence. I began to understand that there was only one 'I' and that it was in me and was everywhere.

The Maharshi grew so much in my heart that I felt him nearer to me than my parents or my wife. He lived more vividly in me than any person I had known. After some time we received permission to write a Red Cross letter to our families, and I used mine to write to the Maharshi and ask him for guidance.

Then the war ended and I left camp. The desire to enjoy life sprang up in me again. I was strongly drawn to the spiritual path but even more strongly for the time being to a worldly life. I wanted to make money, to have power and fine clothes, to be important. In camp I had eliminated day dreaming as far as possible. When I went to bed at night, I slept straight away. But now my nights were often filled with planning and scheming.

A few years later, when I was in Europe and due to return to Siam on business, I wrote to Osborne, who was living at Tiruvannamalai, to suggest that I should break my journey in India and stay there for a few days. He at once wrote back arranging to meet me and conduct me there and inviting me to stay at his house.

In Madras, we hired a car and drove to Tiruvannamalai. It was an old car, and I felt that I was being slowly roasted in the midday heat- When I let my eyes rest on the sun-baked scenery or the country folk sheltering under the wayside trees I saw only the face of the Maharshi looming up before me. Nothing else registered.

I was terribly scared that the Maharshi would look in my eyes and see into me. I cursed myself for a fool for coming to this desolate place, with its heat and discomfort. I don't know what prevented me turning back; perhaps I was afraid to show Osborne what a coward I was. The nearer we approached the Ashram the more I shrank from meeting the Maharshi.

It was nearly dusk when we arrived, and the Maharshi had already retired, but Osborne went in to see him and asked whether he would see me for a few moments. I entered the hall and saw an elderly man reclining on a couch, who gave the impression of great reserve and a certain shyness. It was not the severe Master or the Guru with the burning eyes that I had expected. Osborne explained who I was, and his replies were monosyllabic and sometimes in Tamil. With a slow movement of the head he turned to me and held my eyes for a moment. His eyes were like empty,

bottomless pools, and at the same time they worked like magic mirrors, because suddenly I felt at peace as though I had come home after a long journey.

I can't recall where I slept that night, but I do remember that before going to bed I sat and talked with a number of people, Indians and foreigners, at Osborne's place. One of them was a diplomat from some European country, stationed in China. He talked about seeing spirits and even conversing with them, and it struck me as funny that any one should be interested in such things at a place like this.

Sitting in the hall the next day, I saw that the Maharshi's smile was tender and gracious. I not only lost my fears but felt at ease. I had no questions to ask — before coming I had prepared a number of questions for the Maharshi that had been worrying me, but now I couldn't remember them. My doubts had simply evaporated. Questions seemed unimportant.

I felt that there was nothing strange about the Maharshi. He was just a man who was himself, whereas all of us were growing away from ourselves. He was natural; it was we who were not. We call him a saint or sage, but I felt that to be like him is the inheritance of everybody; only, we throw it away.

There were a lot of people in the hall — Indians and foreigners, learned professors and simple country people. I reminded the Maharshi about the Red Cross letter I had sent him and he replied that he wanted me to come and I had come. There was something childlike about him: he was free and natural and could laugh with the spontaneity that only a child shows.

A discussion started in the hall and they appealed to the Maharshi to say who was right. Some one spoke about unity and I objected that the word implied two to be united and that a better word was Oneness; Maharshi confirmed this. He said that there is only One, and that One is indivisible. I felt that he meant that the divisions are all unreal, just as we say rain, ice, water, coffee-water, washing water, though it is all water.

A group of devotees started singing, and I asked the Maharshi what he felt about it. He laughed and replied that it pleased them to sing and made them feel peaceful.

Next morning again I sat in the hall. There was a yogi with matted hair. The diplomat was there, sitting in concentrated thought. I wondered whether I should imitate him, but I did not feel like meditating. Suddenly the Maharshi looked at me with great intensity. His eyes took possession of me — I don't know how long it lasted, but I felt at ease and happy.

Afterwards a disciple who had been with him for twenty years told me that this was the silent initiation. I felt that it probably was, but I wanted to make sure, so in the hall that afternoon I said: "Bhagavan, I want your initiation."

And he replied: "You have it already."[1]

Knowing myself and feeling anxious about what would happen when I left his presence, I asked for some sort of reassurance from him, and he replied very firmly and decisively: "Even if you let go of Bhagavan, Bhagavan will never let go of you."

There was some whispering and exchange of glances when people heard that. The diplomat whispered to a Muslim professor who was sitting beside him and then the latter asked the Maharshi whether this guarantee applied only to me or to him also. The Maharshi did not look very pleased but replied briefly: "To all."

Nevertheless, I felt that there was something intensely personal in it, that it had been a confirmation of the initiation and a direct, personal guarantee of protection.

Certain it is that, whatever else may have happened, there has been no day since then when his face or his words have not influenced me. ▲

[1] This is the only occasion on which I have ever known the Maharshi give an express verbal confirmation of having given initiation to any one. It will be noted that the request was phrased in such a way that the confirmation could be given without any statement implying duality. (Editor)

Tirukkuṛaḷ: The wisdom of Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar

M.R. Kodhandram

Introduction

Tirukkuṛaḷ is one of the most widely read and acclaimed works in Tamil literature, believed to be about 2000 years old. It is a universal scripture (உலகப் பொதுமறை) that is common to all irrespective of their religion, caste, creed or nationality. The term *Kuṛaḷ* means anything short or concise. There are 1330 pithy couplets or Kuṛaḷs compiled under three sections — Virtue, Wealth and Love, which correspond to the three *purusharthas* or objects of human pursuit in life. There are 133 chapters each consisting of 10 couplets. In this prosody, each Kuṛaḷ has four words in the first line and three in the second. Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar, the author of this great work, must have written numerous Kuṛaḷs in his lifetime so that people could easily remember his teachings. Only 1330 Kuṛaḷs seem to have survived over the centuries and some great scholar must have taken the pains to compile and classify them under various chapters and sections for easy reading and understanding.

In Tamil Nadu, people have long considered *Tirukkuṛaḷ* to be their Veda in Tamil. It is like an encyclopaedia on life. It talks about all the aspects of life and teaches you how to lead your life so as to attain its purpose, which is Liberation. There seems to be a Kuṛaḷ for practically every situation one faces in life, and the solution for it has also been given clearly. It also teaches political leaders on all aspects of governance. There are chapters on military strategy,

which would be useful for a commander. There is also a chapter on agriculture, which can be of help to farmers. There is a wrong view prevailing among many that Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar never wrote about Liberation, which is the fourth and final *purushartha*, but stopped with Virtue, Wealth and Love, because there are only these three sections. The very first chapter dispels this misconception wherein the path of Liberation has been clearly shown. In addition, Chapter 36 talks about Self-Realisation and Chapter 45 shows the importance of obtaining a Guru to guide you in life. Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar says that without the support of a Guru, it is not possible to attain Liberation (Kuṛaḷ 449). Chapter 13 shows the importance of developing control over the mind and senses.

Tirukkuṛaḷ has been translated into a number of Indian and foreign languages over the years. Some say that, next to *The Bible* and *The Koran*, *Tirukkuṛaḷ* is the most widely translated work in the world. According to saint-poet Subramaniya Bharati, Tamil Nadu attained great glory by gifting Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar to the world. *Tirukkuṛaḷ* portrays a way of life and lays down a code of conduct which when practised diligently, will surely take one on the path of no return to this world of impermanence and misery.

Bhagavan had studied *Tirukkuṛaḷ* during his school days and was particularly fond of the book. We are herewith serialising a selection of Kuṛaḷs along with their English translation for the benefit of readers.

Section 1 — Virtue

1. Invocation: Surrender to the Lord

1. அகர முதல எழுத்தெல்லாம் ஆதி
   பகவன் முதற்றே உலகு.
   akara mudala ezuttellām ādi
   bhagavan mudaṭṛē ulagu.

Meaning

All the letters of the alphabet have the letter 'அ' as the beginning; so too, the whole world (of creation has emerged) only from the primordial state of Consciousness.

Commentary

The Tamil alphabet begins with the letter 'அ', which is referred to by the term *Akaram*. In Sanskrit it is *Akāra*. In the English language, the first letter is 'A'. In the Greek language, the first letter is Alpha, and it is similar in every language. The letters form the basis of any language and without them it is not possible to have any language. So too, the world of names and forms in which we live has to have a basis or origin. It could not have just materialised through magic, though we call the Lord as *Māyāvi*. That is why Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, Chap 10:33, that among all letters, I am the letter 'A'. A is also the first letter of the primordial syllable *AUM* which represents the Supreme Being. The Upanishads say that the 'A' sound is the essence of all speech. Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar says that the world has emerged from the primordial state of the Supreme Being, or Consciousness. This Consciousness is the source and origin from which the whole world of name and form has come about. First it was the ether that came out from the Consciousness like how foam comes from water. Ether is the subtlest of all the elements. From the ether, the other elements like air, fire, water and earth arose — each of the elements being grosser than the previous one, and the earth is the grossest of all. These elements combine to form the various objects we see in the universe. The whole universe is nothing but the modification of the one and only Consciousness. The inanimate objects of the world are formed when some of the elements combine. In the living beings, the body is formed by a combination of all the five elements.

Everything in the world is changing constantly, and also, the whole earth is in constant rotation. The river flows with respect to a bed that is unmoving, and the train moves on rails that are unmoving. Thus, there should be something that is unchanging and unmoving as the basis or substratum of the whole universe. That is the Consciousness from which everything has originated. It is all-pervading, and it has created all the objects of the world, including all the stars and planets of the universe which are just hanging in space. This Consciousness shines as the Self or Knower in us. We have come from this Consciousness and we have to eventually go back and merge in it. It is like the river merging in the ocean. The water vapour from the ocean rises up to

form the clouds and pours down as rains to form the river. Thus the river which originates from the ocean eventually reaches the ocean again and becomes one with it. The objects of the world, too, finally disintegrate, and the various elements go back to Nature or *Prakriti* (a product of Consciousness) from which all creation arises. So too, we have to go back to our own origin, which Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar calls Consciousness. This is the sole purpose for which we are born *janma* upon *janma*. This is the purpose of life. Once this purpose is achieved, we will not be born again.

2. கற்றதனால் ஆயபயன் என்கொல் வாலறிவன்
நற்றாள் தொழாஅர் எனின்?
kaṭṛadanāl āya-payan enkol vāl-aṛivan
naṭṛāḷ tozhāar enin?

Meaning

What benefit can one obtain through (mere book) learning, without devotion to the sacred feet (of a Guru) of Pure Intellect (and obtaining His Grace)?

Commentary

Here Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar is pointing out the insufficiency of mere book knowledge in elevating our life. The knowledge we gain through the study of scriptures must result in our inner transformation for it to be beneficial to us. It must bring about a transformation to our life and thinking; otherwise, it would be only a burden in the head and add to our vanity. Thus we need to apply our learning into practice in order to benefit from it. Is it possible for us to apply all that we learn into practice straightaway? No. We need the blessings and Grace of the Guru, Sadguru and God to first develop the correct understanding of what we have learnt from books and other sources. Our understanding normally would only be based on what we have learnt and experienced in the past. We tend to interpret the scriptures only from our existing knowledge, which would give us only a limited understanding. Therefore, we need the blessings and Grace of an enlightened Guru to give us the right understanding. Unless we have surrendered to a Guru, how can we learn and imbibe anything from him? We should be

able to sit at the feet of a Guru and learn from Him with devotion and humility. He has a pure intellect based on evolution and inner transformation to be able to interpret the scriptures for us in the right manner and also teach us many things from his direct experience. It is not enough if you master the teachings, but you should value the master too. If you read a book without love for the author, you will only get information. But if you have love and reverence for the author, it will give you immense faith, and you will strive to put the teachings into practice with dedication. Unless knowledge is translated into practice, it will not become wisdom. Mere book learning would only add to our scholarship and not make us wise in any way. It may give us the pride of learning which will strengthen the ego and prevent us from surrendering to a Guru.

Only when we surrender to a Guru, we will be able to understand properly what we have learnt. Thus we need to develop devotion and faith in our Guru, Sadguru and God and surrender to them to obtain their blessings and Grace if we want to develop the right understanding of whatever we learn. This means that the knowledge we have gained from these teachings should become a feeling in us. We would then be able to practise what we have learnt, and this alone would transform and purify our lives. Moreover, you will be able to hold on to the Guru and His teachings only if you have devotion and faith in him.

Suppose you come to Tiruvannamalai and learn the teachings of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. You will be able to benefit easily if you have devotion to Bhagavan and Arunachala. Otherwise, you will come and go only as a tourist. You would probably buy a few books at the Ashram and read them, but your understanding would only be limited and shallow if you do not have devotion. However, if you read the books with devotion, you will be able to understand the teachings better and at a deeper level because the Grace of Bhagavan and Arunachala will help you to understand properly so that the knowledge becomes a feeling. Thus we need to develop devotion and surrender to the Guru, Sadguru and God if we want to learn and practise the teachings. Only then we would be able to transform and evolve in life. Mere book learning will not suffice. Moreover, the blessings of the Guru are very important to

practise the knowledge we have gained from him. Karna's archery failed him when he needed it most because he could not get the wholehearted blessings of Parashurama, from whom he had learnt the skill through deceit. In the Mahabharata war, he was not able to remember the mantra for using the *Brahmastra* taught by his guru just when he needed it. Therefore, Arjuna was able to kill him. Thus we need the blessings and Grace of the Guru, Sadguru and God for the practise of whatever we have learnt, for which we need to have devotion, faith, and surrender. ▲

Mahaprasadam

Sneha Choudhury

I asked you
O compassionate One
In my ignorance-
For things worthless
For comfort in my worldly life.
You who know
What is best for me
Made me your special child
And gave, what you deigned I merit.
Every day I eat the *mahaprasadam*
And sing Thy Glory, O *Sarvantaryami*!

Essence of Sri Ramana Paravidyopanishad

Part 2 – Self-Knowledge and Self-Ignorance

Annotated by V. Krithivasan

Dr. Lakshmana Sarma begins the core teachings of Bhagavan with a verse that describes the *svaroopa lakshanam* (the essential nature) of the Self. This verse echoes the first *Mangala Shloka* of *Ulladu Narpadu* (*Reality in Forty Verses*) of Bhagavan.

The Nature of the Real Self

ज्ञानस्वरूपं निजसत्यमेकं स्वयंप्रकाशं हृदिसत्यमस्ति।
संशान्तचित्तेन हृदिस्थितिर्या सा तस्य बोधोऽपि विमुक्ति भावः।। (7)

jñānasvarūpaṃ nijasatyamekaṃ svayaṃprakāśaṃ hṛdisatyamasti
saṃśāntacittena hṛdisthitiryā sā tasya bodho'pi vimukti bhāvaḥ

In the Heart there dwells the Reality which is pure non-dual Consciousness, the Real Self. To be in the Heart with the mind quiescent is the Knowledge (Awareness) of Him. It is the Supreme State of Mukti *(Liberation).*

Mr. V. Krithivasan is a highly accomplished author of many articles and was the editor of *Ramana Jyothi*, the magazine of the Ramana Kendram in Hyderabad. He has been associated with the Kendram in various capacities for over forty years.

Reality and Existence are one and the same in Vedanta. *Bhagavad Gita* says, "Of the unreal there is no existence; of the Real there is no non-existence."[1] When asked what reality is, Bhagavan says, "Reality must always be real. It is not with forms and names. That which underlies these is Reality. It underlies limitations, being itself limitless. It underlies unrealities, itself being Real. Reality is that which is. It is as it is. It is beyond speech, beyond all expressions."[2] In a comprehensive manner, this verse lists out the essential nature of the Self, which is Reality:

***Self is *Jnana-svaroopam* (Pure Consciousness)**

Experience of the Self goes by the name *Jnana* or knowledge. This knowledge is not like the ordinary knowledge where there is a knower, known and the act of knowing. Self-knowledge is direct awareness of the one Reality where subject-object relationship has ceased to exist and one abides in Pure Awareness. Bhagavan says, "You are awareness. Awareness is another name for you. There is no need to attain or cultivate it. All that you have to do is give up being aware of other things, that is of the not-Self. Pure Awareness alone remains then, and that is the Self."[3]

***It is *swayam prakasa,* self-luminous.**

Reality is not mere Existence (*Sat*), it is also Consciousness *(Chit)*. It knows Itself by Itself. To see external objects, light is needed, but to see the light itself, no other light is needed. Consciousness is such a light. Explaining the opening stanza of *Sad Vidya,* Bhagavan said, "*Sat* (Being) is *Chit* (Knowledge Absolute); also *Chit* is *Sat*; what is, is only one. Otherwise the knowledge of the world and of one's own being will be impossible. It denotes both being and knowledge. However, both of them are one and the same."[4]

***It dwells in the Heart, without any activity of the mind**

The Self is said to dwell in the Heart in the sense that it is the core of one's Being, the centre of all that is. It does not refer to the physical heart.

[1] *Bhagavad Gita,* 2.16.
[2] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 140.
[3] *Day By Day with Bhagavan,* 24-7-46.
[4] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 506.

On being asked about the confusion regarding the location of Heart, Bhagavan says, "A location is however given to it with reference to the body. You know that you are. Where are you? You are in the body and not out of it. Yet not the whole body. Though you pervade the whole body still you admit of a centre where from all your thoughts start and wherein they subside. Even when the limbs are amputated you are there but with defective senses. So a centre must be admitted. That is called the Heart. The Heart is not merely the centre but the Self. Heart is only another name for the Self."[5]

In that Reality, there is no place for thought, as thought would imply duality – the existence of a thinker and an object of thought. Though the Self is shining all the time, it is not self-evident when the mind is active. One becomes aware of it only when the mind becomes still. The incessant stream of thoughts 'hides' the Self as it were, with the mind's attention being held on the forms of perception rather than on the substratum of perception. Stillness of mind is emphasized by Bhagavan as the sole requisite to realize the Self.

***Liberation or Mukti is only this state of thought-free, non-dual Consciousness**

Our scriptures say that the ultimate goal of human life is to attain *Mukti* or Liberation. But the concept of Liberation varies from one path to another. For most paths/Faiths, *Mukti* is a *loka,* a place like *Brahma Loka*, *Kailasa*, *Vaikunta* or Heaven and such like. But Bhagavan says categorically that it is not a place but one's own natural state of Being: "People think that freedom (*moksha*) is somewhere yonder and should be sought out. They are wrong. Freedom is only knowing the Self within yourself. Concentrate and you will get it. Your mind is the cycle of births and deaths (*samsara*)."[6] When the mind subsides in the Heart never to rise up again, that state alone is Liberation, according to Bhagavan.

Dr. Lakshmana Sarma has wonderfully condensed the core teachings of Bhagavan in this beautiful verse.

Now the question arises, 'Why is the One Self, which is self-luminous and which resides in me always, not perceived by me? All

[5] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 403.
[6] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 31.

that I perceive or experience is myself as a limited individual and the world of multiplicity around!' According to Advaita Vedanta, *avidya* or ignorance is the reason. Ignorance takes the form of superimposition, whereby the Real is hidden and the unreal is perceived as Real.

Ignorance of the Self (*avidya)*

आधारसत्ये विमले तु तस्मिन् निजस्वरूपे मनसोपक्लृप्तम्।
अविद्यया विश्वममुं निमील्य भाति स्वयं सत्यवदज्ञतायाम् ।। (9)

ādhārasatye .vimale tu tasmin nijasvarūpe manasopaklptam |
avidyayā viśvamamuṃ nimīlya bhāti svayaṃ satyavadajñatāyām ||

*The world appearance is superimposed due to ignorance (*avidya*) by the mind on the substratum which is the Real Self; the world shines then as real, concealing Reality, so long as ignorance lasts.*

Superimposition, or *adhyasa*, as it is called in Advaita Vedanta, is explained in great depth by Adi Sankara in his commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*, a seminal work of Veda Vyasa. Simply defined, it is the apparent presentation of the attributes of one thing upon another. When attributes of the body are superimposed on the Self, one says, 'I am fat' or 'I am fair' or 'I am female.' If attributes of the senses are superimposed on the Self, one says, 'I am deaf' or 'I am blind.' If attributes of the mind are superimposed on the Self, one says, 'I am happy' or 'I am miserable.' Sages like Bhagavan Ramana tell us that the Self is the Reality underlying the world. The world is incorrectly superimposed upon the Self and is thus seen to be existing as a separate entity. Each and every superimposition made upon the Self is not really Real. A phenomenon is not Real merely because it seemingly appears. According to Bhagavan Ramana, appearance is not the mark of Reality; invariability, non-sublation, immutability is its mark.[7]

Muruganar equates ignorance with *adhyasa* in this *Padamaalai* verse:

அத்தியா சங்கா ணவித்தையனந் தானந்த
வித்தையே யுள்ளதொரு மெய்ப்பொருளாம் பாதம் (3036)

[7] John Grimes, *Mountain Path*, April 2017.

addiyaasam kaan aviddai anantha ananda - viddaiye ulladoru meypporulaam paadam

Avidya *is an erroneous superimposition (*adhyasa*). The infinite, blissful Consciousness alone is the one existing reality.*

The classic illustration used in Advaita Vedanta to explain superimposition is described in the next verse.

निमील्य रज्जुं भुजगः स्वयं सन् मन्दान्धकारे सति भाति यद्वत्।
आत्मानमेवं भुवनं निमील्य भाति स्वयं सत्यवदज्ञतायाम्।। (10)

nimīlya rajjuṃ bhujagaḥ svayaṃ san mandāndhakāre
sati bhāti yadvat|
ātmānamevaṃ bhuvanaṃ nimīlya bhāti svayaṃ
satyavadajñatāyām||

As in dim light the (illusory) snake, concealing the real rope is taken as real in its own sight, so the world, concealing the Self, appears as real in its own sight, in the state of ignorance.

Seeing a rope in dim light, it is mistaken for a snake - an error of perception or *adhyasa.* We mistakenly superimpose the image of an illusory snake onto the real rope. This error or lack of knowledge leads to fear. In a similar manner, we superimpose the illusion of the world, including the ego that sees the world, onto the Self, which leads to suffering. The circumstance under which a rope is mistaken for a snake is that of inadequate light – one sees 'something' being there but not its true identity as a rope. The mind projects something of its own, namely, the non-existing snake, onto the existing rope. For superimposition to take place, there must be a substratum or *adhara satyam.* The real rope is the substratum upon which the unreal snake is projected. Superimposition cannot take place in total darkness, in which the rope itself cannot be seen, or in total light, where the rope is seen as it is.

The substratum on which the world (together with the ego) is projected is the Real, ever existing Self. "It is possible for the Pure Radiant Being to rise up as ego only in Its Light diffused through darkness known as Original Ignorance," says Bhagavan. Explaining further, he says, "Just as a rope-snake cannot be seen in broad daylight,

nor rope itself in thick darkness, so also the world appears neither in the *samadhi* state of Self-shining pure Being nor in deep sleep, swoon, etc. Only in Reflected Light (Light mixed with Darkness or knowledge soiled by Ignorance) can the world, not independent of its Source, seem to rise up, flourish and be resolved. Its diversity too cannot be exclusive of Reality, the original Source. Here a play is going on in which the One Single Being becomes manifold, is objectified and then withdrawn."[8]

The ignorant view of oneself as a limited individual is the starting point of the cycle of births and deaths. This is brought out in the following verse.

अविद्ययाऽऽत्मा वपुषा मितश्च सुखी च दुःखी च भवपाश बद्धः।
प्रतीयतेऽज्ञोऽपि पृथक् परस्मादात्मा तु साक्षात्पर एव नान्यः।। (11)

avidyayā''tmā vapuṣā mitaśca sukhī ca duḥkhī ca bhavapāśa baddhaḥ|
pratīyate'jño'pi pṛthak parasmādātmā tu sākṣātpara eva nānyaḥ ||

Because of ignorance, the Self is believed to be limited to the body. Bound by bonds of desires to the world, the ignorant individual enjoys and suffers and believes that he is distinct from the Supreme Being. Really, he is identical with the Supreme Being, no other.

The truth expressed in this verse is adopted from the first verse of *Ekatma Panchakam* where Bhagavan says:

When, forgetting the Self, one thinks
That the body is oneself and goes
Through innumerable births
And in the end remembers and becomes
The Self, know this is only like
Awaking from a dream wherein
One has wandered over all the world.[9]

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[8] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 323.
[9] *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Arthur Osborne

Forgetting that we are the Self and believing that the 'I' is limited to the body, we delude ourselves into taking birth in this world again and again. After innumerable lives, eventually the knowledge of the Self dawns on us, putting an end to the cycle of birth and death. This liberation from worldly life is like waking up from a dream in which one goes on a world tour.

The Self is all pervading and is the only Reality. But due to Maya (illusion), an individual is deluded into believing that the 'I' is limited to the body. This mistaken identity with the physical body is the primary ignorance and the cause for the *samsaric* cycle. This ignorance covers up the Bliss of the Self and immerses the individual in the sorrows of worldly life. The only way out is for the individual to realize that this world is just an illusion and worldly life is like a dream. When his true identity with the Self is gained, he wakes up into the infinite Bliss of the Self.

Interestingly, the nature of Self-realization is such that it dawns on the individual that he has all along been the Self alone; ignorance of his true identity, the struggles to overcome the cycle of births and deaths, and in the end 'becoming' the Self are all part of the dream!

संसारिता स्वस्य ततो मृषैव बुध्येत तन्निर्मनने पदे तु।
"नह्यस्त्यविद्या मनसोऽतिरिक्ता मनोह्यविद्या भवबन्धरूपा" ।। (12)

saṃsāritā svasya tato mṛṣaiva budhyeta tannirmanane pade tu |
"nahyastyavidyā manaso'tiriktā manohyavidyā bhavabandharūpā" ||

Hence this world-wandering of the self (the samsaric *cycle) is also just an illusion. But this can be verified only in the mind-free State. "Apart from the mind there is no ignorance; the mind itself is ignorance, which is bondage to life in the world."*

Earlier, it was said that ignorance is 'caused by the mind.' But here, Lakshmana Sarma points out that it is more accurate to say that the mind is synonymous with ignorance. The second line of this verse is a quotation from Sri Shankara's *Vivekachudamani*.[10] If there is mind,

[10] *Vivekachudamani*, v.169.

there is ignorance. As mind is the cause of transmigration (repeated births), it is the cause of bondage too (*bhava bandha hetu*). When the mind unfolds, the world also unfolds. If the mind is destroyed, our world comes to an end. The world of our experience is a network of relationships of infinite variety weaved by the mind. Destruction of the mind is the aim of *sadhana.* When the mind keeps functioning, identification with the non-Self goes on, and repeated cycle of birth and death keeps happening.

The important point to note is that only when the mind-free state is reached can one realize that one had been under an illusion all along, since the illusion is anchored in the mind. While one dreams, the reality of the dream is never doubted because the mind believes in whatever it creates. Stepping out of the mind alone brings to end the illusion of samsaric life. Bhagavan glorifies one who has achieved this feat as *utkrishta yogi* (extraordinary yogi).[11]

निमीलितः स्वो भवितैव तावद्यावत् स्वतः सत्यमिदं विभाति।
तथा न भायान्मनसि प्रणष्टे नाशाय तस्मान्मनसो यतेत।। (14)

nimīlitaḥ svo bhavitaiva tāvadyāvat svataḥ satyamidaṃ vibhāti |
tathā na bhāyānmanasi praṇaṣṭe nāśāya tasmānmanaso yateta ||

The Self will remain concealed so long as the world is taken as real. It will cease to be so taken, when the mind is once and for all extinguished; hence one must strive to extinguish the mind.

The main characteristic of the mind is its objectifying tendency, or knowledge of the 'other.' The Self's essential non-dual Consciousness is split twofold by the mind into 'me' and 'not-me'. A subject-object duo is formed, and in the process, the world springs up. As long as the mind is active, the world vision will continue to occupy the mind totally — not just the external world of objects but also the internal world of thoughts and perceptions. When the mind subsides, as it does in deep sleep or swoon, the world vision also disappears. It reappears when the mind rises once again from its source, which is the Self. By Yogic practices, it is possible for the mind to sink in its source and experience samadhi. According to Bhagavan, this is only a temporary abeyance of the mind. Such abeyance does not prevent the mind from rising again.

[11] *Upadesa Saram,* v. 15.

The innate tendencies or accumulated *vasanas* will cause the emergence of the mind again and again. *Vasanas*, which form the seeds of the mind, will have to be annihilated for the mind to sink permanently in its source. This is called the destruction of the mind, *manonasa.*

Bhagavan says that the path of scrutinizing constantly what the mind is, is the direct path, and it will accomplish for the seeker, *manonasa.* It happens by realizing that in fact, there is no mind![12] Going back to the illustration of snake and the rope, the snake is 'killed' by the knowledge that there was no snake in the first place. This knowledge alone destroys the false superimposition. Similarly, the knowledge that there is no mind alone is mind's destruction. The substratum, the Self, is revealed in all its glory with the realization of the non-existence of the mind.

Self-surrender also destroys Ignorance

Next, Lakshmana Sarma briefly touches upon the alternate path recommended by Bhagavan, namely Self-surrender, for overcoming *avidya* and merging the mind with the Supreme Being.

भीत्याऽथवा जन्ममृतिप्रवाहात् प्रपद्यते चेच्छरणं महेशम्।
नश्येदविद्या कृपयैव तस्य तदा स्थितः स्यान्निजसत्यभावे।। (17)

bhītyā'thavā janmamṛtipravāhāt prapadyate ceccharaṇaṃ maheśam |
naśyedavidyā kṛpayaiva tasya tadā sthitaḥ syānnijasatyabhāve ||

Alternately, if one takes refuge in God due to fear of the flood of births and deaths, then by His Grace alone, ignorance will cease, and then one will become established in the true state of the Self.

This verse conveys the same meaning as the second *Mangala Shloka* of *Ulladu Narpadu*.

The fear of death is the trigger that causes one to ponder deeply about the purpose of life. In many, this fear passes off quickly. But for some, this fear takes root and does not leave without changing one's outlook on life entirely.

[12] *Upadesa Saram,* v. 17.

"Fearing the serpent of death, man runs from place to place, but finds no haven of security anywhere. But, O Lord, at last by some good fortune he comes across Thy feet, and living there in total surrender, attains to peace. Thereupon death withdraws from him."[13]

Helplessness of one's own ability in solving this fundamental fear makes an individual turn towards a Higher Power. While explaining the second *Mangala Shloka* of *Ulladu Narpadu*, Bhagavan says, "All know that they must die some time or other; but they do not think deeply of the matter. All have a fear of death: such fear is momentary. Why fear death? Because of the 'I-am-the-body' idea. All are fully aware of the death of the body and its cremation. That the body is lost in death is well-known. Owing to the I-am-the-body notion, death is feared as being the loss of Oneself. Birth and death pertain to the body only, but they are superimposed on the Self, giving rise to the delusion that birth and death relate to the Self. In the effort to overcome birth and death man looks up to the Supreme Being to save him. Thus are born faith and devotion to the Lord. How to worship Him? The creature is powerless and the Creator is All-powerful. How to approach Him? To entrust oneself to His care is the only thing left for him; total surrender is the only way. Therefore, he surrenders himself to God. Surrender consists in giving up oneself and one's possessions to the Lord of Mercy. Then what is left over for the man? Nothing — neither himself nor his possessions. The body liable to be born and to die having been made over to the Lord, the man needs no longer worry about it. Then birth and death cannot strike terror. The cause of fear was the body; it is no longer his; why should he fear now? Or where is the identity of the individual to be frightened? Thus the Self is realised and Bliss results."[14]

भक्त्या परस्मै स्वनिवेदनं यत् प्रपत्तिमेतां निगदन्ति सन्तः।
तद्भक्तिरीशे नवोपधिष्टा कार्या मुमुक्षोः श्रवणादिरूपाः।। (18)

bhaktyā parasmai svanivedanaṃ yat prapattimetāṃ nigadanti santaḥ|
tadbhaktirīśe navopadhiṣṭā kāryā mumukṣoḥ śravaṇādirūpāḥ ||

[13] *Srimad Bhagavatam,* Canto X-3-27.
[14] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 567.

The wise call offering of oneself to God through devotion as 'self-surrender'. Hence the seeker of deliverance must practice devotion to God, which is described as ninefold, consisting of listening and the rest.

Devotion to a personal God, for most people, starts with the idea of fulfilling desires of various kinds like those for wealth, material possessions, and eminence etc. It could also begin with the idea of getting relief from physical or mental agony, securing relief from adversity or fears of various kinds. Whatever the motive, belief in and devotion to a Higher Power is termed as *bhakti*, and it sows the seed of love for God transcending personal motives and gains. Such devotion gradually cleanses the mind of the devotee and makes him more virtuous. Eventually, he starts loving God for His sake and gets completely immersed in this unconditional devotion. Such a devotion culminates in total Self-surrender, or *atma nivedanam.* The result of *atma nivedanam* is egolessness, which is the same state as that reached by one who embarks on *atma vichara*. In the absence of ego, ignorance also dissolves, and the Supreme State is reached by both types of aspirants.

Bhagavan referred to a verse written by Nammazhvar, one of the foremost Saints belonging to the *Visishtadvaita* philosophy, to illustrate the point that the ultimate goal of merging in the Supreme State is achieved by both the paths, namely, *atma vichara* and *atma nivedanam.*

Not knowing who I was,
I used to speak of 'I' and 'mine'.
But I am You and mine is You,
Lord Whom all the gods adore — (Nammazhvar)[15]

Mention is made of nine types of *Bhakti*, as given out in *Srimad Bhagavatam*, each of which, when taken up with intense efforts, has the power to lead one to deliverance. These are: *sravana* (hearing about Him), *keertana* (singing about Him), *smarana* (remembering Him), *padasevana* (serving Him), *archana* (worshipping Him), *vandana* (offering obeisance to Him), *dasya* (being His servant), *sakya* (being His comrade) and *Atma Nivedana* (surrendering oneself to Him). Surrender and Bhakti will be discussed elaborately in later sections. ▲

[15] *Day By Day with Bhagavan,* 23-1-46, Devaraja Mudaliar, Sri Ramanasramam.

Wall carving in Mother's Shrine

D. Thiyagarajan

KEYWORD

Ātmānaṁ Paryupāsayet: Worship the *ātman*

Part Six

B.K. Croissant

The *Parayana*: *The Poetic Works of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi* gives a brief introduction to an important text that is chanted regularly at Sri Ramanasramam. It goes as follows:

"*Atma Sakshatkara* is the chapter on Self-Realisation in an *upa-agama* text known as *Sarvajnanottara*, 'The Pinnacle of all Knowledge', translated from the Sanskrit original into Tamil by Bhagavan on the spur of the moment in 1933. It consists of instructions in the path of Self-knowledge given by Lord Śiva to his son Guha — Lord Subrahmanya — and serves as an appropriate and poignant advaitic supplement to Bhagavan's teaching."[1]

The truth of the matter, however, is that instead of the text serving as a supplement to Bhagavan's teaching, it is Bhagavan who supplements the Sanskrit text. In other words, we are given instruction concerning

[1] Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2006, p. 167.

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.

a new way to attain reality and gain salvation, but when Bhagavan's *brahmāstram* 'Who am I?' is practised persistently, the entire text is infused with new life and astounding vitality! This article is the second in a series of three that attempts to demonstrate, with the use of keywords, how *ātma vicāra*, which includes *bhakti* or complete surrender, greatly heightens and intensifies the import of ancient texts in general. In that way, mature devotees are given a big push forward in their practice.[2]

Let us pause a moment to see how Lord Śiva's teaching to his son Guha in *Ātma Sākṣātkāram* compares to the teaching of Ramana Maharshi. In both instances the goal, namely liberation from bondage and the cycle of birth and death, is the same, and completely eliminating the mind or thought is essential. Ceaseless contemplation on the *ātman* without thinking is the sole refuge for earnest and sincere seekers. Because there are no thoughts, it is not meditation on an object but merely *being*, which constitutes direct perception (*aparokṣa*) and is the highest state. In both instances one *becomes* pure consciousness by persisting in the practise of simply *being*. One knows consciousness through consciousness which knows no other and is known by no other. Reveling in the *ātman* alone is supreme bliss.

In the previous article, the importance of removing doubts, thereby gaining firm conviction that 'I am Śiva' rather than the elusive 'I' known as mind or ego, was the subject, using the keyword '*na saṁśayaḥ*'. In this article, the focus is on worshipful self-attention without thought. Why? Because the very heart of *Ātma Sākṣātkāram* is direct perception, and direct perception can only be gained by constant contemplation of the *ātman* in a state free of the ego. In fact a considerable number of its 62 verses culminate in the unequivocal instruction to meditate on, attend to and worship the *ātman* without thought. In verses 20-40 especially, almost every one of them urges us to abandon all other practices, such as *japa* and rituals which involve the body, speech and mind, and concentrate single-pointedly on the *ātman*. It's a mighty drum beat, persistent, consistent and unrelenting.

[2] This idea is not new but has been the consistent experience of the author in studying ancient advaitic texts over the years. Michael James has very beautifully articulated the truth of this particular aspect of Bhagavan's manifestation in his many writings and videos.

Given so many verses exhorting unceasing contemplation of the *ātman* without thinking, it is no surprise that there would be multiple Sanskrit words called into service. One of them is *paryupāsayet*, from the compound *paryupās* that is composed of the prefixes *pari* ('all around, about') and *upa* ('near to, by the side of, with, under, down') joined with the root ās ('to sit, lie, rest'). *Paryupās* then means 'to sit round, surround, encompass; to be present at, share in, partake of; to approach respectfully, attend upon, worship'. Think of Muruganar, always seated at the feet of Bhagavan day in and day out! Persistent and unrelenting. In the context of *Ātma Sākṣātkāram*, the recurring *ātmānaṁ paryupāsayet* is an injunction to contemplate, meditate on or worshipfully attend only to the *ātman*.

In verses 20 and 21 of *Ātma Sākṣātkāram,* Lord Śiva states that without directly experiencing the *ātman*, explanations of it are fruitless and cause for confusion of the intellect. The seeker will attain whatever he concentrates his thoughts upon again and again. In verse 22, He makes it clear that what a discriminating seeker should direct his attention to, without seeing himself as separate, is the *ātman*. Since the *ātman* is one without a second and all-pervasive, he should meditate only on that. In verses 23-29, Lord Śiva states that knowledge of the *ātman* is the sole refuge for the *jīva* drowning in the relentless cycle of birth and death, and there is no greater blessing to be attained than that. The *ātman* is not *prāṇa*, *apāna* or the senses, mind and such. It is not inside or outside, across, above or below. It is, however, *śūnya*, devoid of everything other than itself. In verse 30, *ātmānaṁ paryupāsayet* appears as a refrain for the first time.

नैव शून्यं न चाशून्यमशून्यं शून्यमेव च |
पक्षपातविनिर्मुक्तमात्मानं पर्युपासयेत् ||

naiva śūnyaṁ na cāśūnyam aśūnyaṁ śūnyam eva ca
pakṣapāta vinirmuktam ātmānaṁ paryupāsayet

It is not void and not non-void. Also it is non-void and void. Completely free from partiality, one should worship the ātman.[3]

[3] Translations of the Sanskrit verses in this article are by the author with the assistance of her Sanskrit teacher Marcia Solomon. In 1999, Sri Ramanasramam published *Atma Sakshatkara Prakaranam* with the original Sanskrit text in Bhagavan's handwriting. The English translation by D.H. Ramamurthy was based on both the Sanskrit verses and their translation in Tamil by Bhagavan.

The first line of the verse is full of contradictions, all of which Bhagavan beautifully resolves in his explanation of the void. "It is the mind that sees the objects and has experiences and that finds a void when it ceases to see and experience, but that is not 'you'. You are the constant illumination that lights up both the experiences and the void. It is like the theatre light that enables you to see the theatre, the actors and the play while the play is going on but also remains alight and enables you to say there is no play on when it is all finished."[4]

Do you hear the drum beat in the second line? Since the *ātman* extends and pervades everywhere, worshipfully attend only to it! In his translation, Bhagavan compares the *ātman* to ether and adds that it must be contemplated 'at all times'.

Verses 31 and 32 also contain the refrain *ātmānaṁ paryupāsayet*, accompanied by words that can only point to but never grasp the indescribable nature of the *ātman*.

निरामयं निराधारं वर्णरूपविवर्जितम् |
निरञ्जनं गुणातीतमात्मानं पर्युपासयेत् ||

nirāmayaṁ nirādhāraṁ varṇa-rūpa-vivarjitam
nirañjanaṁ guṇātītam ātmānaṁ paryupāsayet

Without suffering or substratum, free from caste and form, unblemished and beyond attributes, one should worship the ātman.

निराश्रयं निरालम्बमप्रमेयमनौपमम् |
स्वभावविमलं नित्यमात्मानं पर्युपासयेत् ||

nirāśrayaṁ nirālambam aprameyam anaupamam
svabhāva-vimalaṁ nityam ātmānaṁ paryupāsayet

Without refuge, without support, immeasurable, beyond comparison, flawless by nature and eternal, one should worship the ātman.

In verse 31, Bhagavan adds that one must meditate 'forever and unceasingly' and, in verse 32, 'with a joyous heart'.

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[4] *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, A. Devaraja Mudaliar, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2002, p. 278 (21-7-46).

Note that verses 33-35 recall the well-known verses 5-9 in the *Kena Upaniṣad* where worship of Brahman is invoked, and the refrain contains the verb *upāsate*. *"That which is not expressed through speech but that by which speech is expressed; that, verily know thou, is* Brahman*, not what (people) adore* (tad eva brahma tvaṁ viddhi nedam yad idam upāsate). *That which is not thought by the mind but by which, they say, the mind is thought (thinks); that, verily, know thou, is* Brahman *and not what (people) here adore. That which is not seen by the eye but by which the eyes are seen (see); that, verily, know thou, is* Brahman *and not what (people) here adore. That which is not heard by the ear but by which the ears are heard (hear); that, verily, know thou, is* Brahman *and not what (people) here adore. That which is not breathed by life, but by which life breathes, that, verily, know thou, is* Brahman *and not what (people) here adore."*[5]

Returning to *Ātma Sākṣātkāram*, in verses 33-35, another verb, *bhāvayet***,** which can also mean 'one should mediate or contemplate upon', takes a turn. Here it appears consistently in three consecutive verses.

33. *Know that having given up all actions, having gained desirelessness and having withdrawn from association [with people], one should thereafter always meditate* **(**bhāvayet**)** *only within oneself, only by oneself, only upon Self, which abides within oneself.*[6]

In his translation, Bhagavan adds to this verse, 'see the importance of this.' The import is that mediation without thought is knowing consciousness through consciousness. Muruganar states it beautifully, "The Self is consciousness. By coming to know that Self through consciousness itself, consciousness became the Self, his ambrosial feet."[7]

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[5] *The Principal Upaniṣads*, S. Radhakrishnan, Harper Collins *Publishers* India, 1996, pp. 582-584. *Paryupāsayet* and *upāsate* occur in the well-known and much beloved Chapter 12 of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, verses 1-3.

[6] Verses 33-35 were translated by Michael James and include elements of Bhagavan's translation into Tamil. See his translation of *Ātma Sākṣātkāram* in the 1996 edition of *Collected Works* published by Sri Ramanasramam. These verses are on page 177 of that edition.

[7] Verse 830 in *Sri Guru Ramana Prasadam* composed by Mukavai Kanna Muruganar and translated by Robert Butler, published by Robert Butler in 2008, p. 127.

34. *Having destroyed all the many thoughts which arise concerning these [body-related distinctions],* desa *[country],* jāti *[birth in a particular race, community or lineage],* varna *[caste] and* āśrama *[stage of life], which shine [as other than his true nature], the wise person should daily do only contemplation* [bhāvayet] *upon his own form [the consciousness 'I'].*

35. *This [contemplation upon Self] is the mantra; this is the deity* (devata)*; this alone is also what is called mediation* (dhyāna)*; this alone is tapas. Leaving all thoughts, boldly do contemplation* (bhāvayet) *upon Self* (svarūpa-cinta).

Ātmānaṁ paryupāsayet appears again as the refrain in verse 37. It's a mirror of verse 30.

नैव चिन्त्यं न चाचिन्त्यमचित्तं चित्तमेव तत् ।
पक्षपातविनिर्मुक्तमात्मानं पर्युपासयेत् ।।

naiva cintyaṁ na cācintyam acittaṁ cittam eva tat
pakṣa-pāta-vinirmuktam ātmānaṁ paryupāsayet

It is not conceivable and not inconceivable. Also it is not thought and thought. Completely free from partiality, one should worship the ātman.

In her commentary to this verse, Kanakammal insightfully explains the meaning of '*paksa-pāta-vinirmuktam*' (completely free from partiality) in this way: "Gita also speaks of the same in Verse 29 of Chapter IX: 'I (the Self) am (the same in) alike to all beings. None is hateful nor dear to Me. But those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me and I am also in them.' The Self has no friends or foes. He is impartial. He does not damn any nor affect any by capricious will. The only way to win His love is by faith and devotion and each must tread the path by himself."[8]

Other words used in *Ātma Sākṣātkāram* to exhort meditation without thinking are numerous. They include *aśrayedātma vijñānam* ('resort to that knowledge of the *ātman*', verse 23), *ātmānam upāsīta* ('contemplate the *ātman*', verse 26), *ātmānam smaret* ('reach for or resort to the thought

[8] *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai*, Volume I, T.R. Kanakammal, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2011, p. 360-361.

of the *ātman*', verse 27), *tatra cittam niveśayet* ('direct your mind there', verse 28), *ātma-samstham manaḥ kṛtvā* ('make the mind get settled in the *ātman*', verse 36), *acintyam cintayet* ('meditate on that which is beyond the grasp of the mind', verse 38). Verse 40 gives a magnificent conclusion to verses 20-39 and goes as follows:

*Giving up all attachments for sense objects (*vishaya*), you should [thereby] destroy the thoughts (*vritti*) which spread out [rising one after another like the waves of an ocean] in the mind. When [by this means] one attains the mind-free state (*unmani-bhāva*), that which then appears is alone said to be the supreme bliss.*[9]

Kanakammal says, "Verses from 28 to 38 dwell at great length on *Ātmadhyāna* with no room for doubt or misconception and are of great help and guidance to seekers."[10] That is true. But then, how can it be said that Bhagavan supplements the text, that he took form in human guise to give fresh life to ancient sacred texts? We can say that this is so because all of these verses and all others from *Ātma Sākṣātkāram*, as hauntingly beautiful as they are and as packed with meaning as they are, lack one very critical piece, that is, none of them tell you exactly, practically, concretely and convincingly how to meditate without thinking, how to make that leap from *saṁsāra* to *nirvāṇa*. This is where Bhagavan's unique gift to earnest and sincere devotees, his invincible *brahmāstram*, comes in. First of all, what precisely is the nature of the ego or the mind?

24. *The physical body does not say 'I'. Being-consciousness does not arise [or disappear]. But in between the two something arises, the 'I', which is limited to the body. Understand that this is known as the knot between consciousness and the insentient, as bondage, as the individual soul, as the subtle body, as the ego, as this worldly condition of existence, and as the mind.*

25. *What a wonder! The ghost ego, which has no form, comes into existence by grasping a form, and having grasped it, endures. Thus*

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[9] See p. 178 in the 1996 edition of *Collected Works* mentioned in footnote 6.

[10] *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai*, Volume I, T.R. Kanakammal, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2011, p. 365.

grasping and consuming forms, it waxes greater. Letting go of one form, it will grasp another. If you seek it out, it will take flight. You should understand this.[11]

Secondly, how to get rid of it?

18. *The mind consists of thoughts only. The root of all these thoughts is the 'I' thought. Therefore what is called the mind is simply the 'I' thought.*

19. *When on seeks within, enquiring whence does this 'I' arise, it will bow its head [and vanish]. This is [the path of] Self-enquiry (*jnana vichara*).*

20. *In the place where the 'I' merges, the awareness 'I [am] I' will spontaneously appear. That itself is the infinite and all-embracing reality.*[12]

In other words, we have been given a simple and infallible tool to experience the non-existence of the ego. *Ātma vicāra* is a very powerful method to attain direct perception of the *ātman* within us, and when intensively practised, its power grows. Using this tool persistently, conquest of mind is indeed possible in time. In *Uḷḷadu Nāṟpardu* Bhagavan states that when the 'I thought' is destroyed, the mind, consisting of thoughts, and the whole world are destroyed.

26. *If the ego, which is the embryonic source, arises, all else will arise. If the ego is not, nothing else will exist. The ego, truly, is all. Know therefore that simply to enquire what it is, is to renounce everything.*[13]

If you practise *ātma vicāra*, which includes *bhakti*, and gain familiarity with the thought-free state, the *Ātma Sātṣātkāram* will have new meaning for you. The obstacle of not clearly knowing how to stop the mind from wandering will be removed, thus allowing you

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[11] These verses are taken from Robert Butler's grammatical commentary on and translation of *Forty Verses on Reality*, published by Robert Butler in 2010, p. 213. They are from the *kaliveṇbā* version of the text which is given as an appendix.

[12] *The Upadesha Unthiyar of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, translated by Robert Butler and published by him in 2014, pp. 62-67.

[13] *Forty Verses on Reality*, translated by Robert Butler and published by him in 2010, p. 213.

to go deeper and deeper in your understanding of advaitic truths and in your practice of true meditation.

Bhagavan's *brahmāstram* is far more effective than being lulled into a temporary peace through ritual or some other means that involves the mind. It gets to the knot and directly confronts the root of all problems. He supplements ancient texts by clearly and unambiguously taking you to the deepest cause of suffering and demonstrates in the most practical and simple fashion the non-existence of the ego, which leads to its final resolution.

With practice, unswerving practice, a change in perception will indeed occur. That false 'I' has no form of its own, only food for pure consciousness that is revealed when the ego is investigated. You will see that all affliction is in your imagination, and you will directly experience pure consciousness knowing and reveling in itself. There is only pure consciousness and you are that! Embrace it and let it embrace you so that you are flooded with love and all you see before you is the eternal, unchanging, all-pervasive, self-effulgent *ātman*.

Finally, *sādhanā* is working up the courage to take the leap and leave behind who you thought you were. It is a new day and that day is your true birthday. Revel in that realisation!

The first article in this series ended with a quote from Muruganar. Here it is again, the perfect ending.

When, through investigation, one comes to know the heart, the place of one's arising, the ego, 'I', which till now has been appearing as if it were itself the underlying reality, will bow its head and be destroyed. As that 'I', the bogus source subsides more and more into the place of its arising, the ātman, the true underlying reality, will shine forth, directly apprehended (aparokṣa).[14]

[14] Verse 362. See *Guru Vāchaka Kōvai*, Composed by Sri Muruganar, Prose paraphrase by Sri Sadhu Om, Translated by Robert Butler, Sri Ramana Center of Houston, 2023, p. 82.

D. Thiyagarajan

Advaita Primer

Part Nine

Analogies - 2

M. Giridhar

We have examined the concepts of *jiva*, *nirguna* (without attributes) *Brahman, jagat* (world)*,* and *saguṇa* Brahman (*ishvara*) and the relations between them in Advaita Vedanta. The ultimate reality is one without a second — Brahman, which is infinite, formless, and beyond all distinctions. It is the substratum of the universe, the essence of all existence. The goal of Advaita Vedanta is to realize one's identity with Brahman, transcending the illusion of individuality (*jiva*) and recognizing the unity of all beings. Various analogies, metaphors and similes are employed within Advaita Vedanta to elucidate these profound and complex metaphysical ideas.

Similar to the intricate realms of quantum physics, the teachings of Advaita often delve into counter-intuitive concepts, relying heavily on analogies and metaphors to elucidate challenging ideas. However, there lies a peril in this reliance on metaphor, as it frequently leads readers to mistakenly believe they have grasped the essence of the profound notion of Oneness. This false sense of comprehension often tempts even adept learners to extrapolate beyond the intended scope of the analogies. This is due to the inherent laziness of both the human brain and those tasked with explaining complex concepts. There is a mutual desire to provide a semblance of comprehension without delving into the intricacies that demand rigorous intellectual effort. Despite these pitfalls, analogies serve as a convenient tool to bridge the gap between the unfamiliar and the familiar, offering a mental shortcut to alleviate the discomfort of not fully grasping a concept. Physics has an advantage, in that mathematics can be used as a language to

explain, but Advaita has its equivalence only in *uttara mīmāṃsā* requiring a reader to delve deeply and carefully. Analogies are meant to explain, but not to give a false sense of understanding. While analogies are undeniably effective in organizing and manipulating ideas, they carry dangers due to their inherent inaccuracies, especially if interpolated. In this article, we will examine the ocean-wave analogy, being mindful of the potential pitfalls of extrapolation and the misinterpretation of analogies and metaphors.

The ocean wave analogy serves as a profound metaphor for understanding the relationship between the individual soul (*jiva*) and the ultimate reality (Brahman). The wave and the ocean analogy is called *samudrataranga-nyaya* and is nicely explained[1]. Though there are countless waves rolling in the vast ocean, and each wave can be distinguished from the others and perceived separately — all are water only and are not separate from the great ocean. In reality, all are only one — the difference being only apparent. This analogy illustrates that all the innumerable apparent individuals (*jivas*) that appear in this universe — though perceived to be separate from one another — are in reality made of the same "substance" as that singular ocean of awareness whose nature is existence-consciousness-bliss (*satchidananda*) and are identical with it. The diversity or difference is only seeming, not actual. In the expansive ocean, an endless array of waves undulates. Each wave appears distinct, yet they are all manifestations of water, inseparable from the vast expanse of the ocean. Though they may seem separate, in truth, they are all unified as one, as the basis is water. Similarly, in the universe, the multitude of beings, though seemingly distinct, are fundamentally unified in the boundless essence of existence. There is no true diversity, only the illusion of differentiation.

The analogy unfolds with profound implications. It illustrates unity in diversity. Just as the ocean manifests as diverse waves, Brahman manifests as the multiplicity of beings and phenomena in the universe. Despite the apparent diversity, all individual entities are essentially expressions of the same underlying reality — Brahman. It entails temporary manifestations. Waves, though distinct, are ephemeral —

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THn5HwNHz1o, Swami Sarvapriyananda

they arise, exist for a moment, and eventually dissolve back into the ocean. Similarly, individual souls emerge from Brahman, undergo experiences in the realm of relative reality (*maya*), and eventually merge back into the transcendental unity of Brahman. The analogy emphasizes the illusory nature of individuality. Just as a wave is merely a temporary formation of water, the individual ego is a transient construct arising from ignorance (*avidya*). In reality, there is no separate self; there is only Brahman. The analogy also explains the non-dual Reality. Despite the apparent distinction between the ocean and its waves, they are fundamentally one and the same — water. Likewise, despite the multiplicity of beings and phenomena in the universe, there is only one ultimate reality — Brahman. The individual souls (*jivas*) are non-different from Brahman; they are Brahman itself, obscured by the veil of ignorance.

The *Mandukya Upanishad*[2] explains that the individual waves of water and the water in the ocean are one and the same. The Upanishad describes the state of *Prapancopasamam*, where all creation subsides like waves sinking into the ocean. Similarly, *Chandogya Upanishad*[3] says, "Our Self is the Self of all. Imagine that the whole cosmos is a vast ocean, and in that ocean there are waves. Some of the waves are huge and some of them are very small, maybe only ripples. But it is the same water. Similarly, there is one Existence, but we see diversity. This diversity, however, is only in name and form. It is not real. Underlying the diversity is one Existence, and that Existence is our own Self." Shankara says[4], "Just as gold is thought as ear-ring and water as waves, so the Atman etc." and continues saying[5], "the ocean of infinite bliss and the waves of the universe are created and destroyed by the playing of the wind of the *maya.*"

A similar analogy is given based on the sea and rivers. It is stated[6], "As rivers, flowing down, become indistinguishable on reaching the sea by giving up their names and forms, so also the illumined soul, having become freed from name and form, reaches the self-effulgent

[2] *Mandukya Upanishad*, v.7.
[3] *Chandogya Upanishad,* v. 7.25.1.
[4] *Aparokshanubhuti*, v.72.
[5] *Vivekachudamani,* v.497.
[6] *Mundaka Upanishad*, v.II-ii-8.

Purusha." This is echoed[7] as, "Just as these flowing rivers get absorbed after reaching the sea, and their names and forms are destroyed, and they are called merely the sea, so also these sixteen parts (i.e. constituents) of the all-seeing Purusha, that have Purusha as their goal, disappear on reaching Purusha, when their names and forms are destroyed and they are simply called Purusha." This is elaborated upon:[8] "The rivers rise from the ocean and merge in the ocean, and become that ocean itself. All these creatures, having come from Being, do not know, that they have come from Being," and[9]: "That Being which is this subtle essence (cause), even That all this world has for its self. That is the true. That is the Atman. That thou art, O Svetaketu."

The interpretation of the metaphor aligns with a common misconception prevalent among spiritual seekers, which revolves around the notion that enlightenment entails some form of merging with the Self. We are already the Self. Such expressions are meaningless. The underlying Advaita philosophy asserts this and the *mahavakya aham brahmasmi*[10] confirms this. Thus, equating the ocean with Brahman and the wave with *jiva* would contradict this profound declaration. The correct interpretation of the ocean-wave analogy is that *Ishvara* should be considered as the ocean, the *jiva* as the wave and the reality being that both the wave and the ocean are fundamentally water, just as both the *jiva* and *Ishvara* are ultimately Brahman alone.

Hence, in essence, both wave and ocean are one, as both are fundamentally water. Likewise, both *jiva* and *Ishvara* are *mithya* i.e., not real ultimately. The other *mahavakya tat tvam asi*[11] indicates that the equality exists between *jiva* and Brahman. The wave cannot proclaim that, "I am the ocean," as a *jiva* cannot become *Ishvara*. The *jiva* can, however, state that both *jiva* and *Ishvara* are both Brahman, just as wave and ocean are both water. This is at the *vyavaharika* view. With the *paramarthika* view, there is only Brahman i.e., only water exists – Ocean, waves, and foam etc. are all manifestations of water.

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[7] *Prasna Upanishad*, v. VI.5.
[8] *Chandogya Upanishad*, v. VI.x.1-2.
[9] *Chandogya Upanishad*, v. VI.x.3.
[10] *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* v. 1.4.10.
[11] *Chandogya Upanishad*, v. VI.8.7.

In conclusion, the ocean-wave analogy in Advaita Vedanta serves as a powerful tool for comprehending the non-dual nature of reality and the ultimate identity of the individual soul with Brahman. By contemplating this analogy, aspirants can deepen their understanding of Advaitic principles, transcend the illusion of individuality, and realize the eternal truth of oneness. These analogies serve as powerful tools to elucidate the concepts of *maya*, *avidya*, Brahman, and the transformative process of Self-realization. Each analogy provides a unique perspective on the fundamental teachings of non-duality and aids in making abstract concepts more accessible, allowing us to understand and grasp the essence of Advaita Vedanta. In the next parts of this series, we will continue to discuss other analogies. ▲

Maya

Suresh Kailash

Piercing darts, sharp arrows
Shot from the bow of the world,
Torment my mind and make me cry
In anguish and agony and hurt.

Tears that flow through the pain
Roll down the cheek at Thy lotus feet,
Evaporate and dissolve in the Enquiry
Whence from these tears and pain.

The heart now placid and sublime
Washed aglow in the morning dawn
I offer at Thy lotus feet.
The pain, the torment, peace and calm,
The ego and the Heart
Are all Thee and Thine.

Sketch by Ghovi

The Blessed Life of Sant Jayadeva

Chapter Eleven

Immersion of Ashtapadi in Ganga

Nabaji Siddha

"O exalted souls! Uplifters of mankind! The life of Jayadeva Swami was replete with the wonderful and sportive plays of the Lord which were enacted to uphold the greatness of the Sant before the world."

Jayadeva Swami was composing *Ashtapadi* comprising enchanting verses on the divine love of Radha and Krishna. At one point, he was inspired to write a verse in which Krishna placed the lotus feet of Sri Radha on His head. Jayadeva was dismayed when he wrote this line. He altered it twenty-five times, trying to express it differently, but to no avail as the same idea obstinately repeated itself in his mind. He was quite exasperated and worried that he had committed a great offense with this preposterous line. He was frightened at his irreverent composition. He concealed the verses in some corner and decided to travel to other places and meet Mahatmas to find out whether such an idea had been expressed in any other work by poets in different regions.

When the king realized the Sant's intention to travel, he sought to make proper arrangements with a palanquin, servants etc. However, the Swami forbade him saying, "The scriptures and wise people advise that one should make pilgrimages on foot in order to truly reap the benefit of such pious undertakings. Sadhus and devotees renounce even heavenly pleasures like straw, but do they become any less by wandering everywhere on foot? While people walk long distances and undergo hardships to meet men of no consequence, like kings and wealthy people in the world, how can I do otherwise when my mission is to have the darshan of Mahatmas?"

The king attempted to follow the Sant on foot. When the ministers remonstrated, the king rejected their plea saying, "Inner joy and spiritual or religious benefits cannot be gained without hardship. The Swami has taught us that one cannot earn the benefit of pilgrimage by traveling in comfort. On various occasions, great men like Arjuna and Balarama had undertaken *padayatra* to wash off the impurities of certain offenses committed by them unwittingly. Didn't Lord Mahadeva, my favorite Lord, roam the world on foot when He was afflicted by the sin of Brahmahatya? Didn't Lord Rama walk on thorns and stones during His exile? All the worldly pleasures and prosperity are fleeting like bubbles on water." Padmavathy, the king and the queen accompanied Jayadeva Swami on his pilgrimage.

Seeing the hardship of the royal pair who were not accustomed to such discomforts, Jayadeva Swami decided to halt at Varanasi. His mind was still afflicted by doubts. He had darshan of many Mahatmas, visited temples and hermitages. Yet, he didn't find the answer to his question. He grew very restless. One night, Lord Vishwanath appeared in his dream and said, "If you compose five poems on Me, I will clear your doubt."

Overjoyed at the dream, the Sant composed five hymns in praise of the Lord before dawn. The Lord of Varanasi came in the disguise of a brahmin along with his disciples to the Ashram where Jayadeva Swami had camped. He sent word to the Swami that a scholar was there to dispel his doubt.

Wondering about the mysterious scholar who had sent the strange message, Jayadeva Swami hastened to him and prostrated at his feet. He wondered whether it was Lord Shiva himself who had come in

disguise. The brahmin gathered the vedic scholars of Varanasi and read Jayadeva's verses to them and said contemptuously, "O learned ones! We have learnt that the Lord's feet dwell on the crown of Vedas. This brahmin has composed a verse saying that Radha's feet are placed on the Lord's head. Is this version agreeable to you?"

The learned men decried it saying, "Fie upon him! Not even a rank fool will compose a hymn like this." They made fun of Sant.

Jayadeva Swami felt humiliated and wondered why the Lord should promise one thing in dream and do the very opposite in reality. Turning to the pandits, Jayadeva Swami said, "You must forgive me. I have written such a thing without paying proper attention."

The brahmin in disguise said, "Oho…! You were absentminded throughout while composing the entire work! You have repeated this line twenty-five times. Whom are you trying to fool? Can one forgetfully introduce his mother as his wife again and again?"

Clapping his hands loudly and poking fun at him, the brahmin jeered, "Oh! You are that Jayadeva who has tried to climb the ladder of fame in a hurry. In your kingdom, you are considered a great poet! I wonder what should be the state of learning and erudition there! It is like a one-eyed man being adored as the king in a country of blind people!"

"O, pandits of Varanasi! He is trying to pose as a great poet in our city of superior learning. What temerity? Whatever is said about him that he wrote another *Srimad Bhagavatam* which was acknowledged by the Lord himself must be a tall tale. Who knows what erroneous things are stated in that work?"

"Let me suggest something. We will immerse these leaves containing the verses of *Ashtapadi* in the river Ganga. If they are carried against the current, indicating that the goddess Ganga endorses their veracity, we will accept it. Otherwise we will throw his Bhagavatam also in the river."

Everyone applauded the idea and they assembled on the bank of the river Ganga. There was an uproar among the crowd. Calming everyone down, the brahmin picked up the palm leaves containing the verses in his hand and said, "O Ganga Devi! I am going to immerse these hymns in the flowing river. If the thirty verses which also include five hymns on your Consort Shiva are blemishless, then please bring

them up in your divine hands." Saying this, he immersed the palm leaves in the river.

Ganga Devi thought, "It is a long time since I left my Lord's matted locks and started my perennial journey. Now I will not only have the precious chance of His darshan, I will also get to touch His lotus hands while returning these leaves. I have secured this good fortune because of the Ashtapadi verses!"

Highly pleased, she appeared with a smiling face and addressed the scholar, "O learned brahmin who dispels ignorance and cures the disease of doubt! Please accept this great work which contains no fault even in a syllable." She had been yearning for her Lord's darshan. Fearing that her Lord would disappear quickly, she resorted to the trick of handing over the verses to Him one by one, thus prolonging the darshan. Then, in the end, she said with a peal of laughter, "O venerable brahmin! The five verses praising Lord Shiva are rightfully mine."

The brahmin specifically enquired, "O Ganga Devi! Is his line about Radha's feet placed on Krishna's head acceptable to the denizens of heaven?"

Ganga Devi replied, "Yes! It is acceptable even to the Trinity of gods."

As if annoyed, the Lord in disguise said, "No wonder this particular line seems to have pleased you, because you yourself have placed your feet on the matted locks of Lord Shiva. However, on our part, we cannot overlook the grave offense indicated in this work," and he tossed the leaves in the river.

Lo! Lord Krishna in the company of Radha Devi emerged and caught hold of the leaves saying, "The first twenty-five verses belong to Me and the last five verses are Yours." The brahmin in disguise revealed His true form, appearing on the Divine Bull along with Parvathy Devi.

Overcome by ecstasy at the divine vision, Jayadeva Swami broke into exultant praises of the Lord, "O Lord of boundless mercy! You are the boat that ferries us across the shoreless ocean of samsara. You are comprehended only by the lineage of Sadgurus. You are the infinite power, beyond time and space. You empower those who utter Your name and dedicate their actions to You. You are above the

thirty-three crores of demi-gods. You are ever new and ever blissful. You are Eternal, You are pure Effulgence. Your divine form spreads its splendor in all directions. You are the protector of dharma and karma on earth. You pervade everywhere. You are the ultimate place where all jivas merge at the time of great deluge. You transcend all causes and remain the causeless Cause. You are immanent in everything. You are Vishnu pervading the world. You are the *Virat-Purusha*, the cause of the world.

"You are the *Ahamkar*, the cause of the *Virat-Purusha*.
You are the *Mahat-tattva*, the cause of the *Ahamkar*.
You are the *Prakriti*, the cause of the *Mahat-tattva*.
You are the ultimate Cause of all the *Tattvas*.
You are the *gunas* and *vasanas* that proceed from cause and effect.
You are the repository of all auspicious qualities like knowledge, wealth, truth, accessibility, courage, valor, beauty and love.
You protect all animate and inanimate forms, You are the doer as well as the act.
You are the Lord of Vedas, You are the very form of Vedas.
There is none other than You.
You are the author of the Vedas as well as the subject matter and essence of the Vedas.
You are the Brahmin who recites the Vedas.
You are the two kinds of knowledge – *jnana* and *vijnana*.
You are the pairs of opposites, You are beyond the pairs of opposites.
You are the name and form, You are the formless, birthless and deathless Absolute.
You are also Narayana who shines in an enchanting form and protects the devotees.

"I have been contemplating on You, worshiping You, I have taken complete refuge in You. Therefore, I implore You, O Lord, to turn Your gracious attention on me, annihilate my evil qualities and bestow peace in my heart."

At that moment, all devotees and disciples of great teachers in the city of Varanasi were uplifted to the state of Knowledge. The

gods of heaven showered fragrant flowers from the sky, the celestial beauties performed beautiful dances and kettledrums sounded to the accompaniment of other celestial musical instruments. The Lord gave the twenty-five verses to Jayadeva Swami with His lotus-like hands. Then these nectar-like words flowed from His lips, "O Jayadeva! You alone know the mysterious happenings in My life. How can others understand what is narrated in these verses? Therefore, they censure what you have described in your *Ashtapadi*. Whoever reads daily with devotion the *Ashtapadi* and *Bhagavatam* composed by you, in their hearts I will eagerly come to reside."

Lord Shiva said, "I promise to promote the welfare of those who listen to these verses you have composed on Me and also to your life story. I will reward them with eight-fold wealth."

The denizens of heaven added, "Whoever pronounces your name, 'Jayadeva' will be blessed with 'jaya' i.e., victory in their lives."

Thus all the Divinities heaped their blessings on Jayadeva Swami.

Thereafter, the scholars of Varanasi, realizing the renown and glory of Jayadeva, accorded him the honor due to the Lord.

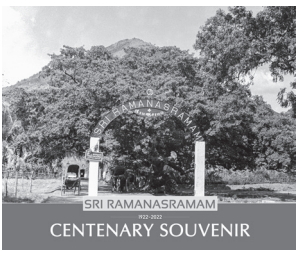
Immersed in rapture caused by the blessed events, the Sant's mind dwelt constantly on the glory of Lord Vasudeva and Lord Mahadeva. His heart pined for Their vision again and again. Singing Their praises, his mind withdrew itself gradually from the outer world. Immersed in divine contemplation, Jayadeva Swami reduced his speech and worldly transactions to the minimum. He remained in the self-forgetful state for long periods. At times, he behaved like a madman, walking in the hot sun unmindful of his body. He appeared as effulgence to some and as the Lord himself to the pure hearted.

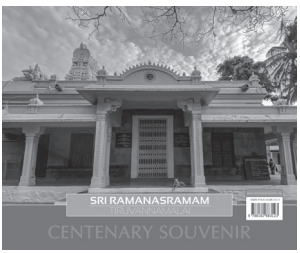
One day, Padmavathy spoke to the king in this manner, "O noble king! The Swami seems to be absorbed in samadhi. He has no body consciousness. I wonder whether he will become extroverted enough to interact with us. You must return to your kingdom and resume your responsibilities."

Bowing down at the feet of the gracious lady, the king replied, "O mother! If one has vomited even a sweet dish, will he lick it again? Similarly, even though it is a royal life, having known about the transitory nature of the world, will I be eager to return to such a life? Can a wife, children and relatives ever promise eternal happiness? I

have no desire for royal life even in dreams. Only he, who looks upon this body made of blood, flesh, fecal matter and urine as joy-bestowing reality, will desire the pleasures of riches and sense-enjoyments. O mother! It is not fair to send me back to such a life which I have rejected as mere straw. Wise people who can discriminate between the ephemeral and eternal will not lose the opportunity of serving the Guru. They will not be weakened in their resolution or leave the company of the exalted ones."

Turning to Jayadeva Swami who was seated there, the king wept uncontrollably. The Swami, casting his compassionate glance on the king, asked him why he was so unhappy.





CENTENARY SOUVENIR

This captivating coffee table book pays tribute to Bhagavan Ramana and his Ashram in a visually stunning manner. Measuring 11 x 9 inches in landscape format, the 280-page volume features over 400 photographs and articles in English, Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, and Telugu, reflecting the diverse linguistic tapestry of its audience. The book meticulously chronicles the evolution of Sri Ramanasramam, from a humble single hut in 1922 to its expansive structure in 2023. Through a captivating blend of archival photographs, rare artifacts, and insightful narratives, readers embark on a journey through the transformative history of the ashram. This exquisite volume serves as a tribute to the profound legacy shaped by the ashram over the past hundred years, capturing the spiritual essence of its evolution and preserving the enduring teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi.

This souvenir may be purchased either at the ashram's bookstore or online at http://bookstore.sriramanamaharshi.org

D. Thiyagarajan

A Different Question

Advait shrivastav

Spiritual giants take birth on Earth to alleviate the suffering of the masses, guide them towards the supreme Truth, and thereby lead them to liberation. They lead a devotee from the finite mental and physical pain to eternal spiritual bliss. We were blessed to have Ramana Maharshi amongst us. Maharshi was not just another human being. He was a divine incarnation. He never revealed the details of His incarnation but it is believed that He was an incarnation of Skanda (the son of Shiva). This belief was held by people close to Maharshi: Seshadri Swami, Ganapati Muni, and Krishna Bhikshu.

Maharshi's actual form has not gone anywhere, but His physical presence is nowhere now. The current devotees do not have the privilege to see Maharshi with their eyes and feel His words enter into their ears. A lot has changed in the world since Maharshi left His body. Mental health issues have become quite common. Physical health problems have gained momentum. The world has become competitive like never before. A recent pandemic has made things gloomier. A depressed and desperate devotee faces the many tumultuous tides of life and asks, "When will Maharshi come again?"

Every person who came into Maharshi's fold after His physical departure has regretted not being born a bit earlier so as to see Maharshi face-to-face. The devotees of every spiritual giant long for his or her return to our planet in a physical body. Ramakrishna Paramahansa was generous to tell his devotees about his rebirth in

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a terse way. Maharshi never spoke about such a thing for Himself. His views on reincarnation were profound and always contained the esoteric essence of the supreme Truth.

Maharshi was of the opinion that enlightened beings do not reincarnate. He says, "The Realised ones cannot be reborn. Rebirth is due to vasanas which are binding. But they are destroyed in the state of Self-realisation."[1] Maharshi was once asked if He upholds the theory of rebirth. He replied in the negative mentioning that we should enquire if there is incarnation before we speak of reincarnation.[2] One might err and misconstrue that Maharshi did not believe in the theory of reincarnation. A different set of His words provide more clarity on this matter: "The Real Self is continuous and unaffected. The reincarnating ego belongs to the lower plane, namely, thought. It is transcended by Self-Realisation. Reincarnations are due to a spurious offshoot."[3] Maharshi always talked about the highest Truth wherein there is no room for anything finite. Its infinity and eternity cannot include the finitude of any incarnation or reincarnation. It is beyond everything and everyone. Maharshi held these views in this very context.

Every devotee craves for the physical presence of his Master. Our Ramana is everywhere, but the appearance of His physical form of six feet[4] can give the biggest smile to a devotee. However, the devotee must remember that this smile will be limited and evanescent, whereas the internal experience of Maharshi as the Self will render the purest happiness. One errs and diverges from Maharshi's teachings by longing for His finite physical form instead of discovering His actual and absolute form which is the infinite and eternal Self. One keeps searching for one's Master outside and not within.

Maharshi taught us to go within. We have to experience the real 'I' in the Heart and not the 'I' with the heart (as in 'I love you'). The inner eye is to be used. Maharshi's teachings put detachment

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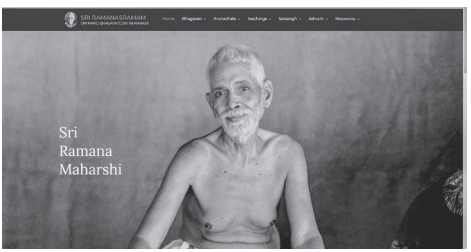
1 *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 317.
2 *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 644.
3 *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 136.
4 *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge* by Arthur Osborne, 2018 edition, page number 125.

over attachment. The desire for the physical form of the Master is a refined form of attachment. A drop can contain an ocean (when it comes to philosophical metaphors), but the experience of the original ocean is definitely greater and grander. Thus one should discover Maharshi's actual and infinite form within instead of desiring His limited bodily form.

Maharshi was the supreme soul. This purest soul keeps voluntarily donning flesh, blood, and bones in various ages, times, places, names, and forms to guide devotees and not for any selfish purpose. It appears in the form of a Master with different roles. It came as Ramana to teach self-enquiry. It came as Chaitanya to spread devotional chanting. It came as Patanjali to talk about meditation. Devotees are much lower than the Master. They possess layers of ignorance which take several births to be removed. Only the blessings of Maharshi and a sincere and intense practice can liberate a devotee in this very birth. Therefore, the question asked by us should not be "When will Maharshi come again?" Instead we should ask ourselves: "Will I come again?" ▲



NEW WEBSITE

We are glad to announce the opening of the new website for the ashram. https://www.gururamana.org is dedicated to the teachings and life of Sri Ramana Maharshi. The site offers a wealth of resources, including texts, videos, and audio recordings of his teachings, as well as information about his ashram in Tiruvannamalai, India. Visitors can explore his profound insights on self-realization, non-duality, and the nature of consciousness. The website serves as a comprehensive portal for those seeking to learn about Ramana Maharshi's legacy and apply his wisdom to their spiritual journeys. There is also a form to report any errors. We hope the devotees will benefit by this revamped website.

Muruganar in His Own Words

Part Two

Hari Moorthy

In a remarkable verse[1] composed by Muruganar, which came about much later in his life, approximately 30 years after he first encountered Bhagavan, he provides an account of the transformative effects of his unconditional surrender.

ஞானமளித்(து) ஆண்டகுரு நாதன் பதத்திலருட்
போனகமுண் டுள்ளுணர்வு பூரித்து – மோனவெளி
தானேநா னாகத் தழைத்துச் செழித்தலால்
யானே பரமா யினேன்.

Meaning: My life is nourished by consuming the wisdom-food bestowed upon me by my Lord, Ramana, who governs my existence. As I delve into the profound experience of the Self, which manifests in the heart as 'I-I', I too have undergone a transformation, becoming one with the Lord.

Muruganar's autobiographical verse within the introductory series of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, known as "நூல் வரலாறு" (History of this Book), gives a glimpse of his deep connection with the spiritual journey and his relationship with Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Beyond merely serving as a historical account of the book's creation, this verse unveils the intricacies of Muruganar's personal transformation and spiritual surrender.

[1] Verse number 1879 in *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham, Volume 3.*

Hari Moorthy is well-versed in the teachings of Bhagavan Ramana with special emphasis on the poetry of Muruganar.

In this verse,[2] Muruganar offers readers a glimpse into the wellspring of inspiration that fueled his poetic genius. The verses he composed weren't merely a product of literary craftsmanship. One of the most captivating aspects of this autobiographical verse is the portrayal of Bhagavan's pivotal role in Muruganar's life. Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi appears not only as a spiritual mentor but as an excellent source of guidance and inspiration throughout Muruganar's poetic odyssey. Each word seems to find its rightful place, akin to stars in the night sky, while every syllable within a word holds the pulse of the universe, much like a seed. Muruganar's poetic flow resembles the cascading descent of water from a mountain peak, drawn by the irresistible force of gravity. His remarkable adherence to the syntactic and semantic aspects of Tamil prosody mirrors the natural orderliness found within the entire galaxy. Much like a diligent bee tirelessly collecting honey from every blooming flower, Muruganar channeled this poetic flow onto paper, filling page after page with the sweetest nectar that the Tamil language can offer.

The verse commences with a customary benediction, following the tradition in Tamil poetry of invoking Lord Vinayaka's[3] blessings before embarking on any literary endeavor. In Muruganar's perspective, Bhagavan Sri Ramana represented a singular divine source that manifested in various forms. When Muruganar looked upon any deity or their divinity, he perceived Bhagavan alone. In the presence of Bhagavan, he witnessed not only the magnificence of Bhagavan's divine presence but also a perfect interconnectedness with all deities and their unique powers. Bhagavan served as the ultimate conduit, revealing the underlying unity and omnipresence of the divine in all its myriad forms. Consequently, the benediction is crafted as an entreaty to Bhagavan, seeking his divine grace through his mere gaze, and asking Bhagavan to assist devotees in abiding in the Self – a supreme act of surrender and a prayer for ultimate peace.

Prayer:[4]

அண்ட மாரிரு ளூடு கடந்தும்பர்
உண்டெ னும்பொரு ளுண்மை விளக்கமா

[2] As there will be many other verses by Muruganar discussed in this series, this verse will be referred to as the autobiographical verse from this point onward.

[3] Even Bhagavan offered his benedictions to Lord Vinayaka in *Aksharamanamalai*.

[4] This benedictory verse is set in "Kali Virthuam" style.

மண்ட வென்னகந் தைமல மாசறக்
கண்ட வித்தகக் கண்ணனை யெண்ணுவாம்.

Meaning: Celestials say that there is truth beyond what exists as a dark cloud of worldly ignorance. This truth is the Self, which can be realized by subsiding my polluted ego. Let us pray to our beautiful-eyed Lord (Ramana) who makes us realize this truth by his mere look.

In the realm of celestial wisdom, it is believed that a deeper truth exists beyond the veil of worldly ignorance that obscures our perception, a truth that transcends the notions of 'I' and 'mine.' As Tiruvalluvar eloquently states[5] in one of his verses, ascending to the heights desired by celestial beings requires transcending the egoic nature of the mind. This journey leads to a greater understanding of the Self and the universe, and one sheds the limitations of individual identity and possessions to uncover the universal truths that lie hidden beneath the surface of ordinary existence.

யானென தென்னுஞ் செருக்கறுப்பான் வானோர்க்
குயர்ந்த உலகம் புகும்.

Meaning: By relinquishing the ego, which asserts 'I' and 'mine,' one ascends to a realm beyond even that of celestial beings, entering the divine world of the highest order.

The truth, which shines as the Self in every being, is not readily available for one's realization due to the mind which often pulls attention externally. Hence, to grasp this truth, one must undertake the arduous journey of transcending the limitations of their ego, which is often tainted and clouded by worldly desires and attachments.

The benedictory verse by Muruganar invites readers to join in prayer, beseeching Lord Ramana to bless with his divine gaze. Muruganar emphatically states that a mere look from Bhagavan can have a transformative effect[6] on one's spiritual development and achievement that can result in the destruction of one's polluted ego.

[5] *Tirukkural*, verse number 346.

[6] Muruganar composed 32 verses in *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* under the title *Tirukannokkam* (the holy gaze of Bhagavan) – chapter 110.

Muruganar composed the main verse in "ஆசிரியப்பா" (Asriyapa), which is one of the most popular and versatile Tamil prosody meters. This meter is characterized by its specific syllable patterns in each line, which poets must adhere to. Each line of this verse type typically consists of four words, except for the penultimate line, which may have three words. There are no limits on the number of lines, and as a result, this meter lends itself to longer poetry, with hundreds of lines.

Asriyapa has a rich historical legacy dating back to the early Sangam period, and it continues to be used by poets to this day. It allows poets to convey a wide range of emotions and themes, making it a favored choice for creative expression in Tamil poetry. The meter's adaptability and its enduring presence in Tamil literary traditions underscore its importance and versatility in the world of Tamil poetry and prosody.

Muruganar's poem in Asriyappa is quite lengthy, so it has been divided into smaller sections to allow for a more in-depth exploration of its meaning and poetic nuances.

மகத்துவ முறத்திரு வாதவூ ரடிகளைத்
திகழ்த்திய தெய்வத் திருவருட் குருவாம்
இறைவனா லாளப் பெறுவனோ வொருகாற்
பெறினுமவ் வாண்டான் பெய்கழல் போற்ற
வல்லனோ வொருதிரு வாசகங் கல்லாப்
புல்லனாங் கடையே னெனப்புரி சிந்தை (1-6)

Meaning: Lord Shiva, appearing as Guru, directed Tiruvathavoorar (another name for Manickavasagar) to magnificence through His Grace. Will the Lord come as my Guru to guide me as well? Even if He comes, am I qualified to praise His holy feet, adorned with anklets? I have not learned *Tiruvasagam*, and I am the lowest among the ignorant people. I wonder what recourse I have?

This introductory section of the verse is verbally vivid, describing a genuine yearning Muruganar has in seeking his spiritual master. Although his modesty comes through in these lines, his greatness shines like a bright gem in those words, as he questions his own qualifications as a devotee. His doubts about his abilities parallels to Arjuna's doubts in the early segments of *Bhagavad Gita*.

Although his statement is that he has not learned *Tiruvasagam*, and he implies his inability to absorb the inner meaning of what *Tiruvasagam* infers,[7] his admiration for *Tiruvasagam* is clear. At this juncture of his life, Muruganar was a Tamil scholar and a budding poet endowed with an extensive Tamil vocabulary. He was well-versed in Tamil prosody and had been working closely with some of the Tamil greats of that time. He had studied Tamil literature extensively, particularly the Shaiva devotional literature such as *Tevaram* and *Tiruvasagam*, as well as other great works like *Tirukural* and *Kamba Ramayanam*.

It is clear that Muruganar had certainly been reading *Tiruvasagam* and was very inspired by Manickavasagar. Seeds of devotion had been deeply sown long before his familiarity with Bhagavan. In fact, this intense devotion is the reason why Bhagavan appeared in his life. As the old saying goes, "Guru appears when the disciple is ready." Bhagavan would shortly intervene in Muruganar's life and take control of it, just as Muruganar prayed for the Lord to do in his own words.

ஏனைய சிந்தையி னிதுவுமொன் றென்ன
வானிடந் தோன்றி மறையுமின் னேபோற்
றொன்றே தோன்றிப் பின்றை மறைந்திடத்
துன்றுபல் காலந் தொடர்ந்து கழிவுழித்
திருவணா மலையிற் றிகழுமெய்ஞ் ஞான
சொருபனாத் தோன்றிச் சுடர்தவக் கொழுந்தாம் (7-12)

Meaning: I let go of this thought, recognizing it as just one among many of my thoughts. At that time, like a flash of lightning in the sky, which appears and disappears suddenly, I came to hear about this fire of Jnana, true wisdom incarnate (Bhagavan Ramana), at Tiruvannamalai through a close relative, who had been in contact with this divine incarnation known to end the cycle of birth and death.

Although this section refers to the fact that Muruganar heard about Bhagavan through his relative,[8] the graphic description of what he

[7] References to Muruganar's awareness of *Tiruvasagam* and his yearning to see a guru, akin to how Manickavasagar saw and worshiped, can be found in *Tiruvandapaguthy*, Chapter 4, of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai,* specifically in lines 47-52.

[8] Dandapani Swami's visit to Muruganar's home.

felt – a sudden and spontaneous "lightning" – could be a spiritual illumination he "experienced" when he had heard about Bhagavan's name. His description can't be read and understood merely as a poetic metaphor. It must have been a profound experience for him, drawing him so closely to Bhagavan and impelling him towards Bhagavan in order to effect the encounter that was about to happen. There is also some parallel to this experience in Bhagavan's own life when he first heard the name "Arunachalam".[9]

From his earlier accounts, it is clear that Muruganar was strongly attracted to *Aksharamanamalai*. There are plenty of references to Bhagavan's own experience in it, particularly lines[10] like below:

பெயர்நினைத் திடவே பிடித்திழுத் தனையுன்
பெருமையா ரறிவா ரருணாசலா.

Meaning: Who knows your glory, for you pulled me to yourself for merely thinking of your name, O' Arunachala?

These lines likely held extraordinary significance for Muruganar, extending far beyond their structural beauty in the Tamil language. Bhagavan's verses would have resonated with Muruganar on a deeply personal and spiritual level. It wasn't solely the allure of the Tamil language that attracted Muruganar to Bhagavan, but rather the indication of the infinite and the resonance with his own spiritual experiences.

In a verse composed at a later stage,[11] Muruganar reflects on how Bhagavan's radiant presence, like a golden effulgence, came to dominate his life, even during a time when he had limited knowledge of spirituality.

என்னையே யானறியா வேழைக்குத் தன்சொருபப்
பொன்னையளித் தாண்டவருட் புண்ணியவான் – மன்னியபே
ரின்பவருட் பாதமே யெங்களையென் றென்றுமனத்
துன்பமறக் காக்குந் துணை.

Meaning: Even in my state of self-ignorance, He graciously revealed His radiant Self, coming to govern and guide me. His divine feet alone sustain and shield me from the afflictions of my own mind.

[9] *Ramana Maharishi and the Path of Self Knowledge,* Arthur Osborne, p.5.
[10] Verse number 70 in *Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*.
[11] Verse number 313 in *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham*, Volume 3.

During those moments of complete ignorance about his own true nature, it was Bhagavan's boundless grace that illuminated Murugunar's being with the radiance of his own Self. In this state, Bhagavan assumed the role of Muruganar's eternal guide and protector, ensuring that he could navigate the tumultuous waters of his mind with resolute support.

Just as a steady lighthouse guides ships safely through a stormy sea, Bhagavan's divine feet served as Muruganar's constant beacon, leading him away from the treacherous currents of his own thoughts. In the shelter of Bhagavan's grace, Muruganar found the strength to confront his inner conflicts and withstand the storms of his life. For Muruganar, Bhagavan's verses were not just linguistic masterpieces, but also clear expressions of the spiritual truths he had personally realized through his association with Bhagavan.

From Muruganar's words, it becomes evident that at this stage, his feelings towards Bhagavan transcended mere intellectual connection, linguistic attraction, or even the hope of finding relief from his ordinary and stressed mind. The "lightning experience" marked the inception of a vital spiritual connection, a magnetic pull drawing him closer to Bhagavan.

Returning to the central autobiographical verse, Muruganar elaborated on this spiritual attraction he felt towards Bhagavan.

... சுடர் தவக் கொழுந்தாம்
அவனடிச் சார்பா லருள்பெற் றுய்ந்தோர்
அவனருட் சீரை யகமகிழ்ந் துருகி
வாயாற் கூறச் செவியாற் கேட்டு
வீயாக் களியால் விம்மித மாகிப்
பார்வளர் கயிலைமுற் பதிகத் துதியாற்
சீர்வள ரடிகளைச் சேவித் தடியேன் (13-18)

Meaning: Those who benefited[12] from Bhagavan's Grace through their association at His feet told me about Him with their hearts full of joy. As they spoke, I experienced immense happiness just hearing those words with my ears. Filled with admiration, I went to meet him and offer my salutations by composing a Tamil verse which began as "*Parvalar Kayilai*."

[12] Includes Dandapani Swami, Ayyaswami etc. as mentioned by Muruganar.

Muruganar beautifully describes his inner transformation in the journey to becoming a devotee of Bhagavan. His faith in Bhagavan was fully pregnant with maturing devotion, which is clear through his words, "வீயாக் களியால் விம்மிதம் ஆகி." (literal meaning: admiring the endless joy). Again, we can't dismiss this as a mere poetic exaggeration. It was rather an inner pull towards Bhagavan that was felt after merely hearing about Him from other devotees.

Vedanta[13] traditionally prescribes three steps for devotees who seek liberation: shravana (hearing), manana (contemplating), and nididhyasana (living the truth). Muruganar was so advanced in his spiritual maturity that he completed the first step of shravana ("வாயாற் கூறச் செவியாற் கேட்டு," meaning: hearing with my ears what has been said) in a very short order through his association (Satsang) with Bhagavan's devotees. A beautiful line from *Tiruvasagam* is a fitting analogy to this state of Muruganar: "வேகங் கெடுத்தாண்ட வேந்தன்" (the king who ruled me over by stopping my mind's speedy swirls).

He ends this section with "அடியேன்" (a devotee at His feet) – a very clear and complete statement of his transformation after his first meeting. The process of surrender had begun!

With the composition of his first verse on Bhagavan, which is to be ordered as the first verse in *Desika Padigam* (தேசிகப் பதிகம்), Muruganar began the second step, manana. Muruganar's devotion was so full and pregnant that he composed this amazing first verse even without seeing Bhagavan in person.

Now is an opportune moment to contemplate the opening verse[14] of *Desika Padigam*, temporarily shifting the focus from the autobiographical stanza.

பார்வளர் கயிலைப் பருப்பத நீங்கிப்
பண்ணவர் சூழலை விட்டு
வாரொளி மணிபோல் வாசகர் வாக்கை
வளர்செவி மடுத்திட விரும்பி
ஏர்வளர் பெருந்தண் டுறையடைந் தாற்போ
லிழிசினேன் புன்சொலும் வேட்டுச்

[13] Verse 70 in *Vivekachudamani* composed by Sri Adi Shankara.
[14] Verse 184 in *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai.*

சீர்வள ரருணைச் செழும்பதி சேர்ந்தாய்
தேசிக ரமணமா தேவே.

Meaning: Lord Shiva is surrounded by His devotees who sing His praises in beautiful Tamil songs. He leaves this scene at the famous, tall Mount Kailash to come to the fertile land of Tiruperumdurai to listen to those words, shining like diamonds, uttered by Manickavasagar. Likewise, O' Ramana Desika Deva, have you come to Tiruvannamalai, which is fertile for bestowing Self-realization, to listen to these unclear words sung by this lowly creature?

Appropriately, in his very first meeting, Muruganar calls Bhagavan "**தேசிகன்**" (Desikan), which means the one who shows the direction. It is noteworthy that Muruganar has already accepted Bhagavan as his personal God by addressing him as "**ரமணமா தேவே.**" (My great Lord Ramana).

In this verse, Muruganar draws parallels between Shiva and Bhagavan in the context of Manickavasagar. Although his self-reference is "**இழிசினேன்**," (lowly, unworthy creature), Muruganar has drawn an equivalency between his composition and *Tiruvasagam*: just as Lord Shiva had descended to hear Manickavasagar's verses, Bhagavan also came to listen to Muruganar's verses.

It is a very subtle comparison, which can only be understood in hindsight, in the context of Muruganar's life's mission to compose verses on Bhagavan like Manickavasagar. He must have intuitively, if only unconsciously, been aware of this mission, for that exact comparison would become true. At this point, during the introductory meeting, Muruganar had no idea of writing poetry like *Tiruvasagam*. There is no equivalent *Desika Padigam* in *Tiruvasagam* either. Indeed, *Desika Padigam* adheres to the meter established by Sundarar, whose compositions are known as *Sundara Tevaram*. Clearly, destiny played its magic, as the very first song he composed had an inkling of what would unfold for another half a decade. Equally amazing is the fact that this verse was composed before Muruganar had the opportunity to personally see Bhagavan with his own eyes. Muruganar's intuition was so remarkable that the song he composed prior to meeting his Sadguru outlined the mission of his life.

The elaborate visual scene woven by Muruganar connects three important spiritual centers – Mount Kailash, Tiruperumdurai, and Tiruvannamalai through the lens of the divine play of Lord Shiva. Apart from its magnificent lyrical beauty, this verse also establishes the divine nature of Bhagavan through Muruganar's own intuition. Again, mere Tamil scholarship alone can't produce such a gem of a verse. He summarizes the entire episode of *Tiruvasagam* in one single sentence: *Shiva came to listen to Manickavasagar's nectar-like words*. That core theme shall shine through in Muruganar's words for a very long time. This verse is well beyond mere mental imagery. It is absolute certainty through a deeply felt inner conviction.

In recollecting this episode further, Muruganar describes the very specific encounter with Bhagavan when he went to give the verse *Parvalar* in *Tiruvandapaguthy* (திருவண்டப்பகுதி), which appears as the fourth poem in *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*.

சீர்வளர் திருவடிச் சிந்தனை யதனாற்
பார்வள ரெனுமொரு பதிகத் தொடுபோய்
ஞானதே சிகனாய் நல்கும் பரசிவ
மோனவா ரிதியா முனிவரன் முகங்கண்
டழலது கண்ட மெழுகது போலக்
கழலது கண்ட கருத்தழிந் துருகிக்
கன்றுதன் றாயைக் கண்டது போலக்
கன்றிநின் றுள்ளங் கழலிடைத் திளைக்க
உடலம் புளகித் துவாமதி கண்ட
கடலின் மல்கிக் காதல் பெருகப்
பரையரு ளாலுயிர் பரவசப் படூஉ
உரைதடு மாறக் குழறிப் படித்துப்
பதிகந் தனையவன் பதத்திற் சேர்த்தலும்
ததியின் மலர்க்கண் சாத்தி யருளினன் (59-72)

Meaning: Through the divine grace bestowed upon me by the sacred feet of the divine, I embarked on a journey of composing a decad of verses,[15] commencing with "*Parvalar*," with the sole purpose of meeting Bhagavan, who embodies the perfect wisdom of the Self. In his complete silence, the radiance of Lord Ishvara shone brilliantly. As I gazed upon the countenance of

[15] This reference pertains to the *Desika Padikam*.

> Maharishi, I felt myself melting like a candle in the presence of a blazing fire. My mind came to a complete standstill as I fixated on his holy feet. I experienced a joy akin to that of a young calf reuniting with its mother after a prolonged separation, standing in reverence before his divine presence. My body responded with horripilation, and my mind was enveloped in a wonderful sense of prayerfulness. An inexhaustible ocean of love intensified within my heart. My soul soared to heights of ecstasy at the mere sight of him. My attempts to articulate my thoughts led to jumbled words and a parched mouth as I began reciting my verses. In the end, unable to complete my recitation, I surrendered those verses to Bhagavan, who, understanding my predicament, gazed upon me with boundless compassion and mercy.

As per Muruganar's vivid description, the entire atmosphere seemed to have been imbued with an overwhelming sense of prayerfulness, as if the very air around him had been sanctified by the divine presence of Bhagavan. His mind, which had previously been a constant whirlwind of thoughts, came to an abrupt and total stillness in the face of Bhagavan's overwhelming aura. It was as though time itself had momentarily ceased to exist, and his entire being became captivated by the divine sanctity that emanated from Bhagavan's holy feet – the sacred symbols of his inner spiritual journey.

In the presence of Bhagavan, silence took on a new dimension, for it was in that deep quietude that the radiant essence of Lord Ishvara revealed itself in all its brilliance. His very countenance seemed to emit a divine light, and as Muruganar gazed upon him, Muruganar could feel the boundaries of his individual self dissolving, much like a candle yielding to the all-consuming flames of a roaring fire.

In that poignant moment, the joy that surged within Muruganar defied adequate description. It was like the boundless exuberance experienced by a young cub when reunited with its mother after a prolonged and agonizing separation. This metaphor beautifully captures the intensity of the emotion that coursed through him in the presence of Bhagavan.

His physical form also responded to this spiritual ecstasy with horripilation, a sensation akin to a thousand tiny ripples coursing

through his body. Within the depths of his heart, an inexhaustible ocean of love welled up, transcending the boundaries of ordinary human emotions. It was a love that sought no expression, for it was an experience beyond words, beyond the limitations of language. As he attempted to recite the verses he had composed, his voice faltered, and his tongue stumbled over the syllables. It was as though the profundity of Bhagavan's presence had rendered him speechless, and his mouth had grown dry in the face of such divine majesty. Sri Ganesan[16] wrote about Muruganar's experience as follows:

> Discerning the predicament of this potential devotee, as it were, Sri Bhagavan himself came out of the cottage where Muruganar reached its entrance. Sri Bhagavan looked straight at him. A miracle took place! The look of the master on that day kindled the fire of poetry in him which glowed in him ever after. 'What?' Sri Bhagavan asked. Sri Muruganar was totally absorbed in Him and the vichara brought him back to life. He started singing in the particularly specified tune the verses composed by him at the temple. Tears welled up in his eyes and he could not proceed. The tune of his reading was obstructed. 'Can't you read? Give it to me. I shall myself read it,' said Bhagavan.

According to Sri Kunjuswami's recollections,[17] Muruganar stayed for a few more days and appeared to have further deep experiences. He walked as if intoxicated with Bhagavan's love. Muruganar's words offer a poignant description of a sincere seeker's experience on the spiritual path when encountering their divine master. In Muruganar's case, this divine intoxication and his amazing love for his master became so ingrained in him that they eclipsed all other aspects of his life. This, in itself, is the true miracle of his story. ▲

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[16] *The Mountain Path*, October 1973 edition, p.203.

[17] Sri Kunju Swami was another highly regarded devotee of Bhagavan. During the time of this meeting, he served as an attendant to Bhagavan and later went on to write his own reminiscences.

Tamil Siddhas

Part Thirteen

Azhukanni: The Siddha who longed for immortality

P. Raja

A stinking bulk is this physique…a salt container.
Can't find a herb to resurrect differently.
If only I could find the herb, Kannamma,
I would throw away my deteriorating form
And reach your feet Divine.[1]

Thus sang Siddha Azhukanni, meaning tear jerking eyes, who always longed for the Divine feet of Kannamma, an incarnation of Goddess Sakthi worshipped by almost all the Tamil siddhas. It is the superior power, the kundalini force, that the siddhas all over the earth love to enjoy. If only they could use this force in the most proper way, they could not only open their third eye but also realize GOD. One is reminded of Mahakavi Subramania Bharati's 'Kannamma'.

Like all other siddhas who donned matted long hair, an uncut and so a flowing beard, an untrimmed and so a shabby moustache,

[1] Song 8.

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Sketch by Ghovi

Azhukanni too did so and adorned himself with rudraksha beads and smeared his body with holy ash. The only difference that common people could make out and used to distinguish him in comparison to the other siddhas was that his eyes were always brimming and flowing with tears.

No one knew why he wept, and that too perennially. Not that they did not dare to ask him, but he cared little to answer them. His tears remained a mystery to everyone who met him in flesh and blood. They sympathized with him but were unable to help him in any way. What could they do when they found no way to know the source for his tears?

Yet, people liked him and loved him for the lovely songs he sang. The songs might have easily passed for dirges, but people loved not only the manner but the matter too. And so, to identify him, they called him AZHUKANNI SIDDHAR. He was not a man of one place but a citizen of the world. He was a terrific wanderer, who was seen in various places on the same day and at the same time. That too remained a mystery, for how can one and the same person be seen in several distant places on the same day? Was he omnipresent?

None of his admirers or critics was able to clarify the great doubt. They decided to run after him, and they did. In such attempts they painstakingly recorded his songs in visible words. For it was said that no Siddha had ever put his songs on Cadjan leaves. They neither knew the use of the stylus nor any other way to preserve the songs they sang. They were illiterates to the core.

Thanks are due to the common people who cared to put the songs in a readable format, for without their goodwill and effort many of the songs the siddhas sang in streets and forests would have gone into oblivion.

People liked the manner in which the siddhas put their matter. People love riddles, wisecracks and conundrums. As we know, the siddhas were good at them. Hence, people during their free hours sat with their kith and kin only to put their heads together and rack their heads over the puzzles the siddhas ululated.

> This body measures just eight spans.
> Its entrances are nine though.

A home for five surely and they wander at will.
Cursed with no rein to control them, Kannamma,
Uselessly I wither and wilt.[2]

Whatever may be one's height, one is eight spans only if measured with one's own hands. The nine entrances refer to the nine holes in a human body, viz. two eyes, two ears, two wings of the nose, one mouth and the other two found below the belt. And the five beyond one's control are the five senses, viz. sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste. We are not blessed with rein, to be sure. But yoga, the true way of bringing our wavering mind together, will give us the rein and thus the ones that go beyond our control can be controlled.

In another song, Azhukanni wails:

My lower belly is all aglow
Like the blazing fire in the smithy.
Inefficient am I to position it.
If only I could place it in the right place,
Oh, Kannamma! I could conquer Death.[3]

He was so much in love with Kannamma, the Divine power in human beings, that he wanted to merge with the force and become one with that. And so he sings, rather a bit romantically:

Are you the daughter of my uncle or aunt?[4]
I am not quite sure. Yet my mind follows you
And my body desires you. If only, Kannamma.
You are one of the two, my eyes will be red
Lusting for you.[5]

As we know, the Kannamma he refers to is power, the kundalini force, and so one need not read sexy connotations here. People who found delight in recording the songs the siddhas sang, liked to propagate such songs to the willing ears of the common folk. Such

[2] Song 2.

[3] Song 7.

[4] It is customary with the Tamils to marry the daughter of one's uncle (mother's brother) or aunt (father's sister). It happens even today as people do not like their wealth to move away from their family.

[5] Song 11.

people who did so declared that the songs were beautiful to the core and so called them *azhukanni*, a combination of two words (*azhagu* + *kanni*) meaning lovely *kannis*.[6]

It was also believed that since the Siddha used a very rare herb called *azhukanni* to practice *kaya siddhi*,[7] he was named after the herb that was bound to shower longevity on the seeker. That emboldened him to sing a song like this one:

> From the womb to the tomb, I move.
> Yet I am blind to the path of perfection.
> If only I could trace the way to it,
> I can do away, dear Kannamma,
> With the tedium of birth and death.[8]

Several of Azhukanni's songs serve as internal evidence to prove that the Siddha treated several incurable diseases through the rare herbs he found during his wanderings. He was a specialist in yoga and herbal medicine. He was also a poet of the common man, for he sang his songs not to confound people but to inspire them in all possible ways to lead a life of perfection. He found great pleasure in telling the world that everyone should seek and nurture one's Kannamma so as to lead a life of immortality.

> Well cooked samba[9] rice mixed with sweet smelling ghee
> Topped with fruits three[10] and offered with lots of affection,
> O to eat it with glee, dear Kannamma, what a paradise!
> The same pleasure I experience in realizing you.[11]

Azhukanni Siddha, who longed for immortality, succeeded in finding the path to perfection. He did not stop with that. He was not self-centered and so gave a loud voice to his findings, and his fans and admirers saved the songs to posterity. His songs are made available to us by those broad-minded people. *Azhukanni siddhar paadalkal*, *jnana*

[6] In Tamil prosody a 'kanni' is a stanza of two lines with the same number of metrical feet, often set to be sung.

[7] The power of securing the body by magical medicaments against age and its effects.

[8] Song 10.

[9] A crop of paddy of five months duration, harvested in the Tamil month Thai.

[10] The three fruits are mango, jack pulp, and banana.

[11] Song 4.

soothiram, *Azhukan vaithiyam*, *Azhukan yogam*, *Azhukan jnanam* are some of his works available to us in book form.

In spite of playing the role of 'lead, kindly light' to the common people, he was not sure of his future. For that matter, who was? For that matter, who is? And who will be? Man wriggles with Fate and he is destined to struggle thus. Perhaps a believer in destiny, Azhukanni made that point also clear in one of his songs:

> Still waters gather moss, it is clear.
> Unclear is the future, however we observe it at close quarters.
> If we are able to know of our future,
> Life would be smarter, Kannamma,
> As clear as moss in still waters.[12]

The songs of Azhukanni Siddha are a compendium of worldly wisdom put in relishable capsules. Though the songs sound mystical in tone, they are like the pulp of jack fruit, hard on the surface but tasty to the core. Written in colloquial language, they make the readers swing to the music the songs produce.

Nothing much else is known about Azhukanni except that he was blessed with a samadhi in the temple premises of Lord Shiva, in Nagapattinam, one of the 38 districts of Tamil Nadu State in Southern India.

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(All references to song numbers are to Tamizhpriyan's *Pathinettu Siddharkalin Mukkiya Paadalgalum Vilakkangalum*. Pub: Narmadha Pathipagam, Chennai, 2006. All the translations from the songs of Azhukanni quoted in this essay are free renderings done by the author). ▲

[12] Song 18.

The Paramount Importance of Self-Attention

Part Fifty

Sadhu Om
As Recorded by Michael James

11th March 1979

Sadhu Om: As Bhagavan often used to say, the same one *cit-śakti* [power of knowing or awareness] when facing inwards, towards itself alone, is *ātma-svarūpa* [the real nature of ourself], and when seemingly facing outwards, away from itself towards anything else, is ego or mind. This is illustrated in *śāstras* by several analogies such as a crow, which is said to have just one eye, which it rolls from one socket to the other to see on either side; an elephant, whose one trunk serves both as a nose and as a hand; and a snake, which is said to use its eyes both to see and to hear.

Since the mind is in essence just this one *cit-śakti*, which is none other than *ātma-svarūpa*, Bhagavan begins the fourth paragraph

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.

of *Nāṉ Ār?* by saying: 'What is called mind is an *atiśaya śakti* [an extraordinary power] that exists in *ātma-svarūpa*. It makes all thoughts appear'. This is the same *atiśaya śakti* that he refers to in the first line of verse 6 of *Śrī Aruṇācala Aṣṭakam*: 'There is only one *poruḷ* [real substance], you [Arunachala], the heart, the light of awareness. In you exists an *atiśaya śakti*, which is not other [than you]'.

He was referring to this one *cit-śakti* on two occasions recorded in *Day by Day*, namely on 11-1-46, when it was recorded that in answer to the question 'What is the difference between the mind and the Self?' he said, 'There is no difference. The mind turned inwards is the Self; turned outwards, it becomes the ego and all the world', and on 8-11-45, when it was recorded that he said, 'The mind, turned outwards, results in thoughts and objects. Turned inwards, it becomes itself the Self'.

This *cit-śakti* is the 'I' that we need to investigate in order to know it as it actually is. What it actually is is pure awareness, which never knows anything other than itself, because it alone is what actually exists, so in its clear view nothing other than itself exists for it to know, as Bhagavan says in verse 27 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

> Only knowledge [or awareness] that is devoid of knowledge and ignorance [of anything other than oneself] is [actual] knowledge [or awareness]. This [alone] is [what is] real. There is not anything [other than oneself for one] to know.

Since this *cit-śakti* seems to be mind or ego only when it seems to face away from itself to know other things, we cannot know it as it is so long as we continue to know anything other than ourself. Therefore, to know it as it actually is, we need to attend to nothing other than ourself.

Only when we attend to ourself so keenly that we thereby cease to be aware of anything else whatsoever, will we be aware of ourself as pure awareness, which is what we always actually are. We can know ourself as we actually are, namely as pure awareness, only by being as we actually are, and to be as we actually are we must attend to ourself alone. Therefore we always have a simple choice: either we can face outwards, and thereby seem to be mind or ego, or we can face inwards, and thereby be as we always actually are.

28th March 1979

Sadhu Om: If you feel that you need any external help for practising self-attention, you can go and sit in Bhagavan's Old Hall. It is not an ordinary place, because that is where Bhagavan lived day and night for more than twenty years, so it has a special power to turn the mind inwards if we are receptive to it. Therefore you will find it helpful if you sit there for your practice.

I do not say that you should sit there for many hours at a stretch, as some people do, because we should not strain ourself to be self-attentive. The key to self-attentiveness is love, and love cannot be forced. This is why Bhagavan advised us to cultivate the love to be self-attentive by patient and persistent practice. By repeated practice, we will gradually wean the mind off its liking to go outwards and correspondingly strengthen the love to remain facing inwards. This is why Sri Krishna said in the *Gītā* [6.25] '*śanaiḥ śanais*', which means 'slowly, slowly', 'gently, gently', 'gradually, gradually'. Therefore trying intermittently but repeatedly is more effective than trying for a long time without a break.

Our aim should be to be self-attentive as much as possible throughout the day, no matter what else we may be doing, but to maintain steady and uninterrupted self-attentiveness requires great love, which can be cultivated only by repeated practice. In the beginning, therefore, it can be helpful to set aside twenty or thirty minutes morning and evening to make more effort to be self-attentive, and to continue trying to be self-attentive as much as possible in the midst of other activities throughout the day. By such practice we will gradually strengthen our love to be self-attentive, and as our love grows stronger, there will be less and less need for the support of any set times or places.

As well as, or instead of, sitting in Bhagavan's Old Hall, you can also sit on the Hill to practise being self-attentive, because he is present in a special way not only in the Hall but also in the form of the Hill. However, we can sit in his Hall or on the Hill only if we happen to be here in Tiruvannamalai, but those who are not here should not therefore be disheartened, because though he is present here in a special way, he is most immediately present in our heart as our own being, 'I am'. Wherever we may be, therefore, we can enjoy his presence simply by turning within.

His outward presence in the form of Arunachala, in Ramanasramam, in his teachings and even in photos of him is particularly helpful so long as our mind still has a strong inclination to go outwards, but as we cultivate the love to face inwards more and more, his inward presence as 'I' will shine ever more clearly. The purpose of his outward presence in all its various forms, therefore, is to lead us back to his real presence, which exists and shines eternally in our heart as 'I am'.

31st March 1979

Sadhu Om: Sleep is actually our natural state. In sleep there is no ego, and hence the five sheaths and three bodies are all completely non-existent, so what exists and shines then is only our own being, 'I am'. It is only when we rise as ego in waking or dream that the five sheaths, three bodies and all other phenomena seem to exist, as Bhagavan repeatedly emphasised, such as in the following passages:

> If the thought called 'I' does not exist, even one other will not exist. [*Śrī Aruṇācala Aṣṭakam*, verse 7]

> Of all the thoughts that appear in the mind, the thought called 'I' alone is the first thought. Only after this arises do other thoughts arise. Only after the first person appears do second and third persons appear; without the first person second and third persons do not exist. [*Nāṉ Ār?*, paragraph 5]

> If the first person exists, second and third persons will exist. If, oneself investigating the reality of the first person, the first person ceases to exist, second and third persons coming to an end, the nature that shines as one alone is oneself, the state of oneself. [*Uḷḷadu Nāṟpadu*, verse 14]

> If ego comes into existence, everything comes into existence; if ego does not exist, everything does not exist. Ego itself is everything. Therefore, know that investigating what this is alone is giving up everything. [*Uḷḷadu Nāṟpadu*, verse 26]

All the imperfections that we generally attribute to sleep, such as that it is temporary and that it is devoid of clarity, seem to be true only from the perspective of ego in waking or dream. Therefore when

sleep is distinguished from *turīya*, which is our real state, and when it is said that sleep is not our perfect state and hence not our goal, that is referring only to sleep as it appears to be from the perspective of ego and not to sleep as it actually is.

As it actually is, sleep is itself *turīya*, the only state that actually exists, as Bhagavan points out in verse 460 of *Guru Vācaka Kōvai*:

> If the beginningless filthy *vāsanās* [inclinations to seek happiness in anything other than oneself], which stood as the cause for dream and waking, are completely eradicated, [what previously seemed to be] the empty [void or desolate] darkness of sleep, which [was considered to be what] assembles the miserable [or wicked] state [of *pravṛtti* or outward-going activity, namely waking and dream] [causing it thereby] to spread out, will be [found to be] *atīta turya avasthā* [the transcendent 'fourth' state].

Sleep seems to be imperfect only because it seems to be interrupted by waking and dream, so the happiness of sleep seems to be temporary, even though it is actually eternal, being our own real nature. From the perspective of ego, therefore, sleep is like a physician's sample of a medicine. It is the real thing, but only a very small quantity, so it does not last long.

Question: But in sleep I do not experience happiness. I do not experience anything at all.

Sadhu Om: It is only ego that says it did not experience happiness in sleep, and that is because ego was absent then. However, even in the absence of ego, you were present, which is why you remember having been in a state in which there were no thoughts or dreams. Since you now remember having been in such a state, in which you were aware of nothing other than yourself, you must not only have existed in that state, but must also have been aware of existing in it.

We all love to be in that state, which we call 'sleep', because however much enthusiasm we may have for experiencing other things in waking and dream, such enthusiasm is short-lived, since sooner or later our love to subside and rest in sleep will overpower it, and if we remain without sleeping for long enough, we will want nothing more than just to fall asleep. As Bhagavan says [in the first

paragraph of *Nāṉ Ār?*], 'happiness alone is the cause for love', so since we all have so much love for sleep, this clearly proves that sleep is a state of happiness. Moreover, since we alone exist and shine in sleep, our love for sleep clearly indicates that happiness is our real nature.

Question: You say we remember having been in sleep, but it is not clear, because how can ego remember having been in a state in which it was absent?

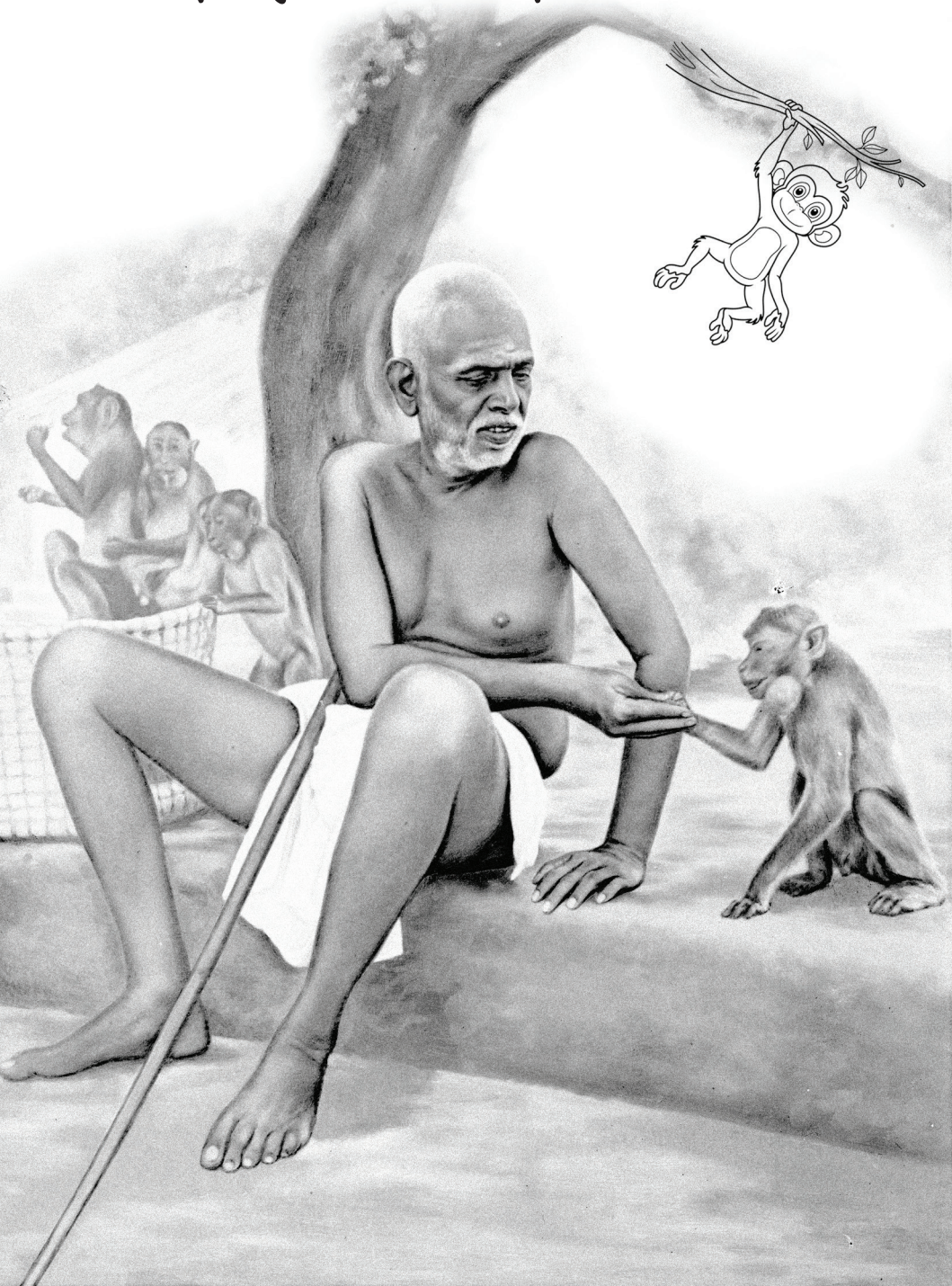
Sadhu Om: Though we did not exist as ego in sleep, we did exist as *sat-cit*, the awareness of our own being, 'I am', which is the reality of ego. That is, ego is the adjunct-mixed awareness 'I am this body', so we cease to be ego in sleep, since all adjuncts drop off when we fall asleep. What remains in sleep, therefore, is only the pure, adjunct-free awareness 'I am', which is our being, and this same awareness is what is now mixed with adjuncts and therefore seems to be ego.

What we now remember about sleep, therefore, is the continuity of our being, 'I am', which existed and shone alone in sleep, and which now exists and shines as if it were mixed with adjuncts as ego. In other words, though ego did not exist as ego in sleep, it did exist as its underlying reality, the pure awareness 'I am'.

However, though ego remembers having existed in sleep, it does not remember sleep as it actually was, because the same adjuncts that obscure its awareness of itself as it actually is now, also obscure its awareness of itself as it was in sleep, when it shone devoid of adjuncts as *sat-cit*, the pure 'I am'. ▲

(To be continued)

Nondi's Corner



Hello young adults and children!

This is Nondi, a monkey devotee of Bhagavan. Welcome to the July 2024 edition of the children/youth corner. In this section, I will share stories, anecdotes, puzzles and interesting facts that offer you spiritual nourishment every quarter. The aim is to inspire you and help you blossom into kind, brave and decisive adults.

I look forward to engaging with all of you, all over the world, in the years to come. Please share your queries, feedback and articles with me at

mountainpath@gururamana.org.

Sincerely,

Your friend,

"Nondi"

The True Significance of All Pradakshinas: Bringing Our Egos Under Control

Here's a beautiful narration by Bhagavan of the well-known story of Ganapati and Subrahmanya vying for a fruit from their father, Lord Shiva. This is from Suri Nagamma's Letters from Ramanasramam (Letter 64 dated 19th Aug 1946).

As is characteristic of Bhagavan, he never fails to bring home the greatest truth from these stories. He constantly redirects us to the ultimate goal of life - to bring our ego under control and turn it inward, to merge with our true Self.

One morning last May, Sundaresa Iyer, who used to bring food for Bhagavan while in Virupaksha Cave by going about begging, came and bowed before Him. Bhagavan asked him, "Did you go around the hill by way of pradakshina?" "No," said the devotee.

Looking at me, Bhagavan said, "Last night when people were going out for giripradakshina because of the moonlight, he also started to go. But he felt he could not complete the round. When they were starting out after telling me, he went around me quickly. When I asked him why he did so, he said, 'I am afraid I cannot go around the hill. So I have gone around Bhagavan.' Then I told him, 'Go around yourself. That will be Atma pradakshina,' I said." So Bhagavan began laughing.

"It means that he has done what Vinayaka once did," said one devotee. "What is that story?" asked another devotee. Then Bhagavan began telling it: "Once upon a time, Lord Parameswara wanted to teach a lesson to His son Lord Subrahmanya who fancied Himself to be a great

sage; so Parameswara sat on the top of Mount Kailasa with Parvati, with a fruit in His hand. Seeing the fruit both Ganapati and Subrahmanya asked their father, Parameswara for it. Then Ishwara said that He would give the fruit to whoever of them got back first after going round the whole world. With self confidence and pride that he would win the race, Subrahmanya started immediately riding on his favorite mount, the peacock, and began going at a fast pace, frequently looking behind to assure himself that his elder brother Ganapati was not following. What could poor Ganapati do, with his huge belly? His vahanam (mount) was after all a mouse. So he thought it was no good competing with Subrahmanya in the race round the world, and went around Parvati and Parameswara, bowed before them and claimed the reward. When They asked him whether he had gone around the world, he said, "All the worlds are contained within you; so if I go around you, it is as good as going around the whole world." Pleased with his reply, Parameswara gave him the fruit and Ganapati sat there eating it.

"In full confidence that he would be the winner, Subrahmanya finished going around the world and returned to the starting point, but found Ganapati seated before Parvati and Parameswara, eating the fruit. When he asked Parameswara to give him the fruit for winning the race, Ishwara said, 'There it is, your elder brother is eating it.' When he asked his father how that could be fair, Ishwara explained to him all that had happened. Subrahmanya then realized his vanity in thinking that he was a great sage, bowed before his parents, and asked to be pardoned. That is the story. The significance is that the ego which goes around like a whirlwind must get destroyed, and must get absorbed in Atma. That is Atma Pradakshina," said Bhagavan. ▲

Youth Corner

Here's a personal account from our young friend Sahana Narayanan about how she came to Bhagavan and what Bhagavan means to her. Sahana grew up in California and is currently a junior at the University of California in San Diego.

My family started attending satsangs when I was 5 years old, in the year 2008. I don't remember too much from when I was very young, but I remember that I would always take the prayer book, try to sing along to *Aksharamanamalai*, *Upadesa Saram*, *Arunachala Pancharatnam*, then go play with the other kids for about two hours and then say the prayers before dinner time. As the years went by, going to satsang became such a normal part of my life - Saturday evenings were always for satsangs and the people there were like our satsang family. I have a lot of memories at satsangs and I will always be able to remember the role that going to these weekly satsangs played in my life while growing up.

I also have many memories of visiting Sri Ramanasramam in Tiruvannamalai whenever my family would go on trips to India. I have fond memories of sitting in the big hall during daily parayanams, going to the dining hall for meals, petting the cows in the goshala, seeing the monkeys, peacocks, and dogs all around. I also remember doing Girivalam and how peaceful it felt walking around Arunachala. I will always cherish these fond memories of attending satsangs and visiting the ashram.

As the years went by and I grew older, I believe I began to grasp the significance of being a devotee of Bhagavan. To this day, whenever I find myself in a stressful or frightening situation and I don't know what to do, my instinct is always to think of Bhagavan's name or to start silently reciting 'Arunachala Shiva' in my mind.

For instance, I remember when I went on a field trip in middle school. We were supposed to go skiing, and it was my first time ever trying it. Everyone else in my group was better at it, so they all went ahead of me, leaving me alone on this snowy slope without anyone to help. I just started silently repeating 'Arunachala Shiva' in my head, and after a little while, I managed to make it down that hill. I simply thought of Bhagavan and prayed that he would ensure my safety, and in the end, I was fine.

Since a young age, I've had this notebook—it's a sort of time capsule of my spiritual journey. You can actually see how I've grown over the years just by looking at how my handwriting has changed. I'm not exactly sure when I started writing in it—maybe around 4th or 5th grade—but I would diligently write 'Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Arunachala Ramanaya' line by line, page after page, as a prayer. I've held onto this notebook for a long time and still write in it today. When I felt anxious about my college results, I would often write 'Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Arunachala Ramanaya' 108 times during satsang time. It always brought me a sense of peace and served as a reminder that Bhagavan was looking out for me.

I wouldn't say that I pray solely because I want something. My belief is that Bhagavan has already determined what will unfold for me in the future, and He's always watching over me to ensure that everything will turn out alright in the end. So, when I write or pray, it serves more as a reminder

to myself that Bhagavan is ever-present and that there's no need to stress or become excessively fearful about any situation I encounter. That's not to say that I've never experienced extreme stress—of course, I've been upset by low test scores or failures to achieve certain goals, and I anticipate facing similar challenges in the future. However, my aim is always to remind myself that Bhagavan knows best and His presence is constant. This perspective helps me navigate through tough times, so that one day when I reflect on such situations, I'll recognize that I am exactly where I'm meant to be.

Attending satsangs and gatherings with fellow devotees, chanting, and praying to Bhagavan has been an integral part of my life for a long time, and I am deeply grateful for it. Believing in Bhagavan and sensing Arunachala's presence has truly provided me with comfort and peace whenever I've encountered challenging situations. One of the key lessons I've learned from being a devotee of Bhagavan is that everything unfolds as it's meant to, and even when faced with difficulties along the way, ultimately things will be okay because Bhagavan is watching over us and ensuring our well-being.

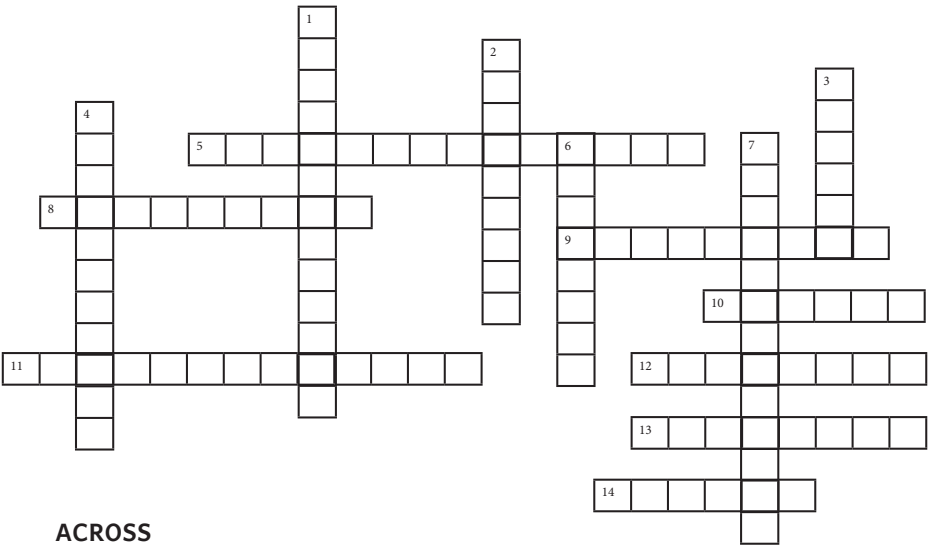
I am grateful for the opportunity to share my journey with Bhagavan.

Sri Ramanaarpanamastu.

HERE'S THIS ISSUE'S FUN CORNER

Crossword and Anagrams

Find significant events in the Ashram calendar.



ACROSS

5. The great night of Lord Shiva (2 words)
8. Monthly observance of Bhagavan's birth star
9. Celebration of the destruction of Narakasura
10. Anniversary of Bhagavan's arrival in Tiruvannamalai
11. Celebration of the birth of Lord Rama (3 words)
12. Mother Azhagammal's Aradhana (2 words)
13. Bhagavan's birth anniversary
14. Karthika star day when Goddess merged with Lord Shiva

DOWN

1. Anniversary of Bhagavan's favourite animal devotee's nirvana (3 words)
2. 9 day festival celebrating Devi
3. Harvest festival
4. Also known as Vyasa Purnima (2 words)
6. Anniversary of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana
7. Commemoration of the Sri Chakra Puja (3 words).

Have fun solving these anagrams of places along the girivalam.

PAIL HMRATTI _____

UDPARIDA PEETLM _____

GUAMAAT SHAMRA _____

RNVUAA GMIANL _____

AMYLAYAUKN TKAN _____

OSAN AMTIHTR _____

NIGA MANILG _____

APMCMAAHAIN EIRSHN _____

DAI NLIAAAAMN PTLEME _____

HNIUSAITMDRAK NIERHS _____

Shloka: Sri Ramana Ashtottaram

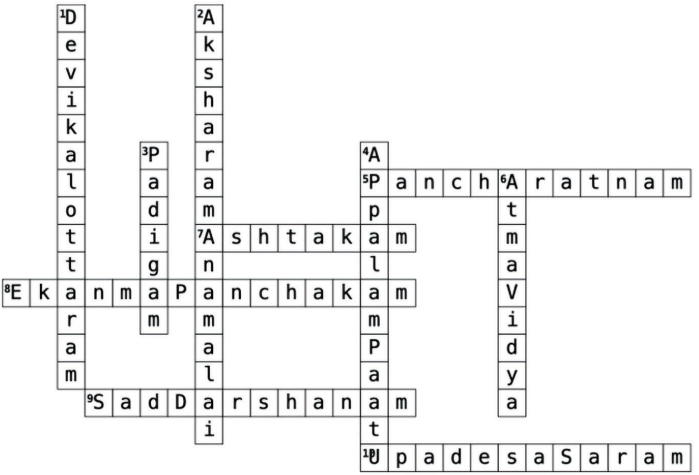
Let's continue to memorize this wonderful composition by Sri Viswanatha Swami. These are 108 names of Bhagavan used to worship him. As each name is uttered by way of invocation, a flower is offered in worship. Let's memorize one name at a time and understand its meaning. Here's Name 3:

ॐ गुरवे नमः ।

Oṁ gurave namaḥ

Meaning: Like the sun, self-luminous, and like the Self, the inner light. The one who destroys the inner darkness of spiritual ignorance, or the spiritual teacher.

Solutions to April 2024 crossword puzzle and word search puzzle



Across

5. Composed first in Sanskrit in the Arya meter

7. Bhagavan's autobiography

8. Last original composition first composed in Telugu (2 words)

9. Sanskrit version of Ulladu Narpadu (2 words)

10. Composed at the request of Muruganar to explain Lord Shiva's teachings to the rishis of the Dharuka forest (2 words)

Down

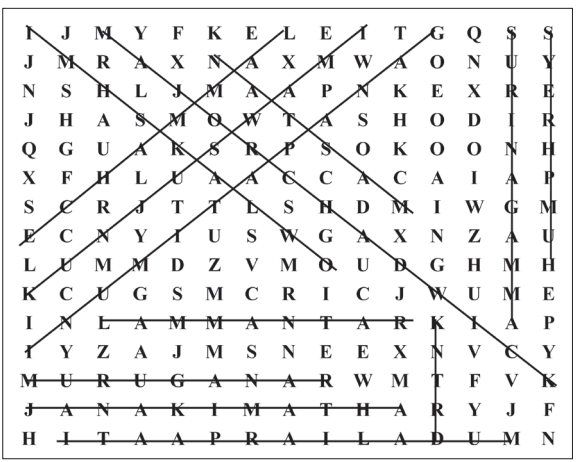
1. Tamil translation in venba meter of Lord Shiva's instructions to Parvati

2. Composed at the request of devotees setting out on bhiksha

3. Composed when the word "karunaiyaal" throbbed spontaneously in Bhagavan's heart

4. Song composed for Bhagavan's mother in the kitchen (2 words)

6. Composed based on Gopalakrishna Bharati's song on Nandanar (2 words)



Cowlakshmi
Frydman
Janakimatha
Mastan
Ratnammal
DrTNK
Ganapatimuni
Kunjuswami
Mudaliarpaati
SSCohen
Echammal
Humphreys
MajorChadwick
Muruganar
Surinagamma

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

QUESTION 1. *I am reading Kapali Shastri's commentary on Ramana Gita - the English translation by S. Sankaranarayanan. It is a 1998 Ashram publication. In chapter 6, verse 4, it says restraint of* prana *checks activities and establishes the person at the birthplace of activities. Does this mean Bhagavan said* pranayama *can eventually lead to the goal? Similarly, in verse 12, it says keeping company with the great good men of exalted minds, the mind gets merged in the place. Does this mean* satsanga *with the Guru is enough to reach the goal?*

Bhagavan gives a prominent place to both *pranayama* and *satsanga* as useful aids to reach the goal. As you know, Bhagavan is emphatic about the definition of the 'goal', which is total destruction of the ego/mind. Even though in *pranayama* the mind 'subsides' in the source for some duration, it springs back again and things are as before. The birth place or 'source' is reached, but the mind cannot rest there. The cause of this is the mental tendencies or *vasanas*. As long as these are not obliterated, there will be only temporary abidance in the Self. In Bhagavan's language the mind is temporarily suspended and revives again.

The *Upadesa Saram* verse 14 says

prana bandhanat leena manasam
eka chintanaat naashametyatah.

The word *leena* or *laya* is used to describe a lull in the thought process. It is a blissful period. It suddenly overpowers the sadhaka but leaves after sometime. He has to continue the practice of pranayama till he repeatedly experiences it. He may not get it again easily. The *vasanas* also do not go away.

According to Bhagavan, only seeking the source of the ego/mind will lift the veil covering the Self. When the mind is exposed to the full glare of the Self, the *vasanas* are burnt off. Even here one has to reach and try to remain in this state repeatedly, but the progress is faster, says Bhagavan. Actually, by seeking the source through enquiry, one burns a hole, as it were, in the causal body, the repository of *vasanas*. When the mind 'sinks' in the Heart (a euphemism for eradication of *vasanas*), the final release happens. *Manonasa* is achieved.

In *satsanga*, also, a similar thing happens. Notice the word *leena* in the 12th verse of this chapter of Ramana Gita. The power of presence of a jnani is such that the mind of the disciple is still. But when he leaves the Presence, the mind will be up to its old mischief. You may remember the story of Kunju Swami. After meeting Bhagavan, he experienced great peace. He felt he could practice meditation on his own; he need not put others to trouble, as food was a perennial problem in Skandasramam. He returned home, only to find that the peace he had in Bhagavan's presence was lost. He came back and told Bhagavan what had happened. Bhagavan told him that the earlier peace was due to the circumstances (Bhagavan's *Sannidhi*) that Kunju Swami had surrounded himself with.

Satsang and *pranayama* are great aids, but not enough in themselves to effect the final goal. Self-enquiry must be taken up if *vasanas* are to be obliterated quickly. More details may be found in Talk 141, where Bhagavan talks about continuing efforts. In the next chapter of *Ramana Gita*, a similar contrast between meditation and Self enquiry is discussed in verses 22 and 23.

QUESTION 2. *In verse 55 of Aksharamanamalai, it is said as follows: "Arunachala! Before You burn me up with the fire of the true knowledge of yourself, reducing me to ash, which is of the form of Self, may You in grace pour down the rain of your compassion upon me (so that my heart is refreshed and I have the power to withstand it). In the commentary of Muruganar, it is stated that unless the heart has already been cooled by the Lord's grace, i.e., unless the mind has already been ripened to a sufficient degree, the* jiva *will not be able to withstand the flame of the fire of the knowledge of the Self,* svaroopa jnana, *and those flames will ferociously consume its existence entirely."*

My questions are as follows:

*1) Is it not desirable, if the ego (*jiva*) is burned up (maybe even before it is ripened). It is* manonasa*, which every aspirant wants.*

2) Is it necessary that the heart should be cooled before the ego is burned up?

3) Is it not desirable if the flames of knowledge consume the existence of the jiva *entirely.*

4) Whether the fruit is raw or ripe, i.e., the mind, should the mind be not destroyed by the fire of jnana which is the goal.

The brief translation of *Aksharamanamalai* Verse 55 is as follows: "Before You burn me up with the fire of the True Knowledge of Yourself, reducing me to ashes, which is the form of the Self, pour on me Your rain of Grace, Oh Arunachala!"

Muruganar says in his commentary that unless the Heart is cooled by Lord's Grace, that is, unless the mind is ripened, the *jiva* will not be able to withstand the fire of *svaroopa jnana,* and its flame will ferociously consume the *jiva* entirely.

This is the literal or superficial meaning given for the verse. Let us analyze this as follows:

1. The aspirant has not received the Grace of the Lord in his quest for God-realisation.
2. Consequently, his mind has not ripened, and he will be unable to withstand the fierce descent of Self-knowledge, if and when it happens.
3. He will be consumed entirely by the flame of Self-knowledge.

The way all these points are presented, one gets the impression that this is a theoretical prospect, just a conjecture, and the end result is not the state of a jnani. By saying the *jiva* will be consumed entirely, Muruganar is implying that the Awareness of abiding at the Source will be absent; there will be no bliss of Self or God Realisation. He will vanish without trace, and will not live to tell other struggling souls about his experience, and thereby guide them in their spiritual journey.

Contrast this with the description given by Bhagavan of Jnana Sambandhar, the child saint, who spread Shiva Bhakti in Tamil Nadu. In Talks, Bhagavan says[1], "Sambhandar had sung 'The one who has fascinated my Heart or the captivator of my heart, I sing of Him in my mind.' The Heart is captivated: consequently the mind must have sunk in the Heart; and yet there is remembrance which enables the saint to sing of God later."

The word 'remembrance' is significant; this means that the awareness of the state of Union with God or Self is ever present. This is the state of the *jnani*. *Manonasa* must be understood as destruction

[1] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 275.

of ignorance of the mind, its identity with the body and its tendency to bind and assume doer-ship. It does not mean it is total obliteration of the mind, or a state of insentience. A *jnani* does have a mind and it is *suddha manas* or Pure Mind, which is the same as Atman[2].

What this means is that he can function in the world without any attachment and live to tell his experience of Union with the God / Self and the way to get there. A *jnani* is the Self and 'knows' he is the Self. This is the contrast between a state of total obliteration and the state of continuous abidance as the Self, wherein the jnani spreads the fragrance of Self-realisation all around, which continues even when the *jnani* drops his body.

In his commentary, Muruganar adds that there is an inner meaning to this verse. He says that Bhagavan is appealing to Arunachala, that before the pangs of separation — *Viraha Taapaagni* — burn him up, may Arunachala pour His rain of grace on him.

The greatest fear of any true Bhakta is that separation might consume him totally before the union with the Lord takes place. Bhagavan expresses this same sentiment in Verse 34 of *Aksharamanamalai* as "Unless You unite with me I shall melt away in tears of anguish, Oh Arunachala!"

This shows that appeal for Grace is the operative theme of all the verses. This inner meaning does not give any scope for doubts as the literal meaning does.

Thus the answers to the questions are

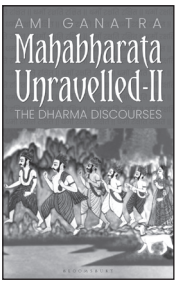
1. Ego being entirely consumed as indicated here will not lead to the state of *jnana* or bliss of Self-realisation. This answers question 3 also.

2. The Heart should indeed be cooled down by the shower of Grace so that the ripened mind can sink in the Heart and constantly enjoy the union with God/Self.

4. It is true that the goal is for the mind to be consumed by the fire of knowledge. When the mind is ripe, the process is sweet and definite and benefits the whole of mankind. ▲

[2] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 513.

BOOK REVIEW



MAHABHARATA UNRAVELLED-II: THE DHARMA DISCOURSES
Ami Ganatra. Bloomsbury India (2024);
pp.206; Rs.249 (on sale).
ISBN: 978-93-56409-33-0.
https://www.amazon.in/Mahabharata-Unravelled-II-Dharma-Discourses/dp/9356409331

In Advaita Vedanta, dharma occupies a nuanced yet significant position compared to other philosophical systems within Hinduism. While Advaita highlights the non-dual nature of reality, asserting that the ultimate reality, Brahman, transcends all multiplicity and distinctions, this perspective does not diminish the importance of dharma; rather, it reframes its significance within the context of spiritual realization.

Firstly, dharma is seen as a path to spiritual growth in Advaita Vedanta. It is regarded as a means to purify the mind and cultivate virtues necessary for realizing one's true nature (Atman). Following one's *svadharma*, or righteous path, is considered crucial for inner transformation and the removal of ignorance hindering Self-realization. Secondly, dharma serves as a framework for ethical living. While Advaita Vedanta emphasizes the underlying unity of all existence, it acknowledges the practical necessity of dharma for maintaining societal harmony. Dharma provides a moral and ethical framework guiding individuals in their interactions, fostering social cohesion and order. Moreover, dharma is viewed through the lens of Karma Yoga in Advaita Vedanta, as expounded in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Karma Yoga is the path of selfless action performed in accordance with dharma. By dedicating actions to the divine and relinquishing attachment to their fruits, individuals can gradually purify their minds and realize their true nature. Furthermore, dharma is perceived as an expression of divine will within Advaita Vedanta. It aligns individuals' actions with the cosmic harmony, contributing to the unfolding of divine order in the universe. Ultimately, dharma plays a crucial role in

the pursuit of liberation in Advaita Vedanta. While facilitating ethical living and spiritual growth, dharma also serves as a stepping stone towards transcending the cycle of birth and death. It leads individuals towards the realization of their non-dual nature as Brahman, beyond all dualities including that of dharma and adharma.

Dharmo rakshati rakshitah is a popular Sanskrit phrase that translates to "Dharma protects those who protect it." It is a summary of the importance of protecting dharma, which is the virtue of culture. In the Mahabharata, dharma is a central and complex theme intricately woven throughout the epic narrative. It encompasses duty, righteousness, ethical conduct, and cosmic order, reflecting the diverse perspectives and dilemmas faced by its characters. Characters like Arjuna grapple with their obligations as warriors, sons, and princes, highlighting the importance of fulfilling one's role in society despite personal qualms or moral dilemmas. Throughout the epic, characters must navigate conflicting duties and principles, and they encounter several moral dilemmas such as Arjuna's reluctance to fight in the Kurukshetra War. This raises questions about the righteousness of violence and the greater good versus personal attachment and aversion. Dharma is depicted as an inherent cosmic principle governing the universe, upheld by characters like Bhishma and Yudhishthira. They strive to maintain order and justice in society despite personal sacrifices. The consequences of adharma, or unrighteousness, are explored through characters like Duryodhana and Dushasana, whose disregard for dharma leads to their eventual downfall and the catastrophic consequences of the Kurukshetra war. Personal ethics and integrity are central to dharma, with characters like Draupadi upholding their principles of righteousness and resilience despite facing immense adversity.

The author, Ami Ganatra, approaches timeless epics with a unique perspective. The first volume, titled *Mahabharata Unravelled*, delved into the ancient saga as narrated by Rishi Veda Vyasa, capturing the essence of our ancestral heritage. Yet, the *Mahabharata* transcends mere historical retelling; it encompasses profound discussions on ethics, interpersonal dynamics, governance, legal principles, and more. Rather than altering or modernizing the narratives, she presents them as they are, contextualizing them for a contemporary audience without diluting their essence or characters. This commitment to authenticity is her forte.

In her latest work, *Mahabharata Unravelled II*, she offers more than a mere continuation of the first volume. Instead, she meticulously gathers and distills the scattered lessons found throughout the *Mahabharata*. This is critical, as amidst the intricate web of its multi-layered narrative, these lessons often go unnoticed by readers engrossed in the sprawling saga.

Ganatra's contribution is invaluable as she skillfully organizes these teachings for easy comprehension by the lay reader. Within the book, she explores the profound discourses of revered figures such as Raja Dharma by Bhishma, the narrative by Narada, Vidura Neeti by Vidura, and the discourse by King Prahlad, along with the enlightening conversations like the Kaama Geeta, Vyadha Geeta, and the Yaksha Prashnas answered by Yudhishthira. She concludes with the compelling narrative of the Pandavas' ascent to Svarga, shedding light on why Yudhishthira was hailed as Dharmaraj despite his fallibilities. Additionally, the narrative unfolds intriguing tales imbued with moral teachings, such as Rishi Markandeya's poignant story of a meat-seller Dharmavyadha enlightening a Brahmin named Kaushika on righteous conduct. This consolidation represents the essence of the *Mahabharata's* wisdom, revealing the profound insights into statesmanship, ethics, and morality embedded within its pages. To enhance the weight of the discourses by venerable figures like Bhishma and Vidura, she supplements them with similar teachings from other scriptures and tales. The author's elucidation of concepts like Apaddharma underscores the timelessness of Vyasa's teachings, leaving readers awestruck by the relevance of ancient wisdom in today's world. Her skill lies in the thematic compilation of diverse discourses, presenting the meanings of various shlokas and stories in clear and accessible English without compromising their integrity while maintaining its originality with Vyasa's *Mahabharata*.

The author refrains from modernizing or distorting meanings, instead simplifying them without sacrificing their essence. In her work, she meticulously extracts and elucidates the timeless wisdom embedded within these Dharma discourses. These lessons resonate profoundly even in contemporary society, perhaps now even more than ever before.

— M. Giridhar

Sri Bhagavan's Shrine on 74th Aradhana Day

D. Thiyagarajan

Mother's Shrine on Maha Puja Day - 31st May 2024

D. Thiyagarajan

ASHRAM BULLETIN

Sri Vidya Havan

Sri Vidya Homa is held every year at Sri Ramanasramam. This year, the homam was held on the 15th March 2024 in the customary grand manner. A few thousand devotees attended the function. The pūjās started early in the morning at around 7 a.m. After performing Navāvarṇa Pūjā, Homam, Sumaṅgali Pūjā, Kanya Pūjā, Pūrṇāhuti and Dīpārādhana, the tīrthas were taken in urns and anointings were done on Sri Chakra Meru. Dīpārādhanas were performed at the temples of Bhagavan (Ramaṇeśvara) and his Mother (Mātṛbhuteśvara) at around 3 pm.

Tamil New Year

Bhagavan's Mahānirvāṇa this year coincided with the Tamil New Year on 14 April 2024. A special morning pūjā was held on the occasion of the Tamil New Year in Bhagavan's Shrine. Devaraja Mudaliar writes, "Today is Tamil New Year Day. The pañcāṅgam for the New Year was read out by our Sastriar in Bhagavan's presence in the afternoon." This tradition has continued over the years and was read out before devotees in Bhagavan's shrine. Devotees recited Akṣaramaṇamālai at 8 pm that night in front of the Ramana Maharshi's Mahānirvāṇa room.

Sri Mahā Rudra Yagñah

Mahā Rudra Yajñaḥ occupies a very important place in Vedic literature and in the practice of Vedic traditions. Mahā Rudra Yajñaḥ was performed at Sri Ramanasramam for world peace. More than 150 Vidyārthi's (vedic students) and their Adhyāpakas (scholars) from various pāṭhaśālās in Tamilnadu and Karnataka took part in the japam. The Yajñaḥ was held from 25 to 27 April 2024 in a grand manner and was attended by several devotees.

On the concluding day after dīpārādhana and mahābhiśekam at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine, the kalasams from the Yāgaśālā were ceremoniously taken round the shrines of Mātṛbhuteśvara and Sri Bhagavan. Sri Ramaṇeśvara Mahāliṅgam was bathed with the sacred

water in the *kalasams*. On the same evening, the participants were honoured with shawls and traditional offerings.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's Aradhana

The 74th Ārādhana of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was conducted on the 6th May 2024. Early in the morning at 4 am, there was maṅgala music followed by a special decoration of the Ramaṇeśvara Mahāliṅgam in the samādhi shrine with multi-coloured flowers. This was followed by Mahanyāsa Rudra Japam, Pārāyaṇa of Bhagavan's works and then anointing ceremonies. Finally, devotional songs were sung and dīpārādhana was held at around 11 a.m. followed by a festive feast offered to all devotees. The event was telecast live on Ashram YouTube channel, watched by many persons and was attended physically by over five thousand devotees.

Mahā Pūja

Ramana Maharshi's mother Alagammal Samadhi day is observed as Mahā Pūja every year at Sri Ramanasramam. This year, on 31 May 2024, the Mahā Pūjawas held at the Mātṛbhuteśvara temple located in the Ashram. The shrine was decorated with multi-colored flowers and special *abhishekas* and pujas were held. The final *aarthi* concluded in a grand manner around 11 a.m.

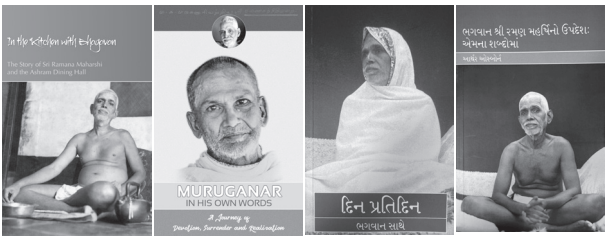
Cow Lakshmi Day

Worship of Cow Lakshmi was held at her samadhi located inside the Sri Ramana Ashram on 18 June 2024. The shrine was decorated with many flowers and the final *aarthi* was attended by a large number of devotees.

Obituary

Sri. Renganathanagarajan, the grandson of N.R. Krishnamurty Iyer, was an accomplished chartered accountant and served as the auditor of Ramana Ashram for nearly twenty years. His father had also served as the auditor of the ashram for many years. He was absorbed at the feet of Arunachala Ramana around 11 p.m. on 15 May 2024. He is survived by his brother and his wife. ▲

NOW AVAILABLE...



IN THE KITCHEN WITH BHAGAVAN (English) – recounts Sri Ramana Maharshi's daily ritual of rising at 3 am to prepare meals, emphasizing the sacredness of his kitchen. Just as Bhagavan's Old Hall is revered as a temple by devotees, Bhagavan's kitchen is equally sacred. It explores with a particular focus on the themes of food — its reception, preparation, and offering — and reveals how acts of everyday sustenance were intertwined with sadhana at Sri Ramanasramam. pp. 251; Rs. 140/-; ISBN: 978-81-8288-325-3.

MURUGANAR IN HIS OWN WORDS (English) – Among Bhagavan's devotees, Muruganar epitomized surrender, dedicating his life to Bhagavan and composing thousands of devotional verses. His poetry, deeply enriched by his devotion, continues to inspire and guide spiritual seekers. Unlike traditional linear translations, this book weaves stories using Muruganar's words from various sources. By following the subtle clues scattered in his elegant poetry, the author provides anecdotal context, bringing to life scenes from those glorious years. The interplay between Muruganar's eloquence and Bhagavan's transcendent brilliance creates a poetic symphony, where every word is a note and every verse a melodious tribute to the eternal source of wisdom. pp. 550; Rs. 300/-; ISBN: 978-81-8288-326-0.

DIN PRATI DIN BHAGAVAN SATHE (Gujarati) – A translation of 'Day by Day with Bhagavan' by A. Devaraja Mudaliar in English translated into Gujarati by Ramkrishna Tuljaram Vyas. pp. viii+352; Rs. 200/-; ISBN: 978-81-8288-324-6.

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHINO UPADESH: YEMANA SHABDOMAN (Gujarati) – A translation of 'The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi in His Own Words' by Arthur Osborne translated into Gujarati by Ramkrishna Tuljaram Vyas. pp. xxiii+240; Rs. 150/-; ISBN: 978-81-8288-323-9.

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Do your actions without caring for the result. Do not think that you are the doer. Dedicate the work to God.

— *Talks*, Sri Ramana Maharshi

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