



Mountain Path





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 They should be in English, original, and previously unpublished.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 भक्तापराधसोढाय नमः

OM bhaktāparādhasoḍhāya namaḥ

He who tolerates the faults of His devotees.

Kshamaa Praarthanaa (*Kshamaapana*) stotras are often recited prayers of expiation, seeking forgiveness from the deity. This is because the Lord tolerates the faults of his devotees. Lord Śiva is described¹ as the ferocious great God, the fulfiller of all desires, auspicious and who tolerates the faults of devotees.

Many are the stories of seemingly wayward individuals whose bad habits might have barred them, in the public opinion, from receiving any sort of divine grace, and who, against all odds, had their cups filled to overflowing. One of the most famous examples is Girish Ghosh, the playwright devotee of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He would come see the Master completely drunk, sob about his inability to claim sobriety, and sometimes even verbally abuse Sri Ramakrishna. Yet, the Paramahansa welcomed him like a mother. Lord Śiva showered his abundant grace on Sundaramurthy Nayanar despite behavior that might seem entirely contrary to that expected of a true bhakta. Not once, but twice, did Sundarar beg the Lord to fulfill his desires for conjugal relations. In both instances, the Lord not only assured him of the success of his lustful advances, but actually acted as a messenger between Sundarar and his would-be brides.

These stories are certainly not a license to act entirely as we wish. Rather, they prod us to ask, “What qualities did these devotees have which caused the Lord to put on full display his unconditional love?” None of us can gauge where exactly we are on the spiritual path, nor can we do so for anyone else. What is abundantly clear is that, in the words of Bhagavan, “If you were really unfit to realize the Self in this life, you could not have come to this place [Arunachala] at all.” Whether we are in Tiruvannamalai or not, this must be true. ▲

— S. Lazar

¹*Srimad Bhagavatam* 3.14.35.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Balancing Tradition and Modernity:

The Eternal Legacy of Sri Ramanasramam

Every institution faces the timeless challenge of balancing the need for innovation in order to keep up with a changing world with the preservation of its cherished traditions and heritage. Our Ashram is no exception. Change is inevitable; as the Greek philosopher Heraclitus famously said, “The only constant in life is change.”

The Ashram attracts a growing number of devotees from across the globe. Tiruvannamalai itself is also evolving rapidly, welcoming several millions of pilgrims annually. Yet, amidst this apparent chaos lies the opportunity to discover Bhagavan’s unwavering presence, a potent source of guidance. The external bustle underscores the Ashram’s vital role as a haven for spiritual solace.

Meeting amazing devotees daily is the most enriching part of my work. Their steadfast devotion to Bhagavan, a Guru they never met physically, is deeply moving, aptly proving that Bhagavan’s presence is ever-present. The Ashram administration prioritizes serving them all by providing several avenues to deepen their connection to Bhagavan and his teachings.

Our unwavering goal is to preserve Bhagavan’s presence and ensure that the immense power of his silence permeates the Ashram. While the superficial mind might yearn for a quieter past, the Ashram’s core principles and mission remain constant.

The *bhaavam*, or inner attitude, with which we approach the Ashram’s atmosphere, determines the outcome of our visit — the

holiest pilgrimage for a sincere devotee. Bhagavan has said, “Grace is flowing like the ocean ever full. Everyone draws from it according to his capacity. How can one, who brings only a tumbler, complain that he is not able to take as much as another who has brought a jar?¹” It is up to us to make the most of our visit and immerse ourselves in Bhagavan’s grace.

The Ashram’s mission statement was laid out with Bhagavan’s endorsement in his Will that was drafted in 1938: **“Make Sri Ramanasramam a centre for the diffusion of spiritual knowledge and a place of sanctity by affording scope for the fulfilment of objects germane to the advancement of spirituality.”**

Holding Bhagavan’s vision for the Ashram as our anchor, the Ashram administration strives to preserve the spiritual sanctity of the Ashram and his teachings in their purest form. Bhagavan gave us the blueprint on how to achieve this while he was still in the body. Our work is to simply maintain that framework while integrating modern amenities and technology where appropriate.

Bhagavan’s legacy endures and will continue forever. Bhagavan established a daily routine of pujas at the Mother’s shrine and twice-daily Vedic chanting. He championed the creation of the Ashram kitchen, guest rooms, dispensary, and *goshala* to serve devotees’ needs. He emphasized cleanliness and a serene atmosphere reminiscent of ancient rishis’ abodes, with calming flora and fauna. Even during financial hardships, Bhagavan ensured that healthy, vegetarian meals were provided to all guests. Near him, a revolving cupboard served as a multilingual spiritual library. When devotees had questions, he’d select the most fitting book, encouraging them to delve deeper. Like a magnificent tree, the Ashram has flourished, its branches reaching out to welcome ever more seekers. Modern amenities now blossom alongside timeless wisdom. Notably, the Ashram now uses biogas from cow dung for half its cooking fuel and organic manure in the gardens. Solar panels are being installed to contribute 60% of energy needs. These initiatives exemplify Bhagavan’s commitment to resource conservation.

We have faithfully maintained Bhagavan’s traditions and facilities, expanding their scale and scope to accommodate a growing number

¹ *Sri Ramana Reminiscences* by G.V. Subbaramayya.

of devotees. Modern amenities now grace the kitchen and dispensary, while new, comfortable guest rooms are continuously added. A world-class auditorium, library, and archives center have been established. The Ashram meticulously preserves the sanctity of the Samadhi Hall, Old Hall, Mother's shrine, and the wilderness of Virupaksha, Skandasramam, and other sacred sites, buildings, ensuring they remain havens of peace. The path to these abodes are paved with greenery paths, echoing Bhagavan's love for nature.

The Ashram bookstall stocks more than 500 publications in 24 languages, preserving Bhagavan's teachings. A visit equips seekers with all the literature needed for their spiritual journey beyond the Ashram. Facebook provides regular updates on events in the Ashram in ten languages. Digital formats of Ashram's books and the online store allow devotees worldwide to buy or download these resources. The new Ashram website provides various resources in 18 languages. Bhagavan's digitally restored photos are also available, serving as powerful tools for introspection upon returning home. The daily telecast of the pujas through YouTube gives the devotees a feeling of physically being in the Ashram.

All major festivals – Pongal, Maha Śivaratri, Sri Vidya Havan, Navaratri, Deepam, Bhagavan's Aradhana, and Jayanti – are observed following the original customs practised during Bhagavan's time, while ensuring meticulous care for the ever-increasing number of devotees. Live streaming of these events through YouTube extends Bhagavan's presence to devotees' homes globally. The Ashram provides resources for conducting *satsanghs* in devotees' homes, and earnest *sadhakas* meet regularly worldwide to practice Bhagavan's teachings.

As in Bhagavan's time, the Ashram is run entirely by his grace. We have preserved his abode for a century and are committed to its eternal vibrancy, and, therefore, his Ashram will always remain a timeless sanctuary. We, Bhagavan's devotees, understand that time and space are mental constructs. As expressed in *Ulladu Narpadu* verse 16: "Without us there is neither time nor space. If we are only bodies, we are caught up in time and space. But are we bodies? Now, then and always – here now and everywhere – we are the same. We exist, timeless and beyond space." Here, one transcends the mundane,

bathed in the timeless serenity that has resonated for generations. The peaceful spiritual environment that existed a hundred years ago remains present today, perhaps even amplified. As Bhagavan asserted, “I am here. Where can I go?”

Devotees return from the Ashram with heartfelt gratitude, expressing that it is a genuine oasis of tranquility and stillness, where their spirits are rejuvenated. The visit recharges them, and they are able to embrace worldly responsibilities with renewed enthusiasm. They describe a profound peace and lightness they wish could endure, and most importantly, they feel Bhagavan’s living presence permeating every corner of the Ashram.

Bhagavan’s grace is our anchor in this ever-changing world. As he often said, *vanda velaiyai paar* – attend to the purpose of your visit. By heeding this at arrival, we shield ourselves from external distractions. During our stay, anxieties fade, replaced by hope and optimism that with our Guru’s grace, we can cross the ocean of *samsara*.

Several decades have passed since Bhagavan graced this earth physically, yet his spirit continues to bloom within the Ashram walls. Just as Bhagavan’s grace sustained the Ashram for a century, it is through the selfless offerings of devotees that we continue to thrive. We are all pilgrims on the path of time, yet within the Ashram’s embrace, those boundaries dissolve. As Bhagavan himself declared, time and space are mere illusions. The devotees share tales of a tranquil haven, where their spirits are refreshed and an immense indescribable peace envelops them. Bhagavan’s presence, a constant current, infuses every corner of the Ashram, a beacon guiding us through the ever-changing world. As changes happen worldwide and everything seems to be in a state of flux, the one constant is his grace and blessings.

Even a skeptic who visits this place will go back transformed. Come, then, with hearts brimming with devotion, yearning, and unwavering faith. Let your vessel be a large container — not a mere tumbler — overflowing with the sincerity of your search. The Ashram awaits, and I assure you, its embrace will leave you forever transformed.

In humility and devotion,

Venkat S. Ramanan

Bhagavan as the inner guide

S. RAM MOHAN

How do we see scenes on a television screen? The scenes we see are transmitted as waves in cyberspace. When we press the appropriate button on the TV, the screen displays pictures for us to enjoy. Similarly, there are Eternal, Divine Truths in transcendental space. God has created these Truths and sent them as spiritual waves throughout the cosmos. The great rishis of ancient times, by pressing the button of *ātma-jñāna* (Self-knowledge), manifested these truths in the mental space, enabling spiritual seekers to experience and enjoy them.

The Eternal Truths, *ritam* (Cosmic Order) and *satyam* (Truth), are perceived by the rishis and transmitted to the *sadhakas* (spiritual aspirants); hence, the rishis are known as mantra *drashtas*, meaning ‘seers of Truths.’ However, the great truths visualized and experienced by the rishis and transmitted to the practitioners of their times have gradually eroded and been forgotten by humanity. Out of compassion for humanity, the Cosmic Consciousness or God takes the form of an Avatar in every epoch to initiate a spiritual renaissance, guiding humanity back to their spiritual origins, revitalizing the Truths, and disseminating them to seekers, appropriately modifying them to suit the needs of the times.

This is the purpose of the Guru. Shri Shankara mentions this emphatically in his *Praudhanubhuti* saying, “The Guru is fully ripe in spiritual wisdom. He is truly living in advaitic experience. He has no need. Out of compassion for the seekers and to spread Transcendental truth, he continues to live in corporeal form.”

The basic principle of *sanatana dharma* is the Eternal truth: ‘I am That.’ What exists is only the Self. Everything else is only a

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creation of the mind. Therefore, the Vedas¹ declare *ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*. This means that there is only one Reality, though scholars call it by different names. The same truth is mentioned in the *Upanishad* as² *divyo hi amūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sa bāhyābhyantaro hi ajah*, meaning that ‘Paramatma is Self-effulgent.’ It is formless. It is never born. It is pure. It pervades everywhere. It is both the external world and your inner core.

We can see that Bhagavan is the recent Avatar who descended to this world to disseminate the eternal truths of the Vedas. He also drew upon the writings of the great masters of the past to explain his teachings. He states³: “The consciousness (*chaitanya*) associated with the aspect ‘I am’ is called Shakti. The entire universe is revealed by that Shakti and thus is Shakti’s *sankalpa*. The state of that Shakti when free of all attachments is the pure state of absolute wisdom.”

The teachings, dialogues, and verses of Bhagavan Ramana convey the treasures in the spiritual corpus of ancient India. Bhagavan has presented them in a lucid manner, rich in both the breadth and depth of content.

Bhagavan says,⁴ “This spark of *jñāna* will easily consume all creations as if it were a heap of cotton.” It is the atom bomb of *jñāna* which destroys all worlds when it comes down on them.

Bhagavan further explains,⁵ “Who is the seer? When I looked within, the seer vanished, leaving behind what remains. No thought of ‘I saw’ emerged; how then could the thought ‘I did not see’ arise? Who can express this in words when even You, in the form of Dakshinamurti, conveyed it through silence alone? To reveal Your transcendent state through silence, You stand as a mountain, shining from heaven to earth.”

The same idea is expressed in another poem⁶ by Bhagavan, “He who turns inward with an unwavering mind to search where the ‘I’ arises, realizes and abides in the Self, like the river when it joins the ocean.”

A seeker might wonder, “Is there a separate entity called the mind that needs to be removed?” In his response to Siva Prakasam Pillai,

¹ *Rig Veda*, 1.164.46

² *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 2.1.2

³ *Devikalottharam*, v.13.

⁴ *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 22 November 1945.

⁵ *Aruṇācala Ashtakam*, v.2.

⁶ *Aruṇācala Pañcaratnam*, v.3.

Bhagavan clarifies: “If you remove the thoughts successively, when the last one is also removed, you will find that there is no separate entity called the mind. There is no mind other than the thoughts; mind is really the succession of thoughts. When the mind is active, as in the states of wakefulness and dream, it conjures up its own world. In the deep sleep state, when no thoughts are present, the mind is also not there. When the first thought arises upon waking, the mind arises with it.”

He further explains: “*aham* — ‘I am’ — is the first name of God. In the Sanskrit language, ‘A’ is the first letter and the last letter is ‘ha,’ thus including everything from beginning to end. The word *ayam* means ‘that which exists,’ Self-shining and Self-evident. *ayam*, *aham*, *ātma* — all refer to the same thing.”

The Upanishad declares, “*asti iti upalabhyate*.” Shankara explains, “One must apprehend the concept, ‘He is’ and the essence of Him dawns.” Bhagavan refers to this Absolute in Tamil as ‘*Ulladu*’ — ‘that which is.’ It is the Self, the ‘I-ness,’ not confined by any limiting adjunct or *upadhis*.

The understanding that ‘I am the Self’ is the goal of life. Bhagavan reiterates this truth in his translation of the *upa-agama*,⁷ a work in which this upadesa is given by Lord Śiva to Subrahmanya. Bhagavan states, “The true mantra that is to be chanted is the steady and continuous contemplation of the Self. This is what is known as meditation. This is the highest level of penance. Therefore, annihilate all thoughts, holding firmly and boldly to the Self.”

The *Ribhu Gita* presents a similar idea in 36.22:

“Knowledge of the Self is the supreme mantra
Knowledge of the Self is the supreme penance
Knowledge of the Self is verily Viṣṇu
Knowledge of the Self is Supreme Śiva.”

Bhagavan states,⁸ “That which is, is the one Reality. It may be represented by one form, *japa*, *mantra*, *vichara*, or in any kind of attempt. All of them finally resolve themselves into that one single Reality. Bhakti, *vichara*, *japa* are only different kinds of efforts to keep out unreality. Meditation or *vichara* is thus a return to our true nature.”

⁷ *Atma Sakshatkara Prakaranam*, v.35.

⁸ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 401.

Every utterance of Bhagavan directs us on the path of *jñāna sadhana*, awakening the inner fire of enquiry and unfolding the Reality within us. When reading Bhagavan's texts, we must ensure that we deeply understand all their implications and practices before moving on to the next verse. It is essential to take time to examine the portions of the text that appear most relevant to our current state of mind, situation, and life. We should focus on these parts for a period of time, repeatedly studying the content. Truly understanding even a single line can be highly transformative.

It is stated,⁹ "Self-enquiry must become the very movement of our mind, moment to moment, though beginning in certain phases and rhythms in alignment with our life experience through body, prana, sense, and mind. We have to examine the teachings step by step through different stages of its conveyance. Another way is to examine the portions of the text that appear most relevant to our current state of mind and level of development. We may focus on a single verse for a period of time until it permeates our awareness."

Alternatively, we may follow the impact of, say, all 30 verses of *upadesa sara*, and in the process, absorb the teachings according to our own level until they are completely internalized, making the teachings and the teacher One with our own being.

An important fact to keep in mind is that substantial progress in the spiritual path is not easy by our own personal effort within the body and ego-mind complex, which is a product of intractable ignorance. There is certainly a need for an inner guide who is totally realized and a purveyor of great non-dual wisdom.

We are fortunate that our inner guide is Bhagavan. He can guide and aid us in our progress, whether we look to him directly or to the great writings and pronouncements in his dialogues, poems, and outpourings. May we have the humility and persistence to approach the Supreme Self, Ramana, with utmost dedication, making the quest of the Self the prime concern of our life, giving up all attachments, distinctions, beliefs, conclusions, and our identity as a body-mind complex. The boundless grace of Bhagavan will lead us to the Absolute and make us realize 'I am That.' ▲

⁹ *Yoga Beyond Body and Mind*, David Frawley.

The Maharshi – Kulachala

KAYS

“The truth of the Hill is mighty indeed” – this Vedic¹ verity resonates profoundly. But mightier still is the Truth and glory of the Himalayas, that houses Kailash, the Abode of Lord Śiva. Yet, the transcendent Śivam, beyond space and time, beyond the grasp of intellect and ego, manifested Itself as a column of Fire symbolizing luminous awareness to dispel delusion. Later, out of compassion, it cooled down as the red rocky hill – Arunachala, the Hill of Luminous Enlightenment. This Tejolinga is celebrated as the holiest of the holy by the hoary Indian scriptures. It combines in itself the holiness of all other holy *kshetras* and thus surpasses all other holy places in grandeur, majesty, and power of bestowing Grace. Saint Tirujnana Sambandhar celebrates it by mentioning the glory of Arunachala in the 9th verse of every decad he was inspired with, save for a very few exceptions.

Steeped in mythology, mystery, and mystique, Arunachala is the *sanctum sanctorum* – the spiritual centre – of the universe and the Self that dances as ‘I-I’ in the Heart of every being. This *aham sphurana* – the *vibhuti* (divine emanation) of Arunachala – is one greater than which none can be there. Hailed as a condensed mass of *jñāna*² (wisdom) by seers, saints, and sages, the Hill is verily a treasure house of Siddhas (perfected beings), abounds in spiritual glories, beckons men of askesis (austerity) to Itself, and is revered from time immemorial as That which grants liberation the moment thought of.

¹ *Katha Upanishad*, 2.2.2

² ‘*jñānat tiralāy niṇḍra perumān*’ - Sung by Saint Tirujnana Sambandhar.

Kulācala, a Samskr̥ta compound word consisting of two roots *kula* (clan, class, race) and *acala* (steadfastness, still, immobile) refers to the stoic and greatest among its races. Himalayas are around 50 million years old while Arunachala is 3500 million years old. The Atharva Veda³ refers to the appearance of Arunachala as *Agni Sthambha*, while the Rig Veda⁴ mentions the creation of Himalayas. Thus, Arunachala by age and Himalayas by height are Kulācalas.

Bhagavan says,⁵ “O Arunachala, the Hill of forbearance.” The cosmic creation coming in one form, namely the Hill, chose this human embodiment, which was also hailed as Kulācala. Ganapati Muni affirms “Victory Be to Ramana Maharshi Kulāchala.”⁶ Kapali Sastri elaborates this in his commentary, “Bhagavan is Kulācala because he is endowed with groups of divine virtues.”⁷

Muruganar defines Ramana Kulāchalam as, “The ultimate non-dual Truth that becomes the Temple for ceaseless abidance as Supreme jñāna.”⁸ Arunachala and Bhagavan both as Kulācala have an intertwining relation. So, Arunachala, the great motionless form – the Hill of Awareness – chose to break into a human frame to answer the spiritual needs of the Age and to bestow his *darshan* on his devotees in *Kali Yuga*. Arunagiri Siddha, under the Banyan tree in the inaccessible northern peak, appeared as the great sage at the bottom of the Hill so that all could see him and be saved. The mysterious identity between the Hill and the human frame encasing gnosis (spiritual knowledge) was confirmed with certitude at every turn of the unfolding of his divine life on earth.

The day the Lord chose to appear in apparent sport was the night of Ardra – the day the Lord first appeared as a column of fire. The exact time of his advent coincided with the re-entry of Lord Nataraja — the Lord of cosmic dance symbolizing the victory of Light over forces

³ *Stamba Sūkta*, 10.7 and 10.8.

⁴ Rig Veda, 10.121.4

⁵ Poṭumaiyām bhūḍara, *Akshara Manamalai* – v. 107.

⁶ जयतु रमणस्तस्याचार्यो महर्षि कुलाचलो, *Uma Sahasram*, v. 849.

⁷ *Umāsahasram vyākhyayā* - śrī kapāli śāstri, śrī aravindāśramḥ p. 369-70.

⁸ நீடும் பரஞான நிட்டைக்குஓர் ஆலயமாக்
கூடு பரமாத்ருவித உண்மைக் குலாசலமே

Nīḍum paraṇñāna niṭṭaikku’ōr ālayamāk

kūḍu paramāttuvida uṇmaik kulāchalamē - *Ramana Puranam*, lines 443-4.

of darkness, delusion, and ignorance — into the *sanctum sanctorum* after a procession through the blessed town of Tiruchuzhi where he was born. The timing is a secret revelation for his descent (*avatara rahasya*), namely taking over that mission of dispelling delusion. In his own words, “the light of Enlightenment may shine forth and the light of effulgent *ātman* (Self) may flourish.”⁹

It is said, “Rising as an aspect of the Self-Effulgent column, Thou bearest as a pillar the entire Universe,”¹⁰ and Ramanachalam remains still as the axle for all the worlds to spin around.¹¹

And he was truly Lord Nataraja come out to reveal Himself by planting “the vastly spread flowers of His Feet on that ego’s head,”¹² piercing the darkness encircling humanity on Mother Earth. Thus, He inherited the scepter of the empire of Śivam.

The subtle vibration of Arunachala, present at his birth, declared the formless presence of the Hill within him. Arunachala’s divine play (*lila*) orchestrated a grand celebration – a grand *mahotsava* – by inducing in him a dramatic death experience. Far from signifying a mere separation of the immortal spirit from mortal life, Arunachala’s overflowing grace transformed his entire being into Infinity. Just as a river merging with the ocean becomes the ocean itself, losing its individual name and form, so too did Arunachala make its own mystery incarnate within him. His entire nature became ablaze with spiritual fire. Body and mind transformed into vessels and instruments of divine light. In essence, he became the human embodiment of the Hill – the embodiment of *ātman* (Self), the ‘I.’ His infinite Eye radiated pure awareness, and silence became his language.

Brahman alone is both father and son.¹³ This echoes the Vedic pronouncement: “*ātman* alone abides as the son” (आत्मा वै पुत्र नामासि - *ātmā vai putra nāmāsi*). Nowhere is this declaration better exemplified than in the case of Bhagavan. The death experience

⁹ *Arunachala Navamanimalai*, v. 8.

¹⁰ உலகமனைத்தும் தாங்கும் சிற்சோதித் தூண்
ūlaganaittum cērat tāṅgum cīrcōdit tūṇ - *Tozhuda Pattu*, v. 10.

¹¹ *Thiruvindhiyamalai*, v. 4.

¹² *Arunachala Padikam*, v. 7

¹³ ब्रह्मैवाहं पिता सुतः - *brahmaivāhaṁ pitā sutah*, *Ribhu Gita*, chap. 20, v. 16.

served as a realization of his oneness with his Father. His letter from Madurai mentions leaving “In search of my Father,” and upon reaching the temple, he submitted, “Father by Thy command, I have come.” Later, while accepting the *ārti* of Arunachala, he affirmed, “The son is subsumed by the Father.”¹⁴

He saw the Hill as his own home, a mansion within his Father’s house. He hailed it as both Mother and Father. Be it during a plague or during acts of torture by jealous sadhus, he – the embodiment of *kaivalya* bliss – remained unmoved, as steadfast as the Hill itself. It was the Self returning to the Self, the finite merging with the infinite. He became another Hill in silent repose, mirroring the original. His admission, “When I come to realize my *svarupa* (form – as ātman) do I have a form apart from Thee?”¹⁵ serves as the final proof of this identity.

The form, essence, nature, and glories of both Bhagavan and Arunachala are identical, trumpeting their non-dual oneness. Scriptures and sages proclaim the Hill as the condensed mass of *jñāna*, an ocean of nectarine Grace, and the embodiment of Love – a mighty spiritual magnet. Bhagavan himself radiated the splendour of *jñāna*, giving a name and form to the abstract term. His heart overflowed with Love, and every pore exuded Grace. Arunachala, in the form of Bhagavan, walked among us – a ‘walking Arunachala’ who spoke, smiled, showered love and liberation on all, from the elite to the illiterate, from bards and birds to children and seekers. These forms, assumed as part of a divine play (*līlā*) to liberate us from the bondage of form, serve as tangible links between reality and unreality.

The Embodied Grace of Arunachala

Arunachala is Pure Awareness, exemplifying the dictum *cinmātram śānti lakṣaṇam*¹⁶ and abides as pure consciousness itself. Clothed in radiant forms (*prathimam prakasam*), imbued with the fragrance of blissful awareness (*chidananda gandham*), and surrounded by infinite peace, they draw souls towards them.

¹⁴ அப்பாவுக்குப் பிள்ளை அடக்கம் - Appāvukkup piḷḷai aḍakkam.

¹⁵ *Arunachala Ashtakam*, v. 3.

¹⁶ *Ribhu Gita*, Chap. 16, v. 29; the characteristic of Peace is Pure Awareness.

This drawing of people unto Arunachala can be described as the snare of Grace (*uyir vali kāntam*).¹⁷ Initially, the forms of Bhagavan and Arunachala capture the hearts, ensnaring them in a net of Grace. From then on, a mere remembrance – the forerunner of Grace – awakens a surge in devotion that acts as an infallible guide on the mountainous path to Realization, the goal of all religions. Miracles blossom along the way.

The ancient wisdom of the Hill shining perpetually in his eyes, Bhagavan’s gaze transmits the experience he received from Arunachala. As the Hill is still and motionless, Bhagavan, too, in the words of Muruganar, is “motionless ever for external perception.”¹⁸ Stillness is the inherent nature of Completeness. Yet both – the oceans of compassion – spontaneously surge into cascades of compassion (their true essence) and reach into the cosmic corners to claim thirsty souls and offer solace to the surrendered. Silence, the medium of their call, is indeed the victory drum that echoes unceasingly, proving that ‘I am’ is the reward of all silence. For the secret of Arunachala and Bhagavan lies in their being the subjective core within individual. As such, both dance as ‘I’ in the Heart.

Thus, the Supreme Truth, shining as the ether of consciousness yet possessing boundless compassion, resides on the one hand as the Hill and on the other as the human frame of Bhagavan. Just as the Hill of blazing wisdom has disguised itself as a still and rocky peak, so too is Bhagavan’s beatific radiance “hidden by the sheath of the gross body like the blazing sun hidden behind the clouds.” He is indeed *sonashilesa rupam*, the very form of Arunachala.¹⁹

The Duality of Stillness

Just as the Hill of resplendence, in Bhagavan’s words, “stands still and silent only to convey the Transcendent state of the ātman,” so too was Bhagavan’s penetrating silence steeped in the stillness of Awareness, intuiting the ātman. Nearness to the magnificent solitude of the Hill, with its towering peaks, imparts a mystical solace. So too, the grandeur of Bhagavan’s stillness spreads the effulgence of the

¹⁷ *Arunachala Padikam*, v. 10.

¹⁸ ‘*Asaivila arunai vazhve*,’ v. 3, *Arunai Vazhvu*.

¹⁹ Jagadeeswara Sastry, v. 4., *Ramaneeya Sthava*.

gracious ātman all around. This makes one wonder, “Oh Bhagavan, is your Light the effulgence of Glorious Arunachala or the scintillating lightning splendour of Ramana.”²⁰ Thus Muruganar says, “O Venkata! Invisible to both Brahma and Viṣṇu leaping below the seven nether lands piercing the seven celestial worlds above shining as the column of Fire, now has girded up Thy loins to consume the egos of the devotees.”²¹

Abode of Siddhas

Just as the Hill is the sanctuary of Siddhas and sages, so was Bhagavan always surrounded by hosts of highly advanced spiritual seekers. One is reminded of the Vedic statement: “Hailed by thousands of rishis, he surges like an ocean.”²² Many siddha *purushas* in various forms came to Bhagavan for his darshan. When he circumambulated the Hill, luminous bodies accompanied him.²³ While Bhagavan himself attested to the truth of the golden mongoose as a siddha *purusha*, many others in different names and forms came, sat for hours in his presence, and departed without a single word being exchanged. They must all have been heirs to the everlasting kingdom of God or scions of the ancient lineage of Śiva’s noteworthy sons. Hence Suddhananda Bharati affirms, “He, the radiant one, hailed and worshipped by Siddhas of great tapas.”²⁴

Infinite and Ever-New

Even as the silent and motionless Hill reveals new and awe-inspiring vistas at different points, so too does Bhagavan’s motionless state unveil various facets of immense activity. “A Brahmajñani who abides at his Source... is eternal and shines ever new and fresh.”²⁵ “Obeisance to the Guru ever anew and with new form.”²⁶ He transcends time and age, his infinite charms never withering or

²⁰ Shantananda Puri, *Ramana Suprabhatam*, v. 23.

²¹ ‘*Athendu Pattu*,’ *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*.

²² अयं सहस्रमृषिभिः सहस्रकृतः समुद्र इव पप्रयः - ayam sahasamṛṣibhiḥ sahasakṛtaḥ samudra iva paprayaḥ, Viswanatha Swamy, *Ashottaram*, p. 30.

²³ *My Recollections*, Devaraja Mudaliar, p.7.

²⁴ *Ramana Vijayam*, Suddhananda Bharati

²⁵ *Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham*, v. 11.

²⁶ *Guru Gita*, Chapter III, v. 48.

becoming stale. He unveiled *jñāna* as love, transformed silence into initiation, and, by his mere presence, created an atmosphere of grace that yields peace. Even the elders, sinking into the bliss surrounding him, called him “nectarine Śivam.”

The Golden Touch of Arunachala: Hiranyabahu in Human Form

The *Hiranyabahu* (golden-armed one) of the Rudram hymn became Ramana, the *Swarnahasthaka* (golden-handed one).²⁷ From childhood, his reputation for a golden touch preceded him. This God of luminous Awareness transformed anything he touched into gold. Victorious in games, fortunate in every venture, and skilled in all he did, his touch brought auspiciousness and sweetness even to the home kitchen. These same ‘golden hands’ later bestowed liberation upon his mother, Cow Lakshmi, a crow, Valli the deer, and Jackie the dog, and secured a heavenly place for Palaniswamy.

When Ganapati Muni suffered from intense heat on his head due to *kapala bheda* Bhagavan’s touch cooled it down. He relieved many physical ailments, his touch acting as an antidote to snake venom. Another feat was the restoration of the broken *Sri Chakra yantra* at the Durgai Amman Temple to its original form, making it fit for worship once more.

His handwriting was as precise as printed text. By his divine touch, bound books, scattered or discarded papers transformed into notebooks, coconut shells fashioned into exquisite water vessels, thorny sticks made smooth and polished into walking sticks – all marvels of an art no mortal could dream of mastering. These show how waste materials could be transformed into delicacies under his touch. It is a certainty that these very hands, the hands of this invisible guide, will take hold of ours and lead us on the path to the Goal of Self-realization. ▲

²⁷ *Ramana Ashtottaram*.



Jnana and Bhakti

BY DR. T.N. KRISHNASWAMI

Jnana and Bhakti are like two sweets made out of the same sugar, of which you can choose whichever you like. Giving up ‘mine’ is Bhakti; giving up ‘I’ is *jñāna*. The former gives up all his possessions; the latter gives up the very possessor of the possessions.

Bhakti is turning the mind towards God; Self-enquiry, the path of *jñāna*, turns the mind to its own inner essence, which is the Self. In Self-enquiry the subject sets out in search of himself. He who seeks must exist. This existence is itself the Self. In Bhakti, one is disgusted with one’s individual self and feels one’s nothingness or unimportance and fixes one’s mind on the Higher Power. When the mind at last becomes fully aware of the Higher Power, it is awed by it and absorbed into it. This is total surrender of the ego — the man no longer is; God alone is.

The Cloud of Unknowing, a 14th Century Christian work in which the soul is said to be one with God, says that all creatures have in them two powers: one a knowing power, the other a loving power. To the first, God, the Maker of both powers, is eternally in-comprehensible; to the second He is comprehensible. This is the wonderful miracle of love. “He may well be loved but not thought. Love may reach God in this life but not ‘knowing.’” So far, this is Bhakti, but the book continues: “And therefore swink and sweat in all that thou canst and mayest for to get thee a true knowing and a feeling of thyself as thou art. And then I trou thou shalt have a true knowing and a feeling of God as He is.” This is *jñāna*. He who does not know his self cannot know, much less love God.

This article and the poem are from the 1964 issue of Mountain Path.

Here is what the Maharshi says on the subject: “To long for happiness is Bhakti. To long for the Self is *jñāna*.”

It is *jñāna* to know that the Master is within you, but to commune with him is Bhakti. When the love of God or Self is manifest it is Bhakti; when it is in secret it is *jñāna*.

To know the Self as bliss is *jñāna*; efforts to uncover this natural bliss are Bhakti. A bhakta makes no plans, trusting that God who sent us here has his own scheme, which alone will work. He claims nothing. He has surrendered his personality, so that his actions and their results are due to the Higher Power. He accepts whatever befalls with equanimity. He has learnt from the *Gita* that actions go on of themselves, without an actor. A cyclone causes havoc but there is no actor responsible for it. God has created actions but no actor at all.

One-pointed thought of God is Bhakti; one-pointed experience of Self is *jñāna*. When ‘other’ arises there is fear. There should be one alone, whether we call it God or Self. ▲

TO SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

By Dilip Kumar Roy

A face that's still, like silent cloudless blue,
And eyes that even as stars drip holiness
Won from a source beyond our ken — a new
Messenger Thou, in this age, of a grace
Men ache for and, withal, are terrified.
When it shines near — wan puppets of fool senses,
That would disown the soul's faith — even deride
The Peace they crave yet fear — for Life's false dances
And siren rhythms beguile the multitude !
And there they woo Time's whirls and wheels — for what?
At best a reeling moment — an interlude Of half-lit laughter dogged by
tears — of Fate! O Son of Dawn! who only knowest the Sun,
And through His eye of Light see'st all that lies
Revealed — a flawless plenitude which none
But Son's own children ever might surmise!
For only the chosen few so far have won
The Truth that shines beyond world's wounds and cries;
Who see Thee throned in high dominion Of Self's invulnerable Verities.

Tirukkuṛaḷ: The Wisdom of Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar

M.R. KODHANDRAM

- 3.* மலர்மிசை ஏகினான் மாண்டி சேர்ந்தார்
நிலமிசை நீடு வாழ்வார்.
malarmisai ēginān māṇaḍi sērndār
nilamisai nīḍu vāzhvār.

Meaning

Reaching the (Heart)-lotus and becoming one with the glorious Source, (the *sadhaka*) will attain the Supreme State of permanence or immortality.

[மலர்மிசை ஏகினான் = reaching the (Heart)-lotus; மாண்டி சேர்ந்தார் = becoming one with the glorious Source; நிலமிசை — நிலம் = place; மிசை = உயர்ந்த, மேலான = supreme; நிலமிசை = supreme place or supreme state; நீடு வாழ்வார் = attain permanence or immortality]

Commentary

To reach the Heart-lotus, one has to internalise his mind and practise *ātma vichara* and *ātma dhyana*. The mind will not internalise easily, as it is used to externalisation into the world due to desires and attachments. Such a mind will be gross. How can a gross mind be internalised? It has to be made subtle, and only then can it be internalised. It is like how only a fine thread can be inserted into

*This number refers to the Kuṛaḷ number in the book

the eye of a needle, not a rope. So, we have to develop the right understanding of the unreal nature of the world first and rein in the mind and the senses with the help of a strengthened intellect. The world is only a projection of the mind and hence unreal. Every time the mind runs into the world through the senses, it has to be pulled back through enquiry and prayers. We should also develop Bhakti, as this is the antidote to all our worldly attractions. Then, slowly, the mind and senses will come under control and *vairagya* or non-attachment will develop. We should also correct all our faults, bad qualities/habits, negative thoughts and emotions through enquiry and prayers. In this manner, we should purify our mind, weaken the ego and make the gross mind subtle.

Normally, only during our interactions with others, or while facing adverse situations, our ego will rise in the mind in the form of reactions leading to negative emotions such as anger, hatred, pride, jealousy, etc. If we are alert to notice them, we can check them through a timely enquiry, prayers, and make our mind positive. If we keep doing this exercise every time we are affected, we can progressively weaken all our bad tendencies or *vasanas*. Then over a period of time, the ego will soften and the mind will become purer, subtler and calmer due to fewer agitations and reactions. This is the first part of our exercise of Self-Enquiry, wherein we weaken our ego-mind and make it subtle. Then, the mind is ready for internalisation and doing *sadhana* that will reveal our true Self within our Heart.

It is not enough if we merely weaken the ego, which is only the first step. We should undertake an inner journey and go to the root of the ego and cut it off there. Then the tree of ego will collapse. Once the ego is destroyed, the mind will merge in the Self and become one with it. Thus, Self-Enquiry is the Direct Path for destroying the ego. We also have to do all our duties properly and be helpful to others without expectations in order to gain *punya* karmas which are required for our faster progress in our inner journey. Duties have to be done properly and completely because they are due from us. Only then our karmas will end and we will be able to focus on doing our *sadhana*. Bhagavan says that doing one's duties properly is the greatest service to God! The ego cannot be destroyed in one stroke merely through meditation, as the *vasanas* will be very strong inside

and will not allow the mind even to internalise in most cases. These *vasanas* are difficult to overcome unless they are softened through enquiry over several years. After this has been accomplished, we can undertake the second part of Self-Enquiry, which is the *sadhana* part that will take us to our true Self in the Heart. How do we undertake this inner journey?

The mind that has calmed down has to be internalised through *ātma vichara*, or Self-Enquiry by asking the questions “Who am I?” and “Wherefrom this feeling of ‘I’ arises in me?” If we then pray to Bhagavan to help us, then, through Grace, we will be able to locate the Source from where the feeling of ‘I’ arises. This ‘I’ that is referred to here is not the true Self but only the ego-‘I.’ If we keep focussing steadily on the point from where the feeling of ‘I’ arises, then the mind will slowly descend along the *paranadi* which connects the head to the Heart and reach the Heart in due course. We also have to overcome the thoughts that will arise during our meditation so that we will be able to sustain our meditation steadily for a long period. Only then the *vasanas* obstructing our inner journey will be destroyed. When the mind reaches the Heart, it will subside, thus revealing the real Self that dwells in the Heart. This is the *sadhana* we have to do to destroy the ego. Thus, Self-Enquiry with sustained meditation on the Self are required to achieve success in our efforts. This is the practice of *nididhyasana*.

The *sadhaka* who reaches the Source within himself, in the lotus of the Heart, attains Self-Realisation. Now, the ego is completely destroyed. This is *mukti*. He has achieved the purpose of his life and has become one with the Self which is the source of his being. Normally, this union takes place at the time of death by the Grace of the Sat-Guru and Self when one has conquered his ego, purified himself and is thinking of God at the time of death. Thus, at the time of death of the devotee, the pure mind becomes one with the Self in the lotus of the Heart. On merging with the Self in the Heart, one attains the state of Permanence, or immortality and will no longer have a rebirth. It is like the river merging into the ocean. This is how a liberated soul goes back to Nature, which is his origin.

If the *sadhaka* is able to reach the Self while still alive, he becomes a *jivanmukta*, or one who is liberated while still alive. It is rare to find

such a person in the world who has attained Self-Realisation even while alive. After attaining Liberation, he continues to live till the end of his lifespan in the body and helps his devotees in their spiritual progress as a Sat-Guru. After the end of his lifespan, the *jivanmukta* continues to live as the Self, even without a physical body, in order to guide His devotees on the path of no return. He is ever available to help His devotees who have surrendered to Him so that they can progress on the spiritual path and attain the supreme goal of life. As a Sat-Guru, He can live as long as He wants and as long as His devotees seek Him. Great ones like Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, Sai Baba of Shirdi, Tiruvalluvar, Adi Shankara, Milarepa of Tibet, Andal, etc. still help whoever prays to them in earnest.

Thus, Sage Tiruvalluvar is showing us the true destination that everyone has to reach in order to be liberated from the cycle of birth and death. The source is only within us as the Self in our Heart. We must return to it and abide in it to regain our true eternal nature.

4. வேண்டுதல் வேண்டாமை இலான் அடிசேர்ந்தார்க்கு
யாண்டும் இடும்பை இல.
vēṇḍudal vēṇḍāmai ilān aḍi-sērndārkkku
yāṇḍum iḍumbai ila.

Meaning

No harm shall ever come to those who have surrendered to the feet of (a *jñānī*), who is free of desires and aversions, (and have restructured their life based on His teachings).

[வேண்டுதல் வேண்டாமை இலான் = who is free of desires and aversions; அடி சேர்ந்தார்க்கு = who have surrendered to the feet (of a *jñānī*); யாண்டும் இடும்பை இல = no harm shall ever come]

Commentary

Desires and aversions are aspects of the ego. A person who is free of desires and aversions is one who has destroyed his ego. He does not seek anything because he likes it, nor does he reject anything which comes to him of its own accord. When one surrenders to the feet of such a *jñānī* (Sage/Sat-Guru) and strives to practise His teachings, his life will be transformed. If his surrender is proper, it becomes the responsibility of the Lord to help the devotee progress

on the spiritual path. To surrender means to give up the idea that you are the doer. Such a surrendered individual would be leading a life of purpose, virtue and value. He will not do anything sinful and would always try to do only good things and be helpful to one and all. This will help him to gain *punya* karmas which will help him in his spiritual development. ‘As we sow, so we reap’ is the Law of Karma of which he has a firm understanding.

Thus, he will lead a virtuous life and also be able to accept the adverse situations that come to him based on his past karmas done in ignorance. Though miseries may trouble him as per his *prarabdha*, he would not be overwhelmed by them, as he would be able to manage them by holding on to his Sat-Guru with surrender, bhakti and trust. Then Grace will help him to face his karmas. He will be under the protection of his Master and therefore will not come to any harm even while facing miseries in life. Socrates has also said that nothing can harm a good man, either in life or after death. Miseries will come and go, and he would have the understanding of the *karma siddhanta* and strength of mind to see through the situations without reaction, thereby clearing all the karmas that are in store for him. In fact, the Sat-Guru, who is the inner Guru, pushes the *vasanas* outside from within so that the soul will be purified. And the outer Guru helps you to manage them when they come out so that you do not fall down. In the process, the *sadhaka* will clear the load of *vasanas* on his soul one by one, also be able to evolve in life and achieve the Supreme Goal. This is the benefit of surrendering to a Sat-Guru who has become one with the Self and is free of all desires and aversions.

5. இருள்சேர் இருவினையும் சேரா இறைவன்
பொருள்சேர் புகழ்புரிந்தார் மாட்டு.
iruḷ-sēr iru-vinaiyum sērā īraivan
poruḷ-sēr pugazh-purindār māṭṭu.

Meaning

Those who have become one with the Supreme Self and (thus) attained the glorious (purpose of life), will not be touched by the two types of Karmas arising out of ignorance.

[இறைவன் பொருள் சேர் = Those who have become one with the Supreme Self; புகழ் புரிந்தார் மாட்டு = and attained the glorious (purpose of life); இருள் சேர் இருவினையும் சேரா = will not be touched by the two types of Karmas arising out of ignorance]

Commentary

The two types of karmas being referred to here are: 1) the *sanchita* and *āgāmi* karmas that come under the category of past karmas and 2) the *prarabdha* karmas that will fructify in this birth. Out of the total lot of karmas present on the soul, some are chosen for exhaustion in this birth and these are known as the *prarabdha* karmas; the rest of the karmas will be kept in the reserve for future births and these are known as the *sanchita* karmas. The karmas made by us in the present birth due to ignorance are known as the *āgāmi* karmas; out of these also some are chosen for exhaustion in this birth and the rest are added to the *sanchita* at the time of death. This is the normal rule for all human beings. The *jñānī* who abides in the Self and becomes one with it in the Heart has destroyed his individuality and has attained Liberation. As he has no ego or individuality left, who is there to experience the karmas? He has no body consciousness and his pure mind is immersed in the Bliss of the Self.

Thus, all the karmas that may still be there as per his *prarabdha* will become infructuous. Though the *jñānī* may seemingly be experiencing the fruits of his *prarabdha*, he is not touched by them because his mind is in total vacuum and always experiencing the Bliss of the Self, and he has no body consciousness to experience the karmas. Thus, the *prarabdha* meant for his body will not affect him when his body experiences them as he is detached from it. This includes the fruits of the *āgāmi* karmas he had made till his Enlightenment. We may have heard how Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi was totally detached from his physical pains while experiencing sarcoma during his last years of life. When asked about it, Bhagavan would remark that the pain was for his body and not for him! Since a *jñānī* has no more future births, his *sanchita* karmas are automatically destroyed. Thus, he is free of all karmas, past and future.

6. பொறிவாயில் ஐந்தவித்தான் பொய்தீர் ஒழுக்க
நெறிநின்றார் நீடு வாழ்வார்.

poṛi-vāyil aindavittān poytīr ozhukka
neṛi-ninḍṛār nīḍu vāzhvār.

Meaning

One who conquers the (desires arising) through the five senses and overcomes the false (ego whenever it rises as negative thoughts and feelings due to reactions), and leads a life of virtue will attain the Permanent State (of the Self which is *mukti*).

[பொறிவாயில் ஐந்து அவித்தான் = One who conquers the (desires arising) through the five senses; பொய்தீர் = overcomes the false (ego); ஒழுக்க நெறி நின்றார் = leads a life of virtue; நீடு வாழ்வார் = will attain the Permanent State (of the Self)]

Commentary

Here Sage Tiruvalluvar is showing us the way to attain the Permanent State of the Self which will lead to Liberation from the cycle of birth and death. For this, we have to first conquer the five senses — hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch — by developing sense control. Without controlling the senses, the mind will externalise into the world and get caught there due to desires and attachments, and we will not be able to attain spiritual progress. We will only get more and more bound to the world. Therefore, through understanding and discrimination based on the knowledge obtained from the Guru and the scriptures, we have to develop *vairagya* or desirelessness, which will help us to rein in the senses and internalise the mind. We have to understand that the world is only a projection of the mind and is attractive to us only due to the power of *maya*. It is unreal and only an appearance on the screen of the Self. Thus, we have to detach the mind from the world, internalise it and take it to its source within, through sustained meditation on the Self. Only then can we destroy the mighty ego and unite with the Self to attain *mukti*.

In addition to our *sadhana*, we also have to overcome the ego whenever it rises in our day-to-day life through a timely enquiry and make our mind positive. This is the way to the purification of the mind. The ego is the false entity in us which rises as ‘I’ and ‘Mine’ — ‘I’ is the sense of individuality and doer-ship and ‘Mine’ is possessiveness and selfishness, giving rise to negative emotions like desire, anger, greed,

delusion (or attachment), pride, jealousy, hatred, etc. These emotions arise in our mind when we react to situations or while interacting with others. In the process, we commit sins and unless they are checked, these tendencies will only gather strength in us. How rigid are we in our views? This shows our stubbornness, and how much we can accept or submit to others' views and feelings — all these reflect the strength of our ego.

When the ego gets strengthened in us, it will only plunge us into more and more misery, as we have to come back again and again to this world to face the karmas created by us due to ego. We should therefore conquer these tendencies through the knowledge of the *karma siddhanta*, timely enquiry and prayers. When we conquer our reactions, we will be able to retain our awareness in every situation, which will help us to respond properly without creating bad karmas. We will also be in a position to see through all the adverse situations peacefully, which will help us to clear our *prarabdha* karmas without leaving any residue, like how camphor burns. When we thus conquer our ego as and when it rises, the mind will become purer and subtler and we will be able to evolve faster in life. This will pave the way for the internalisation of the mind and a successful meditation on the Self, by which we will be able to destroy the ego completely and become one with the Self.

In addition, Sage Tiruvalluvar says that we should lead a virtuous life, wherein we do only good things and refrain from wrongdoing in any manner, thereby preventing the creation of any more bad karmas. We should live in a way so as not to cause hurt or harm to any living being either in thought, word or deed. Leading a virtuous life includes doing all our duties in a perfect and timely manner without trying to escape from them. We should also be helpful and useful not only to our family but also to others in every possible way and this will generate many *punya* karmas that will help us in our spiritual progress.

Thus Sage Tiruvalluvar is teaching us how to lead our life so that we would be able to evolve fast and reach the Self within us and become one with it thus attaining the permanent or natural state of the Self and be liberated from *samsara*.

7. தனக்குவமை இல்லாதான் தாள்சேரந்தார்க்கு அல்லால்
மனக்கவலை மாற்றல் அரிது.

tanakkuvamai illādān tāl-sērndārkkku allāl
manak-kavalai māṭṭal aridu.

Meaning

It is very difficult to end the anxieties of the mind without surrendering to the feet of the Lord (or a *jñānī* who has reached the Supreme State) who is incomparable (and one without a second).

[மனக்கவலை மாற்றல் அரிது = It is very difficult to end the anxieties of the mind; தனக்கு உவமை இல்லாதான் தான் சேர்ந்தார்க்கு அல்லால் = without surrendering to the feet of the Lord who is incomparable]

Commentary

Here Sage Tiruvalluvar is teaching us the benefit of surrendering to the Lord, or the Sat-Guru and obtaining his Grace. Without surrendering to the Lord, it is not possible to overcome our anxieties easily. To surrender is to surrender our ego. You offer to God the only thing He does not have! After you have surrendered, you continue to do all your duties without the doer-ship and as an instrument of God. Then success and failure are not your concern and thus you will have no worries or tensions. Once you have surrendered, it becomes the Lord's responsibility to look after you and guide you in life, as you have placed your trust in Him. Through bhakti, the mind derives strength, and through surrender, it attains peace. When you have truly surrendered to God, you will not get agitated when problems come in life, as you know the higher power is there to look after the problem. But true and unconditional surrender is difficult to achieve, as the ego will not surrender easily, and it will raise its ugly head again and again. Prayer is an essential part of surrender. Prayer reflects the helplessness of the ego and the trust in the Lord. When you pray strongly with faith, the mind gets the strength to see through every situation without getting agitated. Moreover, the responsibility shifts to the Lord. He helps the Bhakta who has surrendered to Him unreservedly and prays to Him with faith.

The Lord is described as incomparable. You cannot compare him with anything in the world. For all objects in the world, it is possible to know them by comparing them with other objects in quality or form. We can say that the water in the ocean is blue like the sky or the moon looks like a white disc. We say that her eyes are beautiful like that of a deer or

her vision is sharp like that of an eagle, or we say that someone behaves like an animal. Thus, we can try to understand something by comparing it with something else. But we cannot do the same thing to describe the Lord, or Sat-Guru, who is one with the Self. We cannot compare Him with anyone or anything in the world. There is nothing similar to the Lord or Self which we can use as an example to describe Him. He is truly incomparable and unique, and that is why He is described in the scriptures as one without a second. He is the Supreme and the Almighty. Therefore, if we surrender to Him with faith and devotion and look to him in every situation, he will surely help us to overcome all our problems and worries. By His Grace, we will be able to reach Him eventually and attain the Supreme State of no return. ▲

(To be continued)

A Prayer

Sneha Choudhury

Nothing planned for the day,
No thoughts on what to do.
Let me be the tiny speck
Blown by the wind of Thy grace
To be still and steady
In acceptance of the Divine plan
Blowing me onward
To Thy holy feet
O Beloved!
Like the children playing
Round and round on the roundabout
Laughing and gay
Holding on to the centre
As the wheel turns and swirls
Grant me the grace,
To ever hold on
Steadfast, Thy holy feet
Arunachala Ramana.

Essence of Sri Ramana Paravidyopanishad

Part 3 – Avasta Traya

ANNOTATED BY V. KRITHIVASAN

After a brief overview of the path of Self-Enquiry and the path of surrender, Lakshmana Sarma describes the steps to be taken by the aspirant to prepare for the challenges in one's spiritual journey. The initial step is the right understanding of what is meant by deliverance (*mukti*).

The Supreme State of Deliverance

निष्ठाऽचला सा निजसत्यभावे ज्ञानं विमुक्तिः सहजा स्थितिश्च ।
स्तिथोऽचलस्तत्र पदे परस्मिन् निरस्तमोहो भवति प्रबुद्धः॥

19

*niṣṭhā'calā sā nijasatyabhāve jñānaṃ vimuktiḥ sahajā sthitiśca |
stitho'calastatra pade parasmin nirastamoho bhavati Prabuddha*

*The true state in which one remains still as the Real Self is itself
called jñāna, mukti and the Natural State (sahaja sthiti). He that*

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dwells immovable in that Supreme State, free from delusion, is the Awakened One (prabuddha).

This verse states that unshakeable abidance as the Real Self (*nijasatyabhāva*) alone is the state of Deliverance. ‘Real Self’ is the keyword in this verse, as it gives the implication of an apparent false self, which is merely a wrong notion of being a separate individual. Bhagavan, as well as our scriptures point out that this wrong notion, also called as the ego-sense, conceals the Real Self. This is the state of primary ignorance. Freedom from this ignorance alone is called *jñāna*, and this can come about only by getting rid of the ego-sense and reaching the Egoless State. Hence, the right understanding of the final goal, which goes by different names, such as Deliverance, Natural State, *jñāna* etc., is only attaining to the Egoless State and abiding in it permanently.

‘Very queer beliefs are being cherished and taught by different kinds of believers regarding Deliverance. Some say that when Deliverance comes to one, he is bodily taken up into the sky. Others say that the body simply vanishes, being miraculously transformed into something invisible. Most people believe that Deliverance means going or being taken to some kind of heavenly world. We are told in the Yoga Vasishtham: “Deliverance is not in the top of the sky, nor deep inside the earth, nor on the earth; It is just the extinction of the mind, with all its desires.”’¹

Muruganar expresses the same truth in his *Ramana Pada Malai* thus:

அகந்தைக் குறும்பை அகழ்ந்தெறிந்து ஆங்கே
அகந்ததும்பும் முத்தியுலகு ஆட்சியெனும் பாதம்

Ahanthaik kuRumbai agazhnderindu aange
Aham tathumbum muttiulagu aatchi enum paadam

The moment you uproot and overthrow the mischievous ego, lordship over the world of mukti will flood your heart. (Ramana Pada Malai 929).

¹ *Maha Yoga*, “Who,” 127.

Sri Sarma uses the word ‘Awakened One’ to refer to the one who has achieved this. Throughout the work one finds that this word is his preferred word to refer to a *jñānī*. The reason is made clear in the forthcoming verses.

निष्ठां परां तामधिगम्य बुद्धो जीवच्छरीरोऽपि विमुक्त एव।
करोत्यहन्तां ममतां न देहे बुद्धो ह्यतोऽसौ अशरीर एव॥

20

*niṣṭhāṃ parāṃ tāmādhigamya buddho jīvaccharīro’pi vimukta eva|
karotyahantāṃ mamatāṃ na dehe buddho hyato’sau aśarīra eva||*

The Sage who has attained that Supreme State is free, even though the body survives; he does not look upon the body as himself or as belonging to himself. Therefore, the Sage is really bodiless.

When the Sage reaches the Supreme State by extinguishing the ego, his link with the body is severed. After all, it is the ego that serves as the knot between Pure Consciousness and the inert body. In his experience, he is not the body nor does he possess a body. For him, all forms are unreal, since his ego, the root cause of appearance of forms, is extinct. The ignorant onlookers may consider him as embodied; they see him acting, eating, walking, talking etc. But from his own outlook, he is just like space, formless and limitless.

Bhagavan: Does the *jñānī* say he has a body? He may look to you as having a body and doing things with the body, as others do. The burnt rope still looks like a rope, but it can’t serve as a rope if you try to bind anything with it. So long as one identifies oneself with a body, all this is difficult to understand.²

In the last days of his earthly life, when the cruelest form of cancer was wreaking havoc on his body, Bhagavan remained totally detached from the suffering, his face betraying no sign of the disease. He translated a verse from *Uddhava Gita* from *Srimad Bhagavatham* to Tamil, to convey to the devotees how he looked on the body. The English meaning is as follows³

² *Day By Day with Bhagavan*, Devaraja Mudaliar, 19th Nov 1946.

³ *Srimad Bhagavatam* 11-14-36; Assorted Verses by Bhagavan, v. 24.

The sage Self-realized knows not
Whether the transient body comes
And stays, or dies and leaves, even as
The senseless drunkard knows not what
Happens to his clothes.

Mind Covers Up the Innate Happiness

यन्निर्मनस्कं पदमेवमुक्तं सुखं तदात्यन्तिकं अन्तहीनम्।
सुखं समावृत्य मनः स्वयं हि सदैव दुःखं विवृणोति जन्तोः॥

21

*yannirmanaskam padamevamuktaṁ sukhaṁ tadātyantikaṁ antahīnam|
sukhaṁ samāvṛtya manah svayaṁ hi sadaiva duḥkhaṁ vivṛṇoti jantoh||*

*The mind-free state is itself complete and endless happiness,
since it is only the mind that covers up the natural happiness
of the Self and unfolds suffering for all creatures.*

Pursuit of happiness is the sole motive for all creatures, without exception. Everyone seeks happiness at all times, everywhere. What is more, we seek happiness that is unbroken, permanent and which is unmixed with misery. All our actions stem from this innate desire. Bhagavan says that even biologically an organism functions because such functions are attended with happiness.⁴ However, permanent happiness eludes us as we look for it in external objects.

“If a man thinks that his happiness is due to external causes and his possessions, it is reasonable to conclude that his happiness must increase with the increase of possessions and diminish in proportion to their diminution. Therefore if he is devoid of possessions, his happiness should be nil. What is the real experience of man? Does it conform to this view? In deep sleep the man is devoid of possessions, including his own body. Instead of being unhappy he is quite happy. Everyone desires to sleep soundly. The conclusion is that happiness is inherent in man and is not due to external causes. One must realise his Self in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness.”⁵

⁴ Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi, Mungala Venkataramiah, Talk 28.

⁵ Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi, Mungala Venkataramiah, Talk 3.

When the mind is active, it cannot but look at the external world and seek happiness there. This is why mind-free state is emphasized in this verse for gaining the unalloyed bliss of the Self.

Only a *jñānī* Can Be a Competent Guru

भजेत् प्रबुद्धं हि गुरुं मुमुक्षुः स्वाज्ञाननिद्रोत्थितं अस्तमोहम्।
कथं नु मर्त्यः स्वयमप्रबुद्धः प्रबोधयेत् अन्यनरानबुद्धान्॥

24

*bhajet prabuddham hi gurum mumukṣuḥ svājñānanidrotthitaṁ
astamoham|
katham nu martyaḥ svayamaprabuddhaḥ prabodhayet
anyanarānabuddhān||*

The aspirant must revere one who has awakened from the deep sleep of ignorance and is free from delusion as his Guru. How can one, who has not yet awakened, awaken others who are ignorant (like himself)?

An important message is given in this verse. It is crucial for an aspirant desirous of *mukti* to approach a teacher who is a *jñānī*, as he alone will be competent to impart *advaitic* knowledge. *Advaita*, or non-dualism, is unlike any other knowledge system. In the traditional manner of imparting knowledge, there is a teacher and a student; this brings in duality at the outset. When the teacher considers himself to be different from the student, the very tenet of *advaita* is broken. Such a teacher is still caught up in the basic ignorance of seeing an ‘other,’ someone who is different from him, needing to ‘acquire’ Self-knowledge.

The *jñānī* is not a mere individual. He is the very embodiment of the Supreme Truth. When the disciple receives *upadeśa* from a *jñānī* who knows himself to be the One Self, not being aware of any ‘other,’ Advaitic knowledge is truly imparted. In *Katopanishad* this famous *mantra* occurs:

अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति

ananyaprokte gativatra nāsti

*When Brahman is taught by a Guru as not being separate from anything in the world (ananya), a worthy sishya has no further confusion about the nature of ātman.*⁶

Scholars further explain the meaning of this *mantra*: The ātman cannot be known from those who are still consumed by worldly desires, nor from those who argue about it in many ways, without conviction. Only by those who know it as their own nature, who teach it as Advaita ātma, only by such a Guru can the ātman be known, as it is most subtle and cannot be known by mere argumentation and logical analysis.

In the eyes of a *jñānī*, even the disciple is not different from him.

Bhagavan: “The *jñānī* sees no one as an *ajñānī*. All are only *jñānīs* in his sight. In the ignorant state one superimposes his ignorance on a *jñānī* and mistakes him for a doer. In the state of *jñāna*, the *jñānī* sees nothing separate from the Self. The Self is all shining and only pure *jñāna*. So there is no *ajñāna* in his sight.”⁷

This is precisely how Bhagavan taught the supreme Advaitic truth. In the great silence of his *Sahaja nishta*, the minds of mature devotees became still without their effort, and they were given a taste of the Supreme State. Tasting this state becomes an important milestone in one’s *sadhana*. Clarity about the nature of *ātman* develops and they are propelled forward. This is why Bhagavan used to say that Silence (the state where there is no awareness of an *anya vastu*), was his primary mode of teaching.

Qualifications of the Aspirant

शमो दमश्चोपरतिस्तितिक्षा श्रद्धा गुरोर्वाचि समाहितत्वम्।
विधीयते षट्कमिदं मुमुक्षोः स्थिरं भवेद्येन मनो गवेषे।

26

śamo damaścoparatistitikṣā śraddhā gurorvāci samāhitatvam|
vidhīyate ṣaṭkamidaṁ mumukṣoḥ sthiraṁ bhavedyena mano gaveṣe||

Mental calm, sense-control, withdrawal from worldly pursuits, fortitude, faith in the words of the Guru, steadiness in sadhana -

⁶ Katopanishad, 1-2-8.

⁷ Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk 499.

these six are prescribed for the aspirant. Through the cultivation of these, his mind will remain firm in the quest.

After defining the qualification needed for a competent Guru, the author describes the qualifications needed in an aspirant. Though no one is barred from pursuing Quest for the Self, if the aspirant cultivates some essential qualities, the progress in his spiritual journey will be faster. These are:

1. *śama* (Tranquillity of mind): To detach the mind from all objective things by continually seeing their imperfection, and to direct it steadfastly towards the goal (ātman).
2. *dama* (Sense control): To detach the sense organs (both the senses of perception and the senses of action) from objects.
3. *uparati* (Non-reaction to external stimuli): Withdrawal from worldly affairs and achieving mental poise.
4. *titikṣā* (Fortitude or forbearance): To endure all kinds of afflictions without any complaint or lament.
5. *śraddhā* (Faith): A firm conviction based on the intellectual understanding that the teachings of the Guru are true.
6. *samāhitatvam* (Steadiness in *sadhana*): To concentrate the intellect on the goal always, without allowing idle thoughts to arise.

These qualities gradually blossom when one persists with the *sadhana*, and thus, the progress is accelerated. Bhagavan also emphasized the need for *satvik* food taken in moderate quantity.

The Self is Beyond All Means of Knowledge

निजस्वरूपानुभवैकवेद्यं तन्नेति नेतीत्युदितं पदं हि।
वाचाऽप्यनुक्तं मनसाऽमतं च मौनोपदिष्टं गुरुणाऽऽदिमेन॥

27

*nijasvarūpānubhavaikavedyaṃ tanneti neṭītyuditaṃ padaṃ hi|
vācā'pyanuktaṃ manasā'mataṃ ca maunopadiṣṭaṃ guruṇā'dimena||*

Brahman/ātman is knowable only by actual transcendental experience. It is indicated in the scriptures only by negations – 'not so, not so.' Neither speech nor mind can describe it. Even the ādi Guru, Dakshinamurthy, taught it only through Silence.

This verse echoes the essence of *Kenopanishad*. The question, ‘Who is behind all these phenomena?’ launches this Upanishad. It goes on to say:

यद्वाचाऽनभ्युदितं येन वागभ्युद्यते।
यन्मनसा न मनुते येनाहुर्मनो मतम्।
तदेव ब्रह्म त्वं विद्धि नेदं यदिदमुपासते॥

yadvācā'nabhyuditaṃ yena vāgabhyudyate|
yanmanasā na manute yenāhurmano matam|
tadeva brahma tvam viddhi nedaṃ yadidamupāsate||

*Brahman cannot be described by speech, for, speech itself is enabled by It. Brahman cannot be comprehended by mind as mind itself functions because of Brahman. Such is Brahman, not what people worship.*⁸

The Self is beyond all means of knowledge (called *pramana* in Vedanta). This is another way of saying that It cannot be objectified. The Upanishads describe the Self as *Aprameya* (beyond comprehension). If Brahman, or the Self, is beyond comprehension, beyond everything, is one totally helpless in attaining it? Luckily, help comes in the form of another of its characteristics, namely, *Sva-samvedyam* – It knows Itself by Itself. Bhagavan in his translation of *Devikalottaram* writes:

தான் தனக்கே வேத்தியமாய் தானே இலங்கிடுமால்
taan tanakke veddiyamaay taane ilangidumaal⁹

It knows Itself by Itself and is self-luminous.

Mahadevan, in his commentary on *Ulladu Naarpadu* puts it beautifully, “Even if the Self escapes objectification, it cannot escape certainty.”¹⁰ Nothing is more certain than the fact of one’s existence. It is self-evident, immediate and direct.

This verse ends by saying that even the Adi Guru, Dakshinamurthi, taught in Silence, as the Self cannot be objectified. He repeats what Bhagavan himself has said in *Arunachala Ashtakam*;

⁸ *Kenopanishad*, Section 1.5, 6.

⁹ *Devikalottaram*, Jnanachara Vicharam, v. 19.

¹⁰ *Ramana Maharshi and the philosophy of existence*, T.M.P. Mahadevan.

விண்டிது விளக்கிடு விறலுறு வோனார்
விண்டிலை பண்டுநீ விளக்கினை யென்றால்

viNdithu viLakkidu viRaluRu vonaar
viNdilai paNdu nee viLakkinai yenRaal¹¹

Who has the power to convey this in words when even Thou (appearing as Dakshinamurthi) could do this in days of yore by Silence only?

The State of Turīya (The Fourth State)

अतीत्य यज्जागरमुख्यभावांस्तत् निष्प्रपञ्चं भवति प्रशान्तम्।
अतस्तुरीयं पदमव्ययं तदित्येष माण्डूक्यनिरूपितार्थः॥

28

*atītya yajjāgaramukhyabhāvāmstat niṣprapañcam bhavati
praśāntam|*

atasturīyaṁ padamavyayaṁ tadityeṣa māṇḍūkyanirūpitārthaḥ||

Since that State is changeless, worldless and calm, beyond the states of waking and the rest, it is called the Fourth State. Such is the teaching of the Mandukya Upanishad.

Once again, the author refers to *Mandukya Upanishad* and its famous seventh mantra, which elucidates the nature of the Self in a comprehensive manner. The second half of this mantra says:

“Essentially, the ātman is of the nature of Self-Consciousness alone (*ekātma pratyaya saaram*), negation of all relative existence (*prapancho-pashamam*), peaceful, of Supreme Bliss (Śivam) and unitary (*advaitam*), and is called as the fourth foot (*pada*). That is ātman. He is to be realized.”¹²

In his extraordinary commentary on this shortest and most beautiful Upanishad, called *Mandukya Karika*, Gaudapadacharya describes from a Vedantic perspective the three states of Waking (*jagrat*), Dreaming (*svapna*), and Deep Sleep (*sushupti*) by denoting the individual experiencing these distinct states with different names.

¹¹ *Arunachala Ashtakam*, v. 2.

¹² *Mandukya Upanishad*, Mantra 7.

“One and the same all-pervading Self (vibhu) appears as three entities. (1) *visva*, whose consciousness is turned outward (2) *taijasa*, whose consciousness is turned inward and (3) *prajna*, cogniser of the amorphous mass of consciousness.”¹³

Explaining the above concept from the perspective of *vyāvahārika satyam* (empirical reality), Bhagavan says:

“The three states alternate involuntarily for the average man. Each one is exclusive of the other two and limited by the conditions of time and space. They are therefore unreal. *visva*, *taijasa* and *prajna* are the denominations of the experiencer in the waking, dream and deep sleep states respectively. The same individual underlies all of them. They do not therefore represent the True Self, which is pure *sat*, *chit*, *ananda*. The experience in deep sleep was said to be the bliss of Brahman. It is only the negative aspect of such bliss, as it is the result of the absence of thoughts. Moreover it is transitory. Such a bliss is only the *abhasa*, the counterfeit of Supreme Bliss. It is not different from the blissful feeling of sensual pleasures. In deep sleep, the *prajna* is said to be united with the Self. So the individuality is potential in sleep. The Self is the basis of all the experiences. It remains as the witness and the support of them all. The Reality is thus different from the three states, the waking, the dream and the deep sleep.”¹⁴

The three *avasthas* (states) constitute our whole life. A keen observation of these three states gives a lot of clues as to the nature of Self, helping in a meaningful Self-enquiry. All the three states are present in a human being, very well demarcated, making him fittest amongst all creation to attain Self-Realisation.

Bhagavan adds *turīya* (which literally means the Fourth) and *turīyātīta* (transcending *turīya*) as *avasthas* from the perspective of *vyāvahārika satyam* (empirical reality). He says,

“If in the *jagrat* state the Heart is not relinquished, the mental activities are stilled and Brahman alone is contemplated, the

¹³ *Mandukya Karika*, Gaudapada, Agama Prakarana, 1-1.

¹⁴ *Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Mungala Venkataramiah, Talk 617.

state is called the *turīya*. Again when the individual being merges in the Supreme it is called the *turīyātīta*. The vegetable kingdom is always in *sushupti*; the animals have both *svapna* and *sushupti*; the Gods (celestials) are always in *jagrat*; man has all the three states; but the clear-sighted yogi abides only in *turīya*, and the highest yogi remains in *turīyātīta* alone.”¹⁵

However, from the perspective of *pāramārthika satyam* (absolute reality), Bhagavan has maintained that there is only one state, the state of Reality,

“Existence or Consciousness is the only Reality. Consciousness plus waking, we call waking. Consciousness plus dream, we call dream. Consciousness plus sleep, we call sleep. Consciousness is the screen on which all the pictures come and go. The screen is real, the pictures are mere shadows on it. Because by long habit we have been regarding these three states as real, we call the state of mere awareness or consciousness, the fourth. There is however no fourth state, but only one state.”¹⁶

तिस्रो ह्यवस्थाः प्रभवन्ति जाग्रत् स्वप्नः सुषुप्तिश्च समस्तजन्तोः।
आधारभूता त्रितयस्य चास्य स्वाज्ञानरूपास्ति सुषुप्तिरन्या॥

29

*tisro hyavasthāḥ prabhavanti jāgrat svapnaḥ susuptiśca samastajantoh
ādhārabhūtā tritayasya cāsyā svājñānarūpāsti susuptiranya*

For every man, there are three states, waking, dreaming and deep sleep; and sustaining these, there is another sleep, the sleep of ignorance.

The author looks at the three states from a different angle in this verse. He points out that the three *avasthas* are unreal because the common factor in all the three is ignorance of the Real Self. This is termed the Sleep of Ignorance (Vedanta calls it *svarupa vismṛiti nidra*). If this fundamental ignorance comes to an end, the three *avasthas* also come to an end; Self-Realization dawns. For the Self-realised *jñānī*, these states are unreal; pure Awareness alone

¹⁵ Talks With Sri Ramana Maharshi, Mungala Venkataramiah, Talk 617.

¹⁶ Day By Day with Bhagavan, Devaraja Mudaliar, 11-1-46 Afternoon.

shines through all the states and he is aware of his real nature all the time.

Explaining that the *jñānī* remains as a mere witness to the three *avasthas*, Bhagavan quotes from Swami Vidyanaraya's *Panchadasi*:

“When a drama is being played, the light is there, which illuminates without any distinction, all the actors and also the audience. That light will be there before the drama begins, during the performance, and also after the performance is over. Similarly, the light within, the Self, gives light to the ego, the intelligence, the Mind and the lower mind (*ahankara*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *manas*) without itself being subject to any change. Although during deep sleep and other states, there is no feeling of the ego, the Self remains attribute-less and continues to shine of Itself.”¹⁷

Sleep of Self-forgetfulness is explained further in Verse 31.

The Waking State is No Different From Dream

अस्वप्ननिद्रेति सुषुप्तिरुक्ता सस्वप्ननिद्रेत्युभयं तदन्यत्।
अनिद्रमस्वप्नकमस्तविश्वं पदं तुरीयं हि विमुक्ति धाम। 31

*asvapnanidreti suṣuptiruktā sasvapnanidretyubhayaṃ tadanyat|
anidramasvapnakamastaviśvaṃ padaṃ turīyaṃ hi vimukti dhāma|*

Deep sleep is just dreamless sleep; the other two are sleep with dream. The Fourth State, being without sleep and dream is the abode of mukti.

This verse echoes one of Bhagavan's common refrains: that there is no difference between waking and dream; they are both dreams only and as such unreal.

The extraordinary import of the verse is this: essentially, what is experienced by all creatures, all through life, is only sleep – the sleep called Self-forgetfulness. In this sleep of ignorance, two kinds of dreams are experienced. One is what is ordinarily understood or recognized as waking; the other dream is what the waker calls dream or *svapna*. Both the dreams are sustained by the sleep of Self-

¹⁷ *Letters from Ramanasramam*, Suri Nagamma, 29 April 1948.

forgetfulness. Thus, our life is basically one long sleep, and in it we experience, say, Dream 1, which we call as waking, and within this dream is experienced Dream 2, or *svapna*. When both dreams are absent, that state is *sushupti*.

By definition, a dream is something that the mind creates all by itself. But Bhagavan would point out that the waking state, as it is ordinarily understood, is also a creation of the mind only. One may argue that there is a solid world outside in our waking state, which looks vast and real, and it is impossible to accept that the mind has created it. Bhagavan provides an answer to this objection in *Ulladu Narpadu*,

உலகை மனம் ஐம்பொறி வாயால் ஓர்ந்திடுதலால்
மனத்தையன்றி உலகுண்டோ அறை (Ulladu Narpadu, v. 6)

Since the mind alone perceives the world through the senses, can there be a world without the mind?

Bhagavan: “There is no difference between dream and the waking state except that the dream is short and the waking long. Both are the result of the mind. Because the waking state is long, we imagine that it is our real state. But, as a matter of fact, our real state is what is sometimes called *turiya* or the fourth state, which is always as it is and knows nothing of the three *avasthas*, viz., waking, dream or sleep. Because we call these three *avasthas* we call the fourth state also *turiya avastha*. But it is not an *avastha*, but the real and natural state of the Self.”¹⁸

Major Chadwick refers to this basic teaching of Bhagavan:

“Bhagavan taught that dreaming and the waking experiences were exactly the same. I always found this hard to understand and would often question him on the subject. He would explain that all my questions about dreams only occurred in my waking state, they never occurred in dream. How, then, could they be valid? Everything is just a projection of the mind. But because you find that dreams are only transitory in relation to the waking state, you imagine there

¹⁸ *Day By Day with Bhagavan*, Devaraja Mudaliar, 5-1-46 Afternoon.

is a difference between them. This is only apparent, it is not real. Dream is for the person who thinks that he is awake, but actually both dream and waking are quite unreal from the absolute standpoint. You do not question your state when you are dreaming, it is only questioned by the one who is awake. Is this fair?

Still, while knowing Bhagavan's teaching, that all is only an appearance and a creation of the mind, I found his teaching on dreams hard to understand. For waking seemed to me continuous, going on from day to day. I awoke into the same world each day whereas my dreams were always different, they were distinct. However, Bhagavan would never accept this distinction and repeated that the criticism only arose in the waking state and never in that of dreams."¹⁹

The import of this verse is this: waking up from this sleep of Self-forgetfulness is true Awakening, it is *mukti*.

Major Chadwick has recorded²⁰ an interesting conversation between a Christian evangelist, Stanley Jones (whose intention was to prove that Christianity is the true religion), and Bhagavan, who patiently answered his questions. This is part of the dialogue that came to an end when Chadwick aggressively confronted the Evangelist about his understanding of Christianity. This conversation reveals the essence of this verse.

Bhagavan: You talk about a difference between people, but what becomes of this difference in deep sleep?

Stanley Jones: (Again ignoring the question) I want to be wide awake.

B.: You believe that you are awake now. On the contrary, this is only a dream in a long sleep. Everybody is asleep, this world and all actions are only a dream.

S. J.: This is Vedanta. I have no use for it. These differences are not imaginary. They are positive. (Harping back to his old

¹⁹ *A Sadhu's Reminiscences*, Major Chadwick, p. 58.

²⁰ *A Sadhu's Reminiscences*, Major Chadwick, p. 78.

question) Can Maharshi tell us what he has found? What is this waking state of which he talks?

B.: It is beyond the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep.

S. J.: But I am awake now and I know it.

B.: But in the real waking state there are no differences.

S. J.: What happens to this world in that case?

B.: There is no world in your deep sleep. When you wake up, does the world suddenly appear and tell you, 'I exist'?

S. J.: No, but other people tell me that there is a world and that it needs spiritual and moral regeneration. So there must actually be a world. All are agreed as to that.

B.: You now see the world and the people in it, but can they exist apart from your thoughts?

S. J.: (Going off at a tangent) I enter the world with Love.

B.: Are you apart from it that you can enter it?

S. J.: I am identified with it. I came here to ask questions and to listen to Maharshi's answers. Why do you keep on asking me questions in this way?

B.: But Maharshi has answered your questions. The real waking state does not involve differences.

S. J.: Have you reached the goal?

B.: There is no goal apart from the Self, so how can it be something to be gained afresh? If so it would be impermanent, and what is impermanent will one day disappear. Do you not agree that the goal must be eternal? So it must be within the Self. Seek and find it there. ▲

U - ARUNACHALA RAMANA

M. Giridhar

Urgent is your mission, unenviable your task,
Unburdening useless urchins like me from *maya's* ugly grasp.
Universes shrink beneath your wide umbrella of compassion,
Unlimited love you give, your undeserving, untamed offspring.

Unprincipled vagabonds like me roam unchecked, uncouth,
Upon this planet, swayed by *maya's* sinfully sweet urging.
Unannounced, you pounced, undermining her strangle-hold on me,
Unbelievably unleashing my unrequited love for thee.

Unseen, you guide me through the labyrinth of illusions,
Unlocking doors to truth with a gentle, unseen touch.
Unwavering in your devotion, you stand as my eternal sentinel,
Under your watchful eye, this fool finds solace, strength, and grace.

Unfathomable is the depth of your boundless compassion,
Unmatched by the brightest stars in the vast cosmic sea.
Underneath your care, I rise above the worldly mire,
Unchained, I soar, my heart ablaze with love for thee.

Unending is your patience with my errant, wayward heart,
Understanding every folly, every stumble, every fall.
Untiringly you lift me, with a grace that's heaven-sent,
Untangling the web of doubt that keeps my spirit small.

Unbridled joy you bring to my once troubled mind,
Unfolding vistas of peace in your warm, loving embrace.
Unerring is your wisdom, guiding me to higher planes,
Under your tutelage, I find my rightful place.

Unseen forces once held me in a shadowed trance,
Undermined by your light, they scatter and disperse.
Unshackled now, I revel in the glory of your presence,
Unwavering in my devotion, my love an endless verse.

Undeniably, Ramana, you are the beacon in my darkest night,
Uplifting my spirit, igniting the flames of pure delight.
Unbroken is the bond that now connects our souls,
Unwavering and eternal, in Arunachala's light, I am made whole.

KEYWORD

Sthā: To Abide

Part Seven

B.K. CROISSANT

This is the final of three articles inspired by *Ātma Sākṣātkāra Prakaraṇam*, the chapter on Self-Realisation in an *upa-āgama* text translated by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi in 1933 at the request of a devotee.¹ The first article treated verses 1-19 using the keyword ‘*na saṁśayaḥ*,’ meaning ‘the end of doubt.’ In those verses, Lord Śiva told his son Guha of another method for reaching Reality. It involves giving up spiritual practices that engage the mind and, instead, placing one’s entire attention on the One all-pervading Self that is beyond thought. Once the ego has been destroyed, the seeker directly experiences *jñāna*, the highest knowledge, and becomes Śiva Himself. The key to this method is the absolute conviction, without the least vestige of lingering doubt, that ‘I am Śiva’ and there is no ‘other.’ Verse 13 reads as follows:

*Cast off the differentiating outlook (bhinna-bhāva) ‘Śiva is someone other [than me], I am someone other [than Him],’ always practise only this non-dualistic outlook (advaita-bhāvana) ‘That Śiva is I alone.’*²

¹ In the *Mountain Path* this series begins with Part 5. Parts 1-4 concern a series of articles inspired by *Devikāḷottaram*.

² Translated by Michael James in *Collected Works*, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 1996, p. 172.

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.

In verses 20-40 the focus switches to relentless practice. Over and over again we are told to contemplate the *ātman* without thought, and almost every verse ends with the same message in different words urging us not to give an iota of space to the mind for thinking anything at all. The keyword, ‘*ātmānam paryupāsayet,*’ meaning ‘worship the *ātman*,’ is one of those refrains that, with great authority, echoes deeply in the mind.

Although Lord Śiva repeats threads of His teaching in verses 41-62, He primarily brings our attention to the state of a *jñāni*. When the practice is perfected, what is the result? What are the characteristics of the one who has become Śiva Himself? The danger here is not to see the *jñāni* as ‘other’ but to understand in some measure, from one’s own practice of *ātma vicāra*, what it feels like to wake up to Reality and to be firmly established in the Heart. The keyword here is ‘*sthā.*’

The underlying purpose in all three articles is to show how *ātma vicāra* significantly clarifies the meaning of ancient spiritual texts, shines divine light upon them and makes achievable, in a very practical way, the journey to spiritual perfection. Bhagavan’s simple tool makes it possible for all of us to become like Him, to realize true freedom and to immerse ourselves perpetually in the infinite glory of our own being.

To reinforce this underlying purpose we can turn to the example of poet-saint Mukavai Kanna Muruganar, who has written about his own personal journey to final liberation in *Srī Guru Ramana Prasādam* with exquisite clarity. Key to his inner transformation was the unceasing practice of *ātma vicāra*, and in these selected verses that point is abundantly clear.

299. *Ignorance will not be eradicated except in those who, through the power of self-enquiry conducted assiduously within the heart, have attained the victorious absolute vision in which the whole panoply of manifestation is transcended, being seen as a mere cinema show.*

300. *It will be hard indeed to unite with the state of the Real — the subtle knowledge that is pure intelligence — and find fulfilment, unless one gains it through attaining the knowledge of the Real by merging in the heart through the inner enquiry that is true spiritual practice.*

301. *Bitter worldly bondage arises through the degrading error of mistaking the Self, being-consciousness-bliss, for the insentient body. It can only be removed through the certainty of the experience of self-enquiry that is filled with the divine light of consciousness.*³

To believe that Self-Realisation is not possible in one's lifetime or possible only for a selected few is a grave error. Muruganar attempts to correct this misconception in the two concluding poems of *Srī Guru Ramana Prasādam*. In an introduction to them, he boldly states the Lord's feet and grace lovingly granted him final liberation. In *Seventy Verses on the Feet of the Lord* and *Seventy Verses on the Grace of the Lord* he proclaims that, in the case of other devotees sincerely yearning for liberation and persistently practicing meditation without thought, the Lord's feet and grace will also confer upon them, through the experience of the Self, the glorious state that is free from remembering and forgetting. Almost every verse in these two magnificent poems equally extol the rewards bestowed upon all true devotees and his own personal experience of those rewards. Here are two examples.

979. *It [the grace of the Lord] will grant the reward that I attained to the rest of his devotees also, and flourish in their hearts like a [spreading] banyan tree. Through its wisdom, completely eliminating my egotistical tendencies, the grace of my Lord took total control over a body filled with deluded desires.*

980. *With a laugh it will purge from his devotees the mind that laments, crying, 'I do not know my true nature!' With a noble smile that expressed a pure consciousness, free of the busy mind's defilement, it contemptuously dismissed my delusion, the grace of my Lord.*⁴

Now back to verses 41-62. In this final section of *Ātma Sākṣātkāram* Lord Śiva relies on illustration, using not only the *jñāni* as the embodiment of his teaching but useful analogies as well. Take verse 42, for example. Here we are told the color of milk is one, although the cows that produce the milk are of many colors. Likewise, pure consciousness is the same within the heart of every human being

³ *Srī Guru Ramana Prasādam*, translated by Robert Butler, published by Robert Butler, 2008, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

despite outward differences. In verse 50, pure awareness is compared to a lamp that shines by itself after darkness has been destroyed. In the next verse when its fuel is exhausted, that lamp is like the *yogī* whose thoughts have become extinct through constant contemplation on the Self. Finally, the pot. In verse 52, the space never moves when the pot is taken from one place to another, like the Self that never moves. In verse 53 the space in the pot merges with the great space when the pot breaks, like the *jñāni* who joins the supreme Self at the time of death.

Many of the verses that attempt to describe the perfected soul contain various forms of the Sanskrit verbal root ‘*sthā*,’ meaning ‘to stand, stand firmly; to stay, remain, continue in any condition or action; to persevere in any act; to continue to be or exist.’ It’s a powerful concept in whatever context it may appear. In the case of the *jñāni*, it can be equated with ‘to become,’ that is, to become Śiva. Total absorption in pure consciousness. Abidance through the grace of Śiva that leads to a state totally beyond the mind. Here is what Muruganar has to say about abidance.

325. *That which should be embraced is Śivahood. That which should be investigated and understood as the straight path of Śivahood is the truth of the Self. That which should be gained through that investigation and understanding is abidance in the Self. And that which should be obtained through abidance in the Self is the experience of profound peace.*⁵

In verse 43 of *Ātma Sākṣātkāram* the *jñāni* is ‘*brahmani samsthaḥ san*,’ one being in the state of abiding in the *ātman*.

यस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म व्यापकं सर्वतोमुखम् |
तस्माद्ब्रह्मणि संस्थः सन्दिग्देशान्न विचारयेत् ||

*yasmāt sarvagataṁ brahma vyāpakaṁ sarvato-mukham
tasmād brahmaṇi saṁsthaḥ san dig-deśān na vicārayet*

*Since Brahman is all-pervasive, extending everywhere and facing in all directions, therefore, being in the state of abiding in Brahman, one should not think of place or direction.*⁶

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶ Translations of the Sanskrit verses in this article are by the author with the assistance of Marcia Solomon. In 1999, Sri Ramanasramam published *Ātma Sakshatkara Prakaranam* with the original Sanskrit text in Bhagavan’s handwriting. The

In the *kalivenbā* version, referring to Brahman, Bhagavan adds ‘without attachment.’ In his translation the all-pervading *ātman* ‘shines’ in all directions, and he adds ‘unceasingly’ to the state of abiding in the Self.

Kanakammal employs a useful analogy in her commentary on this verse. “When the perpetually oscillating mind is fixed in *Atman* unceasingly and unswervingly, the distinctions of time, place and directions — the illusory limitations circumscribing the *Atman* — fall away on their own even as a doll held in the hand of a sleeping child slips away.”⁷

To whom are these thoughts of place and direction? Until you sink deeply in search of the nature of the ‘I’ who perceives differences, you will never be able to fully realise the riches of the true Self that is the screen within you upon which all differences appear.

In verse 44, the *jñāni* is addressed as ‘*sthitasya paramātmani*,’ meaning ‘one abiding in the *paramātman*.’

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो न कार्यो न विधिः स्मृतः ।
न लिङ्गं नाश्रमाचारः स्थितस्य परमात्मनि ॥

Naiva tasya kṛtenārtho na kāryo na vidhiḥ smṛtaḥ
Na liṅgaṁ nāśramācāraḥ sthitasya paramātmani

For one abiding in the paramātman, there is no purpose for doing anything, no prescribed precept to be carried out, no distinguishing mark nor code of behavior.

Bhagavan ends the verse with “Be certain of this.”

When you go deeply enough and experience the falsity of the ego, action on the level of the ego disappears. Through grace, a deep peace surges up and envelops you. You are established in the unmoving, blissful, authentic ‘I.’ There is nothing but the Self, and there are no outward signs.

Concerning religious commandments, Muruganar has this to say.

569. *In performing the sacrificial rituals contained in the sastras, the final oblation most worthy of praise and which brings joy to Lord*

English translation by D.H. Ramamurthy was based on both the Sanskrit verse and Bhagavan’s translation in Tamil.

⁷ *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai*, Volume I, T.R. Kanakammal, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2011, p. 380.

Śiva whose judgment is unerring, is to offer up in fitting manner one's own Self.

570. *Know that those who have fully accomplished that one thing have fully accomplished all other religious duties, because its greatness far exceeds that of any other offering, and after it nothing whatsoever remains to be done.*⁸

In verse 46, the *jñāni* is ‘*ātmanyeva sthitaḥ*,’ one abiding in the *ātman*.

भयदारिद्र्यरोगेषु मान्यविज्वरकादिषु |
आत्मन्येव स्थितः शान्त आत्मतृप्तस्तु निष्कलः ||

bhaya-dāridrya-rogeṣu māndya-vijvarakādiṣu
ātmanyeva sthitaḥ śānta ātma-trptas tu niṣkalah

In fear, poverty, disease and in all circumstances free from distress, one abiding only in the ātman is peaceful, contented in the Self, undifferentiated.

When the false ‘I’ is totally in check, through constant and persistent practice, all afflictions are appearances only. You experience a deep peace that is beyond the reach of the mind. Hold onto it firmly. It is natural and unchanging. It is who you really are.

The previous verse reads: “*Moving or standing or sleeping, Waking or taking food or water, In the face of the wind, the cold and the sun, Unaffected will he be, in any state, at any time.*”⁹

Kanakammal comments as follows on both verses: “This and the preceding verse are a perfect pen-portrait of Bhagavan. Bhagavan always clad in a loin cloth was totally indifferent to extremes of weather. In midday in the height of summer, while the devotees walking with him, unable to bear the heat would be asked by Bhagavan to run or walk fast to reach a shade, he himself would walk in the same measured slow pace of his, unperturbed and unaffected by the heat of the sun or of the scorching earth on the unshod soles.”¹⁰

⁸ *Srī Guru Ramana Prasādam*, translated by Robert Butler, published by Robert Butler, 2008, p. 96.

⁹ *Atma Sakshatkara Prakaranam*, translated by D.H. Ramamurthy, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 1999, p. 53.

¹⁰ *Commentary on Anuvāda Nūnmālai*, Volume I, T.R. Kanakammal, Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, 2011, p. 390.

In verse 51, the *jñāni*, absorbed in meditation, abides only in the Self, ‘*svātmany evāvatiṣṭhate.*’

स्नेहक्षयाद्यथा दीपो बलान्निर्वाणमृच्छति |
तथात्मभावनायुक्तः स्वात्मन्येवावतिष्ठते ||

sneha-kṣayād yathā dīpo balān nirvāṇam ṛcchati
tathātma-bhāvanā-yuktaḥ svātmany evāvatiṣṭhate

Just as a lamp when its oil is consumed forcibly attains extinction, thus the yogī absorbed in meditation on the ātman abides in the Self alone.

Bhagavan adds “There is nothing to be attained greater than the *Ātman*. This is the truth.”

There are no more thoughts because the ego has fled. The Self has consumed them. That is grace. That is bliss. That is the wonder of Lord Śiva! He is always there and never not there. He makes a mockery of suffering. He is pure love and the happiness no external object can match or the mind imagine.

Bhagavan defines *nirvāṇa* thus: “*Nirvana* is Perfection. In the Perfect State there is neither subject nor object; there is nothing to see, nothing to feel, nothing to know. Seeing and knowing are the functions of the mind. In *Nirvana* there is nothing but the blissful pure consciousness ‘I am.’”¹¹

In verse 56, the *jñāni* is all-pervading and abiding within and without, ‘*bahir antaḥ saṁsthaḥ.*’ Notice the exultant change in meter, from *anuṣṭubh* to *triṣṭubh*!

विज्ञानमेवं समुपास्य विद्वान्
विशत्यकायं सततं नियुक्तः |

सर्वत्रगामी भवतीह मुक्तः
तद्धर्मधर्मी बहिरन्तः संस्थः

vijñānam evaṁ samupāśya vidvān
viśatyakāyaṁ satataṁ niyuktaḥ
sarvatragāmī bhavatīha muktaḥ
tad dharma-dharmī bahir antaḥ saṁsthaḥ

¹¹ Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk 406.

The yogī meditating on Supreme Knowledge thus endowed enters into the eternally bodiless state. He becomes liberated in this world, bearing the properties of that experience, all-pervading, abiding within and without.

Where is the body in deep meditation when all thoughts have disappeared? You are here, there and everywhere always. You are formless. There is no place or time when you do not abide. Your authentic Self reigns, and you have merged with It. There is only the Eye behind the eye.

Here is what Muruganar says about bodilessness.

551. The network of thoughts that fills the mind branches out from the perception ‘I am the body’. The proper course of action is to ask the question, ‘What is the place in which this I am the body idea has its source?’ and thus reach and become established within the heart.¹²

Finally, Muruganar has the last word. Thanks to *ātma vicāra* and complete surrender, we can all achieve ultimate peace and, with practice in time, become even in this world our authentic selves. What a gift!

409. I show my deep gratitude to him who brought about his victorious rule within my heart by maintaining self-attention without a break. There is no other way than this. Benedictions upon the glorious Self that shines alone within the Heart through the non-dual truth of its Self-nature!¹³ ▲

Śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ, śāntiḥ

End of series

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¹² *Srī Guru Ramana Prasādam*, translated by Robert Butler, published by Robert Butler, 2008, p. 94.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Setting Tendencies Free

NEERA KASHYAP

In *Yoga Vasishtha*, the story of the demons Dama, Vyala and Kata in their primary creation as blank souls to their progressive creation as the wise and dispassionate demons Bhima, Bhasa and Drdha, is the story of the journey of a mind that moves from an imbued aggressive hostility to a state harnessed by self-enquiry to serve a cause with a sense of detachment and non-doership. This cautionary tale is narrated by Sage Vasishtha to Rama in the chapter, Stithi Prakaranam (Existence) to demonstrate that wisdom dawns when the senses are controlled. To the wise, the mind is an obedient servant, a good counselor, a pleasant spouse, a protective father and a trustworthy friend – all serving to impel good action.

The story: In the netherworld there lived a mighty demon, Sambara, who, as a past master in magic, created a resplendent magical city replete with celestial beings. He was a terror to the gods of heaven. In their endless conflict, sometimes, the gods killed his army, and sometimes, he invaded heaven to kill in retaliation. Afraid of his powers of magic, the gods hid themselves. If Sambara could not find the gods, it meant that they could kill his forces through stealth at opportune moments. To protect his forces, Sambara created three demons, Dama, Vyala and Kata, with no previous mental conditioning. Not knowing the concepts of war, victory or defeat, they did not suffer fear, doubt or even death.

Sambara's army, led by the three invulnerable demons, engaged in a fierce and destructive battle with the gods in which each side won or lost alternately. The gods appealed to the creator Brahma for protection who advised them to retreat from battle for, the demons, in their current state, free of psychological conditioning and an ego-

sense, could not be defeated. Said Brahma, “Conditioning or craving weakens a person. Do what you can to create in them the feelings of ‘I’ and ‘mine.’ Since they are ignorant creatures of the demon Sambara, they will fall for this bait, hence be easily defeated.”

When the fighting was renewed, it was even more fierce and destructive than earlier. The continued involvement in war imbued in the three demons the basic notion, ‘I am.’ There quickly followed worldly desires for wealth and pleasure, and fears for the body and of death. The confusion caused by feelings that ‘this is my body’ and ‘this is mine’ led to inefficiency, loss of courage and entry into the cycle of *samsara*. The demon army was routed, and the three demons fled to the netherworld, whencefrom they were dispatched by Yama to the most dreadful of hells after failing to recognize and honor his visit. After suffering a series of sub-human incarnations, they lived as fish in a lake in Kashmir.

Interspersed through the stories of Yoga Vasiṣṭha are Rama’s questions addressed to the sage and Sage Vasiṣṭha’s instructions in response. Rama asks: If the demons Dama, Vyala and Kata were products of Sambara’s magic and therefore unreal, how did they become real entities like us? Vasiṣṭha’s reply: Just as these demons were products of magic and therefore unreal, so are we, the gods and others unreal. That you and I are seen to be real entities does not alter this truth. However, it is unwise to declare the truth ‘Brahman alone is real’ to the ignorant, for the reality of the world appearance is so deep-rooted in the heart, it will not be dispelled except through self-enquiry. The truth can only be experienced by the wise. The reality is the one infinite consciousness which does not undergo any change. In that infinite consciousness there are notions of you, me and the demons. These notions arise when this consciousness is ‘awake’ as it were; they dissolve when it is ‘asleep.’ Yet in infinite consciousness there are no such states as ‘awake’ or ‘asleep.’ It is pure consciousness.

The story continues in response to Rama’s query as to how the three demons attained liberation. In course of time, there arose a city Adhithana in the middle of Kashmir. On the peak of a hill in its center was a skyscraper where resided the king. In a hole in one of the palace pillars, Dama was reborn as a mosquito. In one corner of the palace, Vyala was reborn as a sparrow. In a minister’s palace elsewhere in the

city, Kata was reborn a mynah. One day, the minister narrated to an audience the story of the three demons. On listening to the story, the mynah recollected its original personality as Kata, a magical creation of the demon Sambara. This recollection freed it from the magical illusion, and the mynah was enlightened. Others recount the same story, and, in similar ways, both the sparrow (Vyala) and mosquito (Dama) attain liberation.

Explains Sage Vasiṣṭha to Rama, “When it is not rightly understood, the ‘I’ appears to be an impure notion in the infinite consciousness; but, when the ‘I’ is rightly understood, its meaning is seen as the infinite consciousness. When its own reality is seen it does not appear as the ego-sense any more, but as the one infinite reality. In fact, there is no distinct entity as ‘I.’ When this truth is revealed to one with a pure mind, his ignorance is at once dispelled.”¹

How do we see this truth? Says the sage, “When one is possessed by this ghost of ‘I-ness,’ no scriptures, no mantras, nothing enables one to get rid of it. Only by the constant remembrance of the truth that the self is a pure reflection in the infinite consciousness does ‘I-ness’ cease to grow. The world appearance is a juggler’s trick; all subject-object relationship between it and me is foolish – when this understanding takes root, ‘I-ness’ is uprooted. When it is seen that it is the ‘I’ that gives rise to the notion of a ‘world,’ both cease in peace.”²

The story continues: After Sambara has been deserted by the three demons Dama, Vyala, and Kata, he realizes they had foolishly entertained egoistic notions and had thus come to grief. Through his magic powers, Sambara embarks on creating three more demons, Bhima, Bhasa and Drdha, of a different kind. Endowed with self-knowledge, these demons were dispassionate, sinless and omniscient. Though in a constant state of war with the gods, the ego-sense did not arise easily in them. When it did, they subdued it through self-enquiry and became free from attachment, desire, aversion, a sense of doer-ship and even from a fear of death. Endowed with an equal vision and dedication to their allotted task, they were able to defeat the gods. The gods took refuge in Lord Viṣṇu, who instructed them to take up their abode in another region. Then Viṣṇu himself fought

¹ *Vasiṣṭha’s Yoga*, Swami Venkatesananda, p. 171-172.

² *Ibid*, p. 172.

Sambara; slain, the demon instantly reached the abode of the Lord. Lord Viṣṇu also fought the demons Bhima, Bhasa and Drdha. Because they had no ego-sense, when their bodies fell, they were liberated.

Describing the latter demons as the true heroes who, by bringing their minds under control, had rid themselves of ignorance, delusion and cravings for pleasure, Sage Vasiṣṭha speaks to Rama of a de-conditioned mind: “When the mind’s conditioning ceases, then ignorance, craving, desires, aversions, delusion, stupidity, fear and ideations come to an end; purity, auspiciousness and goodness arise. One enjoys the delight of self-knowledge. He who has an intelligence rendered pure by the destruction of inner impurities has his heart illumined by the light of the Self won through an enquiry into the self; seeing the worthlessness of birth and death, he dwells without fear or anxiety in the city which is the body.”³

On analysis of this story, one sees that the first three demons created by Sambara – Dama, Vyala, and Kata – were really robot-like creations whose minds were akin to an unseeded field. Theirs was not the child-like innocence referred to by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa when he said, “So long as one does not become simple like a child, one does not get divine illumination. Forget all the worldly knowledge that thou hast acquired and become as a child, and then will thou get the divine wisdom.” Being unseeded fields which could be turned towards *samsaric* tendencies, the gods implanted in them the fundamental seed of an ego-sense that led to a flourishing tree of cravings, aggression, destructiveness, fears and avarice. This weakened them, and even their earlier robot-like implacable courage and efficiency was attenuated. Through several verses, the Yoga Vasiṣṭha describes their fall from heaven onto summits of mountains, into the eddies of the seas, onto burning woods of wild fire and jungles of wild beasts, onto distant islands and into lakes – maimed, fiery eyes open, helmets ablaze, hanging onto the branches of trees by their own entrails, gushing with blood.

Further, after being assigned to the worst of hells by Yama, they picked up the tendencies of their hellish companions there and were reborn in a tribe of forest-dwelling hunters to live out their tendencies for slaughter and cruelty. Later, reduced to animal births

³ *Ibid*, p. 175.

in the forms of ravens, vultures, falcons, hogs, mountain rams and reptiles, they finally live as fish in a filthy lake in Kashmir – neither dead nor alive.

It is an auspicious augury that the three demons get their chance for redemption in Kashmir itself in the lowly births of a mosquito, a sparrow and a mynah, though in the nooks and crannies of a king and a high-ranking official's palaces. The narration of their stories sets them free. In other words, the memory and airing of their *vasanas*, imbued first in their original magical personalities, followed by their emergence through many lowly births, enable them to bear and wear them out. A public narration of the past is symbolic of bringing sub-conscious tendencies into the light of awareness. Imbued now with this light and filled with its illumination, tendencies are seen and resolved in it. This is the opposite of suppression, whereby unpleasant emotions and tendencies are not faced but repressed, only to re-emerge through dreams or unpleasant emotions and situations that compel us to become aware of them and to resolve them through acceptance and understanding.

When asked for the best way of dealing with desires in order to rid ourselves of them – whether by satisfying them or suppressing them, Sri Bhagavan said: “If a desire can be got rid of by satisfying it, there will be no harm in satisfying such a desire. But desires generally are not eradicated by satisfaction. Trying to root them out that way is like pouring spirits to quench fire. Simultaneously, the proper remedy is not forcible suppression, since such repression is bound to react sooner or later into forceful surging up with undesirable consequences. The proper way to get rid of a desire is to find out ‘Who gets the desire? What is its source?’ When this is found, the desire is rooted out and it will never again emerge or grow.”⁴

This questioning leads to a dis-identification with the desire arising from the ego-sense. Sage Vasiṣṭha tells Rama: “Even as a mirror reflects an object held close to it, one’s behavior reflects as the ego-sense in one’s consciousness. However, if this behavior is ‘held at a distance’ in consciousness, with no identification with it, the ego-sense does not arise.”⁵

⁴ *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, Devaraja Mudaliar, 12-4-46.

⁵ *Vasiṣṭha’s Yoga*, Swami Venkatesananda, p. 167.

Freedom from suppression also facilitates a leap in the evolutionary cycle. For now, Sambara gives us a fresh set of demons – Bhima, Bhasa and Drdha – who are able to subdue their egos through self-enquiry to free themselves of attachments and dualities with a dedication to their given task of defeating the gods, free from doer-ship. Through self-enquiry, even the gods are defeated. It is only when Lord Viṣṇu enters the fray that Sambara is slain and instantly reaches Vaikuntha, the abode of Viṣṇu. Similarly, when the three demons, Bhima, Bhasa and Drdha, bereft of ego-sense are slain, they are liberated.

Sambara's liberation is like the well-known incident of Sishupala's beheading by Lord Krishna in the Mahabharata. In Sishupala's case, his involvement with his cousin, *avatara* Krishna, is long and intense. Born with three eyes and four arms, he would have been cast out by his parents if it wasn't for a divine foretelling that his monstrous accretions would disappear once placed in the lap of a particular being. The prophecy also foretold that the same being would also be the cause of his death. When, on a visit, Krishna takes the child in his lap, Sishupala's extra eyes and arms disappear, but it also becomes clear who will be the arbiter of his demise. Sishupala's mother persuades Krishna to forgive his cousin a hundred offenses. Krishna agrees.

Much later, Sishupala, as king of the Chedi kingdom, is invited to Indraprastha for the eldest Pandava Yudhishtira's coronation ceremony. He is incensed when he notes that his cousin Krishna has been honored as a special guest and insults Krishna multiple times, calling him a cowherd and not a king worthy of honor. On Sishupala's 101st abuse, Krishna releases his Sudarshana Chakra, killing his cousin on the spot. The interesting thing here is that, irrespective of Sishupala's love or hate, it is his intense involvement with Krishna that liberates him. He attains salvation by merging into Krishna's body.

When Sri Bhagavan was asked if it was possible to get immediate results from *sadhana*, he said: "Some (*sadhanas*) yield immediate results and some do not. That depends upon the intensity or otherwise of the *sadhana*. If good acts or evil acts are done with great intensity, the results will manifest themselves immediately; otherwise, the results are slow. The results, however, necessarily follow. It cannot

be helped.”⁶ Sri Bhagavan has also said that good deeds lead to happiness provided we are not attached to these deeds, for happiness is our natural state.

It is likely that *sadhana* also goes through an evolutionary cycle. In David Godman’s book, *Living by the Words of Bhagavan*, we have the candor of Annamalai Swami’s narrations of feeling beleaguered by sexual desires. One hot summer afternoon, while sitting before the storeroom door, he saw a very beautiful woman come for Bhagavan’s *darshan*. He was so captivated by her appearance that he wondered if she was a goddess in human form. He felt a strong sexual desire arise in him. At that moment, Bhagavan suddenly appeared. He called Annamalai Swami out and asked him to stand in the sun on a big rock. As he was barefoot, heat from the rock to the feet caused great discomfort. For several minutes, Bhagavan calmly chatted about various construction issues. The heat was burning his feet but Annamalai Swami didn’t dare move, as Bhagavan had specifically asked him to stand on that rock. After a while, the thought struck him that the experience of pain had completely displaced the desire for the woman. As soon as this thought occurred, Bhagavan abruptly terminated the conversation and walked away.⁷

Some years later, when Annamalai Swami was again beset by sexual desire and was so despairing of his thoughts that he could not eat or sleep for three days, he sought Bhagavan’s help. Bhagavan remained silent for a few minutes, then gave his quintessential teaching – words that have stood the test of time in their universal, cleansing and resonant impact in our hearts. He said: “Why should you always be thinking that an evil thought occurred at such and such a time in the past? If you instead meditate: ‘To whom does this thought come?’ it will fly away of its own accord. You are not the body or the mind, you are the Self. Meditate on this and all your desires will leave you.”⁸ ▲

⁶ *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, Suri Nagamma, p. 474.

⁷ Summarised from *Living by the words of Bhagavan*, David Godman, p. 150

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 151.



Sparks from Bhagavan

V.S. KRISHNAN

Just as Tiruvannamalai represents fire, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi signaled the fire of knowledge. Once, when a devotee found that the eyes of Bhagavan were centered on the mountain, he asked: “Are you looking at the mountain?” and prompt came the answer from Bhagavan: “I am looking at myself.” Quite often, sparks came from the fire of knowledge that Bhagavan symbolized. The sparks which came from Bhagavan were so illuminating and enlightening that Sri Venkataramaiah experienced the inner current, and being thus inspired, recorded and published as *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*. Here, we take a look at some of the sparks which emanated from Bhagavan.

An American lady came to India in search of truth. She had heard what Adi Sankara has said that the world is a myth and Brahman alone is truth. She came to Bhagavan and said, “I have no idea what Brahman is; but I know about the beautiful world that appears before me. How can the world be wrong when I see it distinctly with my eyes and perceive its movement through my intellect? Are the relations I maintain with my family members wrong? Are the economic, political and administrative activities that regulate the world wrong?” Having listened to her patiently, Bhagavan asked her, “When you were asleep, where was your ‘real world’? Could you perceive it at that time? You saw certain images during the dream and you see certain images during the waking state. Which is real? Did your relatives stand by you while you were dreaming? In fact, the images of the world that you see in the waking state are as unreal as the images you see in the dream state. Know yourself first before you know about the world. What you see is the reflection of the images created by your own mind. What is real is you, the seer, and not the seen.” Gradually, the truth dawned on her. It was wrong to find reality in a world that appears

and disappears. It was wrong to find spiritual fulfillment by being in the material world. She therefore decided to seek the Self-knowledge (*ātma jñāna*) by being away from the world of materialism and by being her true Self.

Two Parsi ladies came to the Ashram and posed the question: “My knowledge is theoretical and not practical. How shall I gain practical realization of the Self?” Bhagavan replied: “Realization is nothing to be gained afresh. It is already there. It is your nature. There is never a moment when the Self is not. It is ever-present, here and now. If it is not there or if it is something new to be attained afresh, it is not worth pursuing, because, what is got afresh will also be lost. So long there is doubt of non-realization; attempt must be made to rid oneself of these thoughts. The thoughts are due to identification of the Self with the non-self elements like mind and body. When the non-self disappears, the Self alone remains. To make room anywhere it is enough that things are first moved from there. If only the bundle is removed from the shelf, a space is created there. So what is necessary is to remove the thought “I am not realized.” Bhagavan said that ‘present’ alone is real. To investigate the past and future without knowing the truth of the present is like counting without the first number of one (*Ulladu Narpadu*, v. 15).

A devotee asked Bhagavan, “How can I find out what I was in my previous life?” Bhagavan replied, “Before investigating previous lives, why don’t you inquire whether your present birth itself is real?”

A devotee asked, “How does a *grhastha* (householder) fare in the scheme of liberation?” Bhagavan replied, “Why do you think you are a *grhastha*? If you go out as a *sannyāsī*, the thought of being *sannyāsī* would always dominate you. Whether you continue in the household or adopt sainthood, what matters is your mind. Ego is the source of thoughts. It creates the impression that you are a *grhastha* (householder) or a *sannyāsī*. What is needed is not the substitution of the role of *grhastha* with *sannyāsī* but the removal of all identifications. What is needed is not any change in environment but change in the mindset. Another devotee came to Bhagavan and raised the similar question: “Swamiji, I want to find peace and fulfillment in life. Can I go to the forest and do penance (*tapas*)?” Bhagavan replied, “You may go to some holy places, a solitary place or a forest. But wherever you go, chances are, you may be carrying the same mind, the same *vasanas* (mental

inclinations), the same karmas and the same ego. What needs to be done is Self-examination from wherever you are. Self-examination or *ātma vichara* paves way for Self-realization. For *ātma vichara*, which is a self-initiating and self-sufficient exercise, it is not important where you go but how deep you go within yourself. You may do the *vichara* from home or from the forest; what is important is the quest to know the Self.”

Once, Devaraja Mudaliar, an ardent devotee, said that one needs the grace of God to be able to get *moksha* (liberation). Bhagavan replied, “The grace is already there and you may receive it in abundance so you long as you (your ego) do not come in between.” “How to cope up with problems that are mounting day by day?” asked another person. “There is no problem as such,” Bhagavan said, “Actually, you are the problem. Though you are the divine supreme, the limitless Self, you confine yourself within the mind. When you identify yourself with mind, you become the problem.” Bhagavan was *jñāna* personified: one who has answers to all questions that concern humanity. Rightly, therefore, he was described as a saint among saints.

A lady devotee came to Bhagavan and said that her heart was longing for bhakti towards God. Bhagavan said, “So long as this longing is there, so long as the yearning for union with God, realization would be forced on you even if you do not want it.” Bhagavan often said, bhakti is the mother of *jñāna*. When bhakti gets matured, it paves way for the dawn of *jñāna*. In other words, *vichara marga* and bhakti *marga* converge at same end; *ātma vidya* or Self-knowledge. “In the devotional path, one starts by dwelling intently on the Personal God whom one worships and proceeds till the duality is lost and merges in Him. In the path of Inquiry, one starts by dwelling on oneself and proceeds till one loses oneself or one merges in That. “In the case of devotion, the surrender takes place first and is followed by knowledge, and in the case of *jñāna marga*, the knowledge dawns first and is followed by surrender.” He who surrenders will ultimately know and he who knows will ultimately surrender.

There are occasions when no words came from Bhagavan. In fact, occasion when Bhagavan spoke are much less compared to occasions when he remained unspoken. Bhagavan said, “Speech is only the function of the mind, whereas silence is the source and origin of all

thoughts and speech. If speech is effective, silence, which is the origin and source of all thoughts, must be more powerful. Silence speaks volumes. It is unceasing eloquence.” Silence establishes a mental wavelength. When there is perfect understanding, the conversation takes place not necessarily through words or language. The souls, finding harmony, express themselves in their own language of silence. When true silence is observed, the mind is dissolved; the world of illusion ceases to exist, and one remains in perfect identification with the supreme ‘Self.’

“Bhagavan, how can I keep my body free from disease?” This was the question posed by another devotee. The reply came instantly from Bhagavan: “The body itself is a disease.” When afflicted by a disease, a person cannot pay attention to anything else. Similarly, a person who identifies himself with the body cannot pay attention to anything other than the body; therefore, the body becomes the disease.

A devotee went into a cave near Arunachala Hill and did intense tapas without taking normal food. He gradually reduced the intake till at last he subsisted with barely a mouthful of food. After completing his penance and tapas, he went to Maharshi and said, “Bhagavan, I have found that I could keep the body alive with only a mouthful of food a day.” Bhagavan smiled and remarked: “You can be alive even without the body. Bodiless-ness is your real nature. The Self is bodiless-ness (*asariram*).” The disciple was made speechless by the power of those words.

“All books say that the guidance of a Guru is necessary. Is it so?” asked a devotee. Bhagavan said, “The Guru will not give you anything you do not have already. Even if you get any such thing, it will go as it came because what comes afresh will also go. ‘What always is’ will alone remain. All that is required is removal of the notion: ‘I am not realized.’ We are always the Self. Only, we don’t realize it.” According to Bhagavan, the Self is the eternal Guru. It is enough if one looks within and contemplates. However, since the mind has an outgoing tendency, it will respond more actively to external factors than to internal factors. Bhagavan says, “In order to bring the outgoing mind to the source, Guru appears externally in the form of a human Guru, a form to which the mind responds. Guru then holds the attention of the extroverted mind and redirects it to its source, the

Self. Guru is both within and without. So he creates conditions to drive the individual inward and prepares the interior to drag him to the center. Thus he gives a push from without and exerts a pull from within so that you may be fixed at the center.”

A devotee came to Bhagavan and said, “I realize the importance and value of Self-Awareness but I am caught under the net of *samsara* (family life). I am unable to come out of my attachments towards my own people. Can I renounce everything that belongs to me?” Just one short reply came from Bhagavan that spoke volumes. He said, “The Self has already renounced.” It is only when we cling on to our mind that the possessive spirit takes over us. In a similar vein, Bhagavan said, “Renunciation is not discarding of externals but the cancellation of the uprising of the ego. You should renounce not just the possessions but the possessor too.” When Sri Muruganar, the ardent disciple, sought Bhagavan’s blessing for Self-realization, Bhagavan’s brief reply was “*irunda padikke iru*” – “Be as you are” or remain “just being.” When Muruganar asked; “How one should conduct himself in dealing with the world.” Bhagavan replied: “*iraivan arul seluttum vazhikke sel*” – “Move as the grace of God leads you.” These two sentences sum up the entire teaching of Vedas.

Sri T.K. Sundaresan, an ardent disciple of Bhagavan, used to go up the hill regularly and spend time with Sri Bhagavan. He used to carry a small sugar candy or some eatables as offering to Sri Bhagavan. One day, being short of money, he had to visit Bhagavan bare-handed. On seeing his face, Bhagavan enquired the cause of his dejection. Sundaresan said that he had not brought anything. Bhagavan looked at his face and said, “But you have brought the main thing. You have brought yourself. The most precious thing in the world is ‘YOU’ — the ‘You’ in every one of us is the truth. You are the main thing. All else is unimportant.” This recalls another instance where the importance of the word ‘YOU’ is stressed. Once, a Professor of Philosophy, after listening to the explanation of Bhagavan on *Ulladu Narpadu*, became very emotional and said, “Bhagavan, you are the Greatest Teacher. What you conveyed is the Great Teaching.” Then Bhagavan said: “Teacher and Teaching; for whom? The Greatest Teacher is there and the Greatest Teaching is also there and yet there is a ‘missing link’ in this Golden Spiritual Chain. The missing link is ‘YOU.’ When

the Teacher and the Teaching are linked with ‘you,’ they become the ‘Golden Spiritual Chain.’ Bhagavan is helping the ‘YOU’ in every one of us to wake up and complete the precious ‘Eternal Chain.’ Let us make full use of it, in our daily life. Sri Bhagavan commands us to wake up to Spiritual Perfection. Let us all abide by the Master’s Words of Wisdom,” said the Professor.

On another occasion, Sri Sundaresan asked Bhagavan, “What is that one thing, knowing which all doubts would be cleared?” Bhagavan replied: “Know the doubter. If the doubter is known, doubts will not arise.” Recognize for certain that all are *jñānīs* and all are realized beings. Only few are aware of this fact. Therefore, doubts arise. Doubts must be uprooted. This means that the doubter must be uprooted. When the doubter ceases to exist, no doubt will rise. Another devotee who came to Bhagavan posed the question, “I wish to help the world. Shall I not be helpful?” Bhagavan said, “Yes, by helping yourself, you help the world. You are in the world. You are the world. You are not different from the world, nor is the world different from you. So, help yourself by knowing who actually you are.”

Suri Nagamma was a great devotee of Bhagavan. One day, when she came to Sri Ramanasramam, she found Bhagavan seated on the cot. She then started circumambulating (doing *pradakshina* to) Bhagavan with veneration. Bhagavan said, “If you do this, others would also start doing it without knowing the significance of *pradakshina*. The true *pradakshina* is *ātma pradakshina*, circumambulating the Self itself. It means, “I am the *ātma* and many objects keep moving around me. So, you do the *pradakshina* to yourself.” In Ramanasramam, we find devotees circumambulating the idol of Bhagavan because Bhagavan represents the Self.

A devotee from Andhra, a good singer, came to Bhagavan and asked whether one can attain liberation by the exclusive means of devotional songs or whether any other *sadhana* is required. Musicians like Saint Thyagaraja attained liberation only by singing the glory of God,” she added. Bhagavan replied, “They have not attained realization by singing; they have expressed through songs what they already realized and that is why their songs are immortal.”

There was a devotee who came from a poor background and all he knew was simple devotion towards Bhagavan. While other devotees

were asking different questions to Bhagavan, this devotee used to simply watch, as he thought he was not well-versed in spiritual matters. He heard Bhagavan saying that whatever the devotee does, Vedanta studies, dhyana, yoga are aimed at attaining Self-Realization in the end. This devotee who could not comprehend the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta merely witnessed the discussion taking place and moved away. One day, when Bhagavan was taking his morning stroll on the mountain, this devotee came from the opposite direction. He carried with him a mango fruit to be offered to Bhagavan in case he was lucky enough to meet the Maharshi. Exactly, as he envisaged, he was happy to see Bhagavan and gave the fruit to him. Though Bhagavan accepted the fruit, he gave it back to the devotee. The devotee took it as the prasada or blessings from Bhagavan. Having got the opportunity to meet Bhagavan at close quarters, he expressed his feelings. “The other day while you were deliberating the theories of *Dvaita*, *Advaita* and *Visishtadvaita*, I was there but I could not grasp them. Can an ignorant person like me aspire for the high state of knowledge that you symbolize?” Bhagavan assuaged his feelings and reassured him that he is more qualified to reach the state of *jñāna* because he is beyond the influence of the opposites like knowledge and ignorance. Bhagavan then explained to him about the theories. “*Dvaita* means dual. You are there and apart from you the fruit is also there. This is *Dvaita*. When you put a slice of mango into your mouth, the fruit is in you. Then, both you and fruit, though different, appear as one. This is *Visishtadvaita*. When you take the fruit completely and the fruit get fully digested, you and the fruit become one. This is *Advaita*.”

There was a lady devotee who used to visit Ramanasramam daily. On an auspicious day, there was special puja at the Ashram. When she was eagerly getting ready to go, some guests unexpectedly turned up and she was forced to attend to them. Though she was entertaining the guests, offering them food and talking to them, her mind was hovering around Ramanasramam. The next day, when she met the Maharshi and explained the delicate situation which forced her to stay at home, Maharshi said: “It is good that you have chosen to remain at home to attend to your guests. Even while attending to your guests, you were thinking of Sri Ramanasramam. If you had come to Ashram, your mind would have been hovering around your home and guests only. You may be physically here, but your mind would have been there only. It was

good that you chose to remain at home and thought of Ramanasramam rather than visiting Ramanasramam and thinking of home.”

Even one who knew Bhagavan from very close quarters could not assume what kind of reply Bhagavan would give to a question. Even if he assumes some of the possible answers of Bhagavan, when the reply does come from Bhagavan, it would be something which he could have never imagined. Once, Sri Devaraja Mudaliar asked Bhagavan, “How it will be when a devotee gets the glimpse of the Self and experiences the Brahman within?” Bhagavan replied, “It will be like the state of a thief who had been stung by a scorpion while in the midst of a theft.”

“What is *nishkamya karma*?” This question was put to Bhagavan by Rangachari, a renowned Pundit hailing from Andhra. Bhagavan did not respond. Though the devotee wondered why Bhagavan did not answer his question, he did not pursue it any further. It was time for Bhagavan for his usual stroll towards the mountain along with other devotees and this devotee from Andhra also joined along. On the way, Bhagavan saw a long piece of wood with thorns lying on the road. He picked it up, started cutting the edges and shaping the walking stick. Even while walking and conversing with his followers, he was attending to the stick, trying to smoothen it and straighten it. The disciples observed the extra care with which Maharshi made it into a fine stick. Even while returning, he was seen holding the stick, as if it were some precious possession. As he continued the journey down, he saw a shepherd coming in the opposite direction, walked towards him and just gave the stick to him. The followers were a little surprised that the stick that Maharshi made with so much care and attention was just passed on to a boy. Maharshi dispensed with the stick as if he has nothing to do with it and forgot about it. Sri Rangachari, who was a Pandit and Yogi, could get the message loud and clear now. He realized that Bhagavan has answered his question not by means of words but by means of action. A true Karma Yogi does an action very sincerely but without any motivation or desire. He puts his heart into whatever he does but expects no result out of it. He has no likes and dislikes and is beyond the concepts of ‘yours’ and ‘mine.’ When an action is done dispassionately, without motivation, without the notion of ‘I,’ it becomes *nishkamya karma*. This is also a reiteration of what Bhagavan Sri Krishna said in his Karma Yoga: “Set thy heart upon thy work but never on its reward.”



Muruganar in His Own Words

Part Three

HARI MOORTHY

Following his initial and unforgettable meeting with Bhagavan, Muruganar's spiritual focus was firmly established, with Bhagavan at its very core. He felt a powerful inner pull drawing him closer to Bhagavan, prompting him to make numerous journeys from Madras to Tiruvannamalai to be in the presence of his beloved guru. He was drawn to Bhagavan's presence much like a ball thrown into the air is inevitably pulled back to the earth by the force of gravity. Just as the ball, regardless of its weight, color, or condition, has no choice but to return to the earth due to its irresistible gravitational attraction, Muruganar felt compelled to be near Bhagavan irrespective of his physical or mental condition. Reflecting on this period, Viswanathan Swami summarized¹ Muruganar's irresistible pull towards Bhagavan, "He [Muruganar] was so keenly devoted to Bhagavan that he used to come direct from his school to Sri Ramanasramam with his coat and turban on and returned to Madras only when his school reopened."

Returning to the main autobiographical verse, let us proceed to the next section.

¹ *Surpassing Love and Grace*, p.10.

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

விதியின் விளைவான் மீக்கெழு மன்பாற்
பதிகஞ் சிலசொலிப் பரவுநா ளொன்றில்
அண்ணா மலையென் றாரம் பிக்குமோர்
பண்ணார் பாவைப் பாசுரந் தீட்டியுள்
உருக்குங் கருணை யுடைரம ணேசன்
திருக்கண் ணோக்கச் சேர்த்தலு மன்னோன் (19-24)

Meaning: Due to a certain good destiny, overwhelming love sprang in me to write a few more verses [on Bhagavan]. On one such trip to see [Bhagavan], I wrote another verse that began as “Annamalai,” resembling *Tiruvempavai* of *Tiruvasagam*. When this was shown to my Lord Ramanesan, who melts my heart with his Grace, his divine eyes kindly perused the verse.

This entire poem is incredibly biographical, filled with fascinating details of Muruganar’s emotions. It’s worth noting how Bhagavan allows devotees to come to him at their own pace, without external pressure. As Bhagavan once mentioned² after meeting Somerset Maugham,³ “Heart-talk is all talk.”

At the onset of this section of the poem, Muruganar places great emphasis on the idea that his love for Bhagavan was a direct result of the benevolent workings of his past good karma. This unique approach to narrating his deeply personal and spiritually significant experience is rather intriguing, showcasing Muruganar’s sense of egolessness and humility.

While it would have been a straightforward endeavor to craft this poem using personal pronouns, thus highlighting the intensity of Muruganar’s burgeoning love, he deliberately chose a different path. Instead, he attributes the blossoming of his affection and devotion to the divine destiny orchestrated by the Lord of the universe, acknowledging this force as the guiding hand behind both his spiritual journey and the love that had welled up within his heart. This choice of perspective reflects Muruganar’s great sense of surrender and gratitude to the divine order, humbly recognizing that his own agency is but a small part of a grander design. What a remarkable devotee, not even taking credit for the love he feels towards Bhagavan!

² Somerset Maugham, a well-known English author, visited Bhagavan in 1938.

³ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 550.

This poem, commencing with the word *Annamalai* (“அண்ணாமலை”), serves as the opening verse in the *Tiruvempavai* section⁴ of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*.

Tiruvempavai is a Tamil devotional hymn⁵ composed by saint Manickavasagar at Tiruvannamalai. *Tiruvempavai* is a part of the *Tiruvassagam*, a collection of devotional hymns in praise of Lord Śiva. *Tiruvempavai* consists of twenty verses, and it is typically recited during the Tamil month of *Margazhi* (December-January) as part of a tradition called *Margazhi Tiruvempavai*. This practice involves singing *Tiruvempavai* early in the morning, typically before dawn, as a form of devotion and spiritual awakening.

In a ritual observed by unmarried girls during ancient times to seek blessings for finding good husbands, they would wake up early, rouse each other from sleep, and joyfully proceed to ponds and streams for their morning baths. Following this, they would gather to worship Pavai, a female deity, and earnestly seek her divine blessings for the gift of suitable husbands. These special songs, part of the festival, were sung by the girls during the ten days leading up to the Tiruvadira⁶ festival.

The hymn’s content revolves around the devotion of the poet-saint Manickavasagar to Lord Śiva and his yearning to join the Lord’s divine abode. *Tiruvempavai* is highly regarded for its spiritual depth, devotional fervor, and portrayal of the devotee’s intense longing and surrender to the divine.

அண்ணா மலைரமண னன்பர்க் கருண்மாரி
கண்ணாலே பெய்யுங் கருணைத் திறம்பாடி
எண்ணா தனவெண்ணி யேங்கடியர் வெம்பாவத்
திண்ணா சறவே தெறுசே வகம்பாடிப்
பெண்ணா ணலிகளெனும் பேதத்தை நீத்துத்த
முண்ணா டுளத்தொளிர் முண்மை வளம்பாடிப்
பண்ணா ரவன்புகழைப் பாடுங்கீ தாமுதம்போல்
தண்ணா ரமைதி தழையேலோ ரெம்பாவாய்.

⁴ Verse number 1453 in section 105 of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*.

⁵ Per *Tiruvempavai Vilakkam*, a Tamil book authored by Dr.C. Balasubramanian, published in 1979.

⁶ Tiruvadira⁶, also called Arudra Darshan, is celebrated in December; Bhagavan Ramana was born on the day of Arudra Darshan.

Meaning: Arunachala Ramana showers His Grace upon His devotees through His compassionate gaze. Sing of this divine Grace, which dispels the multitude of external distractions and wandering thoughts. Sing of how He purifies our minds from such pollution. In His presence, all distinctions of genders like male, female, or non-binary gender fade away, allowing every soul to behold the radiant inner Source within their hearts. Sing of the boundless power of His truth. Let these verses flow in the sweet, nectar-like beauty of Tamil, celebrating His blissful abidance in the Self, O maiden!

With the skillful use of words and meter and a striking resemblance to *Tiruvvasagam*, Muruganar had, perhaps unknowingly, embarked on the initial phase of his life's purpose. In addition to his love for Bhagavan, Muruganar might have consciously or unconsciously realized the connection between Tiruvannamalai and *Tiruvempavai*. While we don't have an exact date for the composition of the following verse, internal clues within the verse suggest it was likely composed around December. Perhaps, it could have been the influence of a Margazhi month (மார்சு மாதம்) recitation of *Tiruvempavai* that Muruganar happened to hear on his way to see Bhagavan.⁷ Even today, it is a common occurrence for anyone walking in Tiruvannamalai to hear the recitation of the *Tiruvempavai* verses during the month of December.

The eloquent phrase found in the third and fourth lines, “எண்ணாதன எண்ணி ஏங்கடியர் வெம்பாவம் திண் ஆசு அறவே தெறு சேவகம் பாடி,” can be translated as: “By dwelling on countless futile thoughts, devotees squander their days pursuing material desires, enticed by powerful external attractions. To purify their minds of this contamination, they earnestly beseech Your divine feet.” This phrase emphasizes the need for constant vigilance among those who pursue spiritual ideals, as the mind can quite easily slip into its default mode of pursuing material desires.

Every part of this verse is either in praise of Bhagavan or highlights the struggles of devotees seeking self-improvement. However, amidst these lines, there is one sentence that stands out – a precise description of an inner state that can only be understood through

⁷ This is just a conjecture by the author.

discernment and the grace of Bhagavan. This is the stunning phrase in this verse, “உண்ணாடு உளத்தொளிரும் உண்மை,” which translates to “effulgent Truth shines for those who seek inside.” In just three words, this phrase gives a precise and beautiful way to describe Self-enquiry and the immense bliss that arises from merging with the infinite Self. Once again, it is not easy to dismiss these words as mere poetic phrases; they could only have been penned by someone who had undertaken a level of Self-enquiry and experienced the accompanying blissful truth. Muruganar has subtly provided us with a clue in this verse to help us piece together his inner transformation following his initial encounter with Bhagavan.

Furthermore, if we relate this verse to the biographical verse in which Muruganar stated that he composed the *Annamalai* verse due to overflowing love (“மீக்கு எழும் அன்பால்”), we can uncover another dimension of Muruganar’s spiritual state. It is possible to interpret the word “anbu” (அன்பு) as love. Simultaneously, we can also interpret “anbu” (அன்பு) as Śivam (சிவம்), which refers to the ultimate divine state. Therefore, it raises the question of whether we can interpret “ezhum anbu” (எழும் அன்பு) as intermittent samadhi experiences that Muruganar had been savoring. Samadhi is a deep state of meditation and absorption in which the individual achieves a profound, unbroken connection with the divine state of consciousness. It is often described as a state of oneness or union, wherein the individual ego is transcended in the divine light of the Self. Consequently, we might conclude that the *manana* period has also been completed by him..

Bhagavan very simply defined⁸ samadhi as, “Holding on to Reality is samadhi. Holding on to Reality with effort is *savikalpa*⁹ samadhi. Merging in Reality and remaining unaware of the world is *nirvikalpa*¹⁰ samadhi.”

Bhagavan often emphasized the importance of *sahaja*¹¹ samadhi, a state in which one is permanently established in the Self at all times. He expressed¹² this rather eloquently as, “One should be in

⁸ *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 391.

⁹ *Savikalpa* means differentiated.

¹⁰ *Nirvikalpa* means trans-conceptual.

¹¹ *Sahaja* means natural.

¹² *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 54.

spontaneous samadhi – that is, in one’s pristine state – in the midst of every environment.”

Muruganar’s repeated visits to Bhagavan and his smitten love were not merely scholarly fascinations by someone who was devoted to Bhagavan. He was not considering Bhagavan as an impersonal, “external” guru. Muruganar’s words interpret that, though perhaps unsteadily, he began enjoying deeper bliss through Bhagavan’s initiation through His eyes. As this verse eloquently states “His eyes pour blissful Grace” (“கண்ணாலே பெய்யுங் கருணைத் திறம்.”). This theme of grace pouring through Bhagavan’s eyes would repeatedly be woven in hundreds of subsequent poems that he would be composing.¹³

Due to the deeply biographical nature of that statement, it is reasonably evident that Muruganar greatly benefited from and possibly experienced initiation into his ‘Self-bliss’ through the grace emanating from Bhagavan’s eyes. This is supported by the phrase in line 24 of the autobiographical verse in which Muruganar says, “Bhagavan, who can melt my heart with his love, benevolently gazes.” (உருக்குங் கருணையுடை ரமணேசன் திருக்கண்ணோக்கச் சேர்த்தலும்.).

This is where the limitations of the written language may become apparent, and we must rely on our intuition. Muruganar offered a prayer to Bhagavan. However, Bhagavan was not merely an external figure to Muruganar; he had started experiencing glimpses of Bhagavan internally through intermittent samadhi experiences. Muruganar had come to understand that Bhagavan was not confined to a physical body with specific height and weight. From his own experiences, Muruganar had realized that Bhagavan was the radiant Self shining within his own heart.

What evidence supports this conclusion? It lies in the very last word of line 25 in the autobiographical verse, “*annon*” (“அன்னோன்”), which translates to “Lord Śiva.” However, the deeper meaning of the word extends to “He who is undifferentiated.” Among the plethora of word choices available, Muruganar specifically employed this word to describe Bhagavan at this critical juncture in the poem.

Indeed, there’s another clue that Muruganar provides in the preceding line before using the word “*annon*” (“அன்னோன்”).

¹³ *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* has an entire section called *Tirukannokkam*, which is dedicated to Bhagavan’s eyes pouring grace onto devotees.

In the phrase “Lord Ramana Ishvara can melt my heart through his grace,” (“உள் உருக்குங் கருணை உடை ரமணேசன்”), which serves as a prelude, Muruganar hints at the reason for referring to Bhagavan as “*annon*” (“அன்னோன்”). While the phrase “melting my heart” (“உள் உருக்குதல்”) might superficially appear as an emotional statement, its deeper significance likely lies in how Muruganar’s ego completely dissolved, allowing him to experience the bliss in an undifferentiated state of samadhi. In this state, Bhagavan shone as the undifferentiated Ishvara (“ரமண ஈசன்”) within Muruganar’s heart.

Additionally, there is a subtle acknowledgment of the influence of Manickavasagar in Muruganar’s verses. Muruganar employs a powerful phrase from *Tiruvasagam*, a work by Manickavasagar. In the *yathirai pathu*¹⁴ (யாத்திரைப் பத்து) section of *Tiruvasagam*, there is a phrase that reads, “intertwined within me is the abundantly melting grace of the Self.” (“கலந்துணர்வாய் உருக்கும் வெள்ளக் கருணையினால்.”)

This shared phrase, “melting grace” (“உருக்குங் கருணை”), used both by Muruganar and Manickavasagar, cannot be merely seen as inspiration from the latter for Muruganar. Instead, it serves as a verbal clue that indicates Muruganar’s deep understanding of the inner meaning of *Tiruvasagam*,¹⁵ which is likely due to the immense grace that Bhagavan poured on him through His eyes.

Returning to Muruganar’s main autobiographical verse, the next section contains the guidance provided by Bhagavan, which would go on to shape the course of Muruganar’s life and leave a lasting legacy. This journey would establish him as one of the foremost devotees of Bhagavan, and as a poet who would produce timeless classical Tamil poetry and several thousand verses for the next 50 years.

..... அன்னோன்

சயம்பெறு மணிவா சகர்வா சகம்போல்

இயம்பவும் வல்லையோ வெனவிளை யாட்டாக்

¹⁴ 45th chapter in *Tiruvasagam*.

¹⁵ Muruganar’s deep understanding and admiration for *Tiruvasagam* may be attributed to various factors, which will be elaborated later.

கூறா நின்ற குறிப்பின் சிறப்பைத்
தேறா வுணர்வாற் சிந்தை தியங்கிக்
கூகைபோ னண்பகற் குருடா யிருட்கு
வாகைசூ டியவென் மடமதி யெங்கே (25-30)

Meaning: Ramana Bhagavan, who is none other than Lord Śiva, playfully asked, “Can’t you write like Manickavasagar?” Not fully comprehending the depth of His words and what was conveyed without words, my mind started racing: Where is my small-minded ego, which is as ignorant of reality as an owl is blind during the daytime, that is attempting to achieve victory?

It is truly beautiful to observe how Bhagavan gently and playfully encouraged Muruganar to write in the style of Manickavasagar. It’s crucial to remember Bhagavan’s exact words when he said, “Can’t you write like Manickavasagar?” (“மணிவாசகர் வாசகம்போல் இயம்பவும் வல்லையோ?”) These words not only reflect Bhagavan’s humble and encouraging demeanor but also serve as a pivotal moment in Muruganar’s life and literary journey.

Bhagavan’s suggestion was remarkably direct, cutting through any ambiguity like a piercing arrow. He didn’t merely propose that Muruganar write in the style of *Tiruvagasam*; he specifically directed him to write in the spirit of Manickavasagar’s words. One might wonder, what’s the significance of this distinction? The emphasis here is on Muruganar, whose reverence for *Tiruvagasam* was already deeply ingrained. Bhagavan’s intention wasn’t for Muruganar to produce a mere imitation of *Tiruvagasam*. Instead, by encouraging him to write in the vein of Manickavasagar’s words, Bhagavan was essentially asking him to carry forward the legacy that Manickavasagar had initiated. This was an extraordinary task, a continuation of a spiritual and literary journey that had transcended multiple centuries. It meant picking up the thread of devotion and poetic expression where the great saint-poet Manickavasagar had left it. It was an invitation to not only emulate the style but also to tap into the same inner spiritual experience that had inspired Manickavasagar’s divine verses. Bhagavan’s suggestion was, in essence, an entrustment of the legacy of devotion and poetry into Muruganar’s capable hands. Bhagavan was urging Muruganar to contribute to this timeless tradition and express his love for the divine through the powerful medium of poetry.

In this poignant moment, three significant threads converged: the rich heritage of ancient Tamil poetry, the enduring legacy of devotional saint-poets, and the steadfast devotion to one's guru. In Muruganar's case, Bhagavan Ramana served as his revered guru, guiding him on a path of inner spiritual and poetic exploration. This convergence marked the beginning of an extraordinary journey that would weave these threads into a magnificent tapestry of devotion and poetic expression, honoring the timeless tradition of Tamil literature and the spiritual depth of devotion to the divine.

In the ordinary course of human existence, individuals often find themselves ensnared by the ceaseless activities of their minds, rendering them unable to perceive the ever-present divine radiance that shines within their hearts. This spiritual insight is beautifully encapsulated by Muruganar through the metaphor he employs in line number 29 of the verse. He likens this state to that of an owl, which, being blinded by the brilliance of daylight, can only see clearly in the obscurity of the night. This metaphor not only showcases Muruganar's perfect understanding of spirituality but also underscores the significance of turning one's inner vision toward the divine, especially when the external world seems blinding and bewildering.

Furthermore, a significant question arises: What does Muruganar imply when he says, "Not fully comprehending the depth of His words"? Is there a deeper inner meaning concealed within Bhagavan's seemingly straightforward and playful suggestion to Muruganar to write like Manickavasagar? Often, spiritual masters use simple, everyday language to convey spiritual truths, and their words carry deeper layers of meaning that may not be immediately apparent to the untrained mind. To appreciate the depth of Bhagavan's words, we must recognize that Manickavasagar is not just any poet. He is revered as one of the greatest devotional saints in Tamil literature, known for his intense and spiritually transformative verses in *Tiruvasagam*. By invoking Manickavasagar, Bhagavan was not merely asking Muruganar to imitate a literary style; he was guiding him to access the intense spiritual state and devotion that Manickavasagar embodied.

Even with that context, it is still unclear what exactly was the struggle by Muruganar in comprehending this tough task. Muruganar undoubtedly

grappled with the monumental challenge of emulating Manickavasagar in his compositions. The enormity of the task might have left him bewildered and temporarily clouded his mind due to its sheer weight. However, it is essential to remember that this struggle was merely his initial response to Bhagavan's straightforward request. The real question lies in unraveling the unspoken, deep truth concealed within Bhagavan's words.

Exploring the deeper implications of Bhagavan's words in this context is a journey into the interplay between guru and disciple, where spiritual guidance extends far beyond the spoken language. It delves into the realm where ordinary words become carriers of spiritual transmission, enticing the disciple to embark on a transformative inner quest. Muruganar's struggle and his eventual realization in response to Bhagavan's suggestion hold the key to unlocking the hidden dimensions of this inner teaching, which will be explored in greater depth in our later discussions.

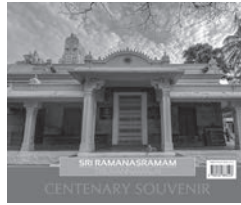
This subtle exchange of unspoken words between Bhagavan and Muruganar (“சொல்லாமல் சொல்லிய குறிப்பு”) can be observed in several of Muruganar's verses. It's intriguing how Bhagavan's communication style often involved hinting without explicitly stating, a dynamic that would play a significant role in their subsequent interactions. This approach becomes especially notable when we reflect on the initial lines of the poem, where Muruganar expressed his reverence for *Tiruvasagam*.

Bhagavan, recognizing Muruganar's latent potential, inner desire, and, most importantly, his destined path, playfully broached this subject without overtly addressing it. He might have also recalled the *parvalar* verse (“பார்வளர்”) that Muruganar had presented to him several months prior to this incident. While the *Parvalar* verse had overt references to *Tiruvasagam*, the second *Annamalai* verse subtly hinted at a poetic resemblance without making explicit pleas or comparisons to *Tiruvasagam*. This nuance underscores the depth of their spiritual connection and Bhagavan's skillful guidance. Viswanathan Swami wrote¹ a succinct summary on Muruganar, “Scholars who had worked with Muruganar on the Tamil Lexicon Committee say that Bhagavan Ramana chose a very worthy scholar to sing his glory. Poets worship the Divine through their poetry. That alone is sufficient sadhana for them. They are molded unawares into the likeness of the object of their worship.”

At this juncture, Muruganar led a fulfilling life as a young family man. He held a respected position as a teacher and was emerging as a promising Tamil scholar. Additionally, he was actively involved in the freedom movement and deeply inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, as discussed previously. Muruganar's poems, infused with nationalist fervor, were widely sung by fellow freedom fighters. He also had strong familial ties, particularly with his mother, and had been married for roughly ten years, making him a relatively young husband. At the time of this pivotal meeting with Bhagavan, Muruganar was approximately 33 years old.

In contrast to these worldly connections, there was his magnificent encounter with his guru, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, who, at that moment, beckoned him to embark on a spiritual journey, inspiring him to compose poetry akin to the illustrious Manickavasagar. This moment marked the beginning of a transformative phase in Muruganar's life. ▲

(To be continued)



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.gururamana.org>



Sketch by Ghovi

Tamil Siddhas

Part Fourteen

Karuvoorar: The Siddha who knew all about herbs

P. RAJA

Siddha Karuvoorar, also known as Karuvoor Thevar, was called by this name because he hailed from the place Karuvoor, now known as Karur, near Trichy in Tamilnadu. Some scholars believe that they are two different Siddhas. Some researchers are of the opinion that both the names refer to the same person. Let us leave the debate to these scholars and not worry if they can arrive at any solid conclusion.

Karuvoorar belonged to parents who struggled to make ends meet crafting metal images of gods and goddesses to sell them in public places. He learnt that traditional art from his parents but did not know that it would help him in the long run.

As a boy, Karuvoorar showed a lot of interest in gathering knowledge, especially knowledge about herbs. He was a great wanderer, and that he did only to know more about herbs. He recorded his findings as he had felt and experienced. And 11 of his books available in print today are:

Vaadhakavyam (700); *Vaithiyam* (500); *Yoga Gnanam* (500); *Pala Thirattu* (300); *Guru nool soothiram* (105); *Purna Gnanam* (100); *Meichurukam* (52); *Śivagnana Bodham* (42); *Karpavidhi* (39); *Muppu soothiram* (32); *Puja Vidhi* (30).

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The numbers mentioned refer to the number of songs he sang in praise of herbs in each book. Each work is treated as a source book by siddha medical practitioners. In fact, every book is a treasure trove. Sung in an easy to understand style, every song glorifies the life cherishing herbs. The songs also speak of the importance of herbs in man's healthy life. His songs on special herbs speak of the importance of taking them regularly. He was the one who said, "Food is medicine and medicine is food."

Whoever wants to live for 300 years at a stretch without any ailment; whoever wants to dodge old age and remain young forever; whoever wants to escape from the deadly bite of poisonous snakes and scorpions can very well go through his first book *vaadha kavyam* and learn more about the importance of young neem leaves in one's life.

If, for a period of 27 days, one chewed and gulped down a few young neem leaves in the morning on an empty stomach, they could play with deadly snakes, for their poison would be rendered harmless. If taken for a month, one can do away with the disfiguring disease called vitiligo. If the young neem leaves are dried in shade and powdered, and if the powder is taken with honey regularly, one could escape from getting grey hairs and wrinkles. What a service to society? His knowledge of neem leaves and several other herbs is really amazing. By reading the songs of Siddha Karuvoorar, one can understand how ignorant we are though surrounded by life saving herbs.

Proud to call himself a disciple of Siddha Bogar, he obeyed every syllable his master commanded. Once when Karuvoorar was on his research tour, he received a letter sent by his guru through a crow messenger. The letter conveyed the message that he should immediately rush to Thanjavur. He obeyed. On reaching Thanjavur, he was made to understand that the king was almost in tears, for the image of Lord Śiva could not be installed in the *sanctum sanctorum* of the huge temple he had built. As a Siddha, Karuvoorar wasted no time in finding out who was at fault. His investigative mind told him of a *brahmarakshas*, invisible to every eye, that was wreaking havoc inside the temple. He identified the *brahmarakshas* and spat on it. His spittle, like sizzling fire, destroyed the evil force. The Śivalingam was installed and the *mahakumbabhishekam* was

performed without any further difficulty. His religious act made the king happy. His subjects were also thrilled. That was the very first miracle Siddha Karuvoorar performed. His fame began to spread far and wide.

Not long after this incident, another Chola king needed his help. He had given a lot of gold to the image makers and wanted them to mould a statue of dancing Śiva. The image makers could not complete the image because it broke and fell. They tried their luck several times but could not succeed. They were afraid of the king and his stipulated timeframe. They needed help, and that too immediately. They had to save their heads. Siddha Karuvoorar volunteered to help them out. He told everyone to get out of the room, entered it and locked it from the inside. The next morning, he emerged from the room and humbly declared that he had completed the work. People who doubted the authenticity of his work rushed into the room to find out the truth of the matter. They were surprised and shocked. The image of dancing Śiva was very much there.

The king too came to witness the idol. He could not believe his eyes for the glittering idol suddenly dazzled his mind. He knew that all that glitters is not gold. It took no time for him to understand that the idol was not made of pure gold, and some other metal was also used. He condemned the sculptors for stealing his gold and prepared to pronounce punishment on them. The sculptors, seeking mercy, spoke the truth and blamed Siddha Karuvoorar. The Siddha was called in. Immediately, without any further enquiry, he was incarcerated.

Siddha Bogar came to know about Karuvoorar's imprisonment through his 6th sense and rushed to the king to tell him that molten silver too could be converted into pure gold if a dash of *senduram*¹ is added to it. He added that golden idols are not made of pure gold: some quantity of copper is to be added to make ornamental gold.

Bogar further said that his incarcerated disciple was no mean fellow to be imprisoned. He told the king of the various alloys and metals and the science of making gold by mixing juices of various herbs. He told him a lot about alchemy. The knowledge about gold driven into the head of the king made him think. He came to the conclusion that

¹ Calcined powder red in colour, also a metal red in colour.

siddhas who can make gold by themselves would never even think of stealing gold from others.

The king understood that he was at fault and so prepared to set the imprisoned Karuvoorar free. When both the king and Siddha Bogar rushed to the prison, to the disappointment of the king, Karuvoorar was not there. The king began to wonder and said, “the cell is empty.” Siddha Bogar laughed and said, “the cell is full with my disciple’s presence.” The king looked askance at Bogar. The master Siddha called his disciple by name and prodded him to show himself. Karur came out of the cell and presented himself before the king. The king gulped down the spittle that had collected in his mouth, for the cell was still under lock and key. The king understood that the Siddhas are all-powerful men and no cell could hold them.

Several such legends and myths have accrued around Siddha Karuvoorar. In fact, a voluminous book can be written on the legends galore available on him through the ages. The tough fight he gave to the king made him very famous. Many kings and chieftains invited him to make Śivalingams and consecrate their temples. He obliged everyone and did the job gratis.

It must be mentioned that the bhakthas are those who go on pilgrimages from place to place and enter the temples in each location to worship Lord Śiva. They sing songs in praise of the Lord in each location. That seems to be their predominant duty. But the Siddhas are different from bhaktas. They too go from place to place, but with a mission to cure the ailing people. They did the travel under the Divine’s sacred service. Almost all the Tamil siddhas had the knowledge of herbs.

Karuvoorar believed that God is just one. There could not be two. But is the God male or female? Or is that God a version of male and female known to the world as Ardhanarishwara? Hence he called God as *vaalai*, who is considered as a supreme being beyond gender.

He was all praise for *vaalai* and asserted that everyone’s predominant duty is to find the *vaalai* in them. He was aware of the fact that innumerable people go to mountains and valleys, forests and caves, sometimes even to the depths of the sea, and everywhere,

without the least understanding of *vaalai*, who can be found within oneself. That he called God realization.

This *vaalai* can be realized only by bringing the monkey mind under control. If mind and body, thought and action, become one, then *vaalai* will come into view. A struggle indeed and no easy joke. Yet by practice of yoga, that is bringing the wavering mind under control, one can achieve this feat.

He was certain that *vaalai* is everywhere. Without *vaalai*, nothing on Earth can exist. What are the five elements without *vaalai*? What is life without *vaalai*? Can heaven and hell exist without *vaalai*?

The flower that blooms emanates a scent. One can enjoy the scent only if one's olfactory sense is perfect. That scent is *vaalai*. The air we inhale and exhale is *vaalai*. Just because we cannot see *vaalai* it does not mean that it does not exist. It exists in everyone and everywhere playing the game of hide-and-seek with us. It is up to us to seek and find it. It is difficult for all those who can not kill their desires. Desires can be killed only if there is a will. That will, otherwise known as determination, is due to nothing but *vaalai*. Karuvoorar dismissed all religious rites and worship of gods and goddesses in temples, for he strongly believed that religion is Man and Man is religion.

It is said that when a name with fame grows, dissenters also grow. In case of Karuvoorar, the dissident groups were looking for the right time and place to finish him off. The much awaited opportunity came when Karuvoorar came back to his hometown. His arch enemies rushed to him with cudgels and spades. Karuvoorar pretended that he was an ordinary man and he knew no *ashtama-siddhis*² that a Siddha could use.

Hence, he pretended to be afraid and he ran faster than ever towards the Śivalingam he had built with his herbal juices and he tightly hugged the idol, as if in great fear. To the surprise and shock of his enemies, he disappeared to be one with the Lord.

The idol of the Maha Siddha Karuvoorar is found even today in Karur Temple as well as in the Thanjavur big temple. ▲

² The eight boons from the divine: *anima*, *mahima*, *laghima*, *garima*, *prapthi*, *vasithvam*, *prakamyam* and *isithvam*.



Sketch by Ghovi

MAHA BHAKTA VIJAYAM

The Blessed Life of Sant Jayadeva

Chapter Twelve

King's Initiation into Brahmavidya

NABAJI SIDDHA

The noble Sant Nabhaji said, “O beloved friends! Now listen to what transpired between the king and Sant Jayadeva. We are going to enjoy a feast from the Sant in the form of instructions to his royal disciple.”

Clasping the holy feet of Jayadeva Swami, the king entreated, “O all-transcendent master! O epitome of perfection, I crave for the gift of Self-knowledge and bliss of the Absolute. Bestow your grace on me and initiate me into the science of Self-knowledge.

“My life is being eroded slowly by time and each day is spent aimlessly. This life in the body is so unpredictable. It may leave in an hour, in a day, in a week, in a month, in a year or after many years. It may leave while eating, sleeping or travelling; it may leave in the forest or city; it may be plucked away by lightning, wild animals, enemies, or disease. It is so transitory that I feel at times that I am carrying a dead body, as it may drop dead at any moment. Life is like a lamp in the open space which may be put out by a gust of wind any

time. The life that clings to the fragile perch of the body may depart without notice. It is no exaggeration to compare it to a bubble of water or a ripe fruit ready to drop down from the branch, or a flash of lightning, or a dew drop hanging on to the edge of the grass.

“This body, truly a container of filth, becomes food for vultures and worms in the end. Without realizing its worthlessness, I have indulged it with all comforts and sensual pleasures. Wallowing in ignorance, I have taken this inert body as myself. I have been so dense that I have spent my days mistaking the transitory world for eternal Self, which is like erroneously taking the salt for the ocean, or pots for earth, or ornaments for gold, or implements for iron. Infatuated by the illusory world, I have ignored the Reality. The sun of my life is ready to set. No one can escape the clutches of the ever-devouring Time. Just as the plantain tree is axed at the root as soon as the bunch of bananas gets ripe, death is biding its time to snatch away my life.

“My stupidity and involvement with royal duties and worldly affairs have only caused agitation and cowardice in me. I am groping in the dark bound by desire for land, riches and women. I don’t know a single day of the bliss of the Self in which you always revel. Wallowing in sensory delights and ignorance, I am unable to see my way to the other shore of this ocean of worldliness.

“Instead of walking towards liberation, I am getting more and more entangled in the bondage of body and attachment. Neither am I satisfied with what the world offers or nor have I the right mind-set to walk on the spiritual path. It is as if I am standing with my feet in two boats which are heading in opposite directions. The worldly pleasures that we enjoy are minuscule, but the troubles that ensue from them are in abundance. Though endowed with an intellect which distinguishes man from brute, yet I have lived like an animal. I am unconscious of the spiritual aspect of life, then what to talk of liberation? Such people are indeed a burden on earth. While even the cattle are useful, my body is worthless.

It is frightening to see death standing before me baring its teeth like a tiger, ready to pounce on me. The pangs at the time of birth are nothing compared to the agony one will suffer at the time of death. For one who has not realized the Truth, the cycle of birth and death is interminable. I am so fortunate to be endowed with a human body, that

too male and further a king. With such favorable conditions bestowed on me, and with you, the enlightened and compassionate one as my preceptor, if I throw away this opportunity in the dust and die without turning to the path that leads to eternal joy, where is redemption for me? How am I going to get out of the bottomless pit of transmigration?

“Just as a child is nurtured and protected by the mother, trees and plants are irrigated by water, devotees are protected by the Lord, embodied beings are nourished by food, citizens are cared for by the king, the poor are succored by the generous, daytime is illumined by the sun, night is made cool by the moon, dharma is protected by peace, the warrior is defended by his valor, a king is fortified by the might of his army, a husband is cherished by the wife and vice versa, determination is strengthened by periodic listening to scriptures, austerity is intensified by willpower, emancipation is attained by desirelessness, a woman is shielded by the fire of chastity, a man is matured by learning, which becomes meaningful by the practice of compassion and nonviolence, a minister is revered for his sagacity, a merchant flourishes by trade and commerce and the world is sustained by rain; you, my venerable teacher, should protect me from the fear of *samsara*.

“Though I have worshiped deities, studied scriptures, revered elders, and am friendly and helpful to others, yet I live like a poverty-stricken person; for, I have not asked for the alms of great Bliss and eternal Peace which are true wealth. O Lord! By bestowing your grace, please drown me in the rapturous waves of divine bliss.” The king, making repeated obeisances, stood before the Sant with tears streaming down from his eyes.

Understanding his state as that of an earnest seeker, Jayadeva Swami held him in fast embrace with affection and spoke these words conducive to his spiritual welfare, “O king! May your mind abide in peace! By merely uttering the word ‘sugar,’ can one taste its sweetness? By saying, ‘food,’ can hunger be appeased? By the word ‘Ganga,’ can sins be destroyed? By stating ‘lamp,’ can darkness be dispelled? By merely pronouncing the syllables ‘Vedas,’ can all doubts be cleared? By articulating the word ‘mantra,’ can *siddhis* be attained or by saying ‘medicines,’ can disease be cured? Can grace be obtained by simply shouting ‘Guru?’ Can devotion sprout in the

heart by repeating the word ‘God?’ Can one ever attain eternal bliss by the play of words?

“O supreme among kings! Even if a person has a keen aspiration for liberation, imparting knowledge to him will be futile if there is no dispassion in his heart. Supreme dispassion is a prerequisite for fruition of spiritual life. There are different kinds of dispassion. I will briefly tell you about them.

“At the time of listening to the scriptures, the mind may resolve not to indulge in sins but to live a righteous life and contemplate God. But, this attitude does not last long. This is called *purana-vairagyam*, dispassion arising out of scriptural study.

“While witnessing a dead body being taken for cremation, the mind may be overcome by strong dispassion, saying ‘What kind of life is this? The body is like a juggler’s trick, appearing now, disappearing soon! It is so transitory and unpredictable that one cannot stake one’s faith on it.’ This is also momentary detachment and is categorized as *smashana-vairagyam* or dispassion arising from witnessing a cremation.

“When a woman undergoes labor pains, she thinks, ‘Oh, what an agony; there is only pain in life, no pleasure,’ and resolves not to yield to sense-indulgence, but to live only a life of dispassion thereafter. This is *prasava-vairagyam* or dispassion arising out of labor pains and does not last long; for, once the memory of pain passes, so does the resolve!

“When there is friction and painful disharmony in the family, one wants to relinquish home and out of anger seeks to live in solitude. This is *chalana-vairagyam* or dispassion caused by conflicts in life. This is also temporary.

“Out of bitter enmity, one resolves to cut the enemy to pieces and then to run away and adopt *sannyas*. This is *mooda-vairagyam* or foolish dispassion.

“Eating prohibited things, wallowing tirelessly in sense-pleasures day and night, being intoxicated with pride and arrogance and paying no heed to moral and ethical injunctions prevailing in the society is *rakshasa-vairagyam* or demonic dispassion.

“The religious fanaticism of glorifying one’s own deity or faith and decrying that of others is *madha-vairagyam* or dispassion arising from religious fanaticism.

“Approaching the ordinary gurus for material prosperity and welfare, reposing faith in them and adoring them to the neglect of genuine gurus who can lead us to our original state is *ajñāna-vairagyam* or dispassion caused by ignorance.

“In order to preserve the transient body filled with filth, some resort to rejuvenation techniques, controlling breath or vital airs and yogic exercises which may merely lead to seeing light, hearing sounds and thereafter to *sunya bhava* or experience of nothingness. This is *hata-vairagyam* or dispassion arising from obstinacy.

“Being indifferent to *Vedic* learning and the teacher who has experience of the Self, shunning the opportunity to realize the world’s transitory nature and seek the immortal Self and remaining immersed in self-delusion and haughtiness is termed as *abala-vairagyam* or dispassion arising out of shallowness or feeble mind.

“Different varieties of *vairagyas* originating from ignorance are many more. Man’s doggedness to live in the dark realm of ignorance is due to the fanatic notion of ‘I’ which fortifies the ramparts of egoism and pride. They ensconce a person in unawareness and selfishness, denying him the light of Knowledge and will never lead to his well-being and eternal joy. There are other categories of dispassion which are superior and aid one in marching on the spiritual path with steadfastness and lead to ultimate good.

“The man of Knowledge, like the invincible hero in the battlefield who fights fearlessly against all odds or like the unwavering judge in the court who awards judgment without being swayed by partiality, should uphold and teach uncompromisingly the ultimate dharma or truth. He should not fall from the sublime height of steadfast abidance in Truth, which indeed is the hallmark of Realized or get swayed by the ways of the mediocre — who glorify one path and denigrate others, lack compassion towards all beings, discriminate between one’s own children and other children while serving food, remain insensitive to others’ hardship, do not consider others’ dishonor as one’s own, succumb to flattery, get agitated by slander and practice deceit, hypocrisy and religious fanaticism.

“There are thousands of ways of attaining the Truth. However, the five states of waking, dream, sleep, witness and Pure Consciousness are common to all *jivas*. One has to make deep enquiry into these states

under the guidance of a Sat-Guru to get out of the maze of ignorance. One cannot easily get rid of the 'I' sense on one's own. Annihilating the individual sense of 'I' is indeed Knowledge. Devotion and mystical powers without Knowledge or mere dispassion and eligibility that do not result in Knowledge or meditation and absorption without the subtlety of mind are futile exercises. Dispassion and Knowledge alone can lead to emancipation.

"With the certainty 'Brahman alone exists and Brahman alone pervades and inheres everything from the atom to the universe. No one is apart from the Undifferentiated Brahman,' one should discard the dualistic sense of 'I and others,' or 'seen and seer,' and abide in the unitive state like the serpent swallowing the frog. This is *purna-vairagyam* or the state of perfect dispassion.

"The world-appearance is like a mirage and, therefore, sense-pleasures should be rejected like the crow's excreta. Lust, anger and desire for progeny to which the jivas are glued should be undone with a firm resolve. Thoughts rising in the mind should be mercilessly axed down without indulging in them. When one thus rejects the lower nature and dissolves all sense cravings in the blissful ocean of Self-experience, it is *ethartha-vairagyam* or natural dispassion.

"One-pointed devotion to the Guru, courting the company of Sants constantly, giving up the notion 'I am the body' and ceaselessly adhering to Brahman *bhavana*, i.e. the attitude 'I am Brahman,' quelling desires and distractions, practicing complete inwardness and remaining as the pure witness constitute *sadbhava-vairagyam* or positive dispassion.

"Now, O king, I will dwell upon *abhava-vairagyam* i.e. dispassion arising from thought-free state. With the steadfast conviction 'Karmas cause tendencies in the mind that give rise to pairs of opposites. But I am beyond the play of gunas. karma and bhakti yogas are of no consequence,' transcending the play of gunas, eschewing all initiatives of the mind, abiding in external and inner silence – silence of both speech and mind, effacing individuality or *jivahood* and abiding in the state of choiceless awareness or attitudeless state is *abhava-vairagyam*.

"Considering everything as a dream, transcending pain and pleasure, entertaining no desires even in dream, being contented,

cleaving to the unitive state without the polarized affliction of ‘I and you’ and being established in oneself by oneself is *sthana-vairagyam* or dispassion arising from the firm seat of Self.

“The body subject to pain and pleasure is the result of past karmas or *prarabdha*. Accepting with equanimity this self-created lot of happiness and sorrow are resulting from one’s *prarabdha*, giving up anxiety and fear about bodily comforts and concerns, mentally breaking free of earth-bound do’s and don’ts, treating the pairs of opposites with equanimity and being fixed in the witness state is *dhrida-vairagyam* or unswerving dispassion.

“Unflinchingly facing one’s *prarabdha*, burning up the subtle conditionings and layers of veils by the fire of knowledge, being unconcerned about death and living in a care-free state displaying various divine moods and behaving like a madcap or a guileless babe while being absorbed in the non-dual state is *vishrama-vairagyam* or dispassion arising from a care-free attitude.

“Being supremely unconcerned about praise, abuse and sleep, bereft of body-consciousness, continuously listening to scriptures, earnestly contemplating and fulfilling the ideals and injunctions thereof and abiding in absolute silence in the complete union with the Absolute is *sammada-vairagyam* or agreeable or harmonious dispassion.

“Even if a thunderbolt descends on my head, I will be fearless with the certitude, ‘I am indestructible, attributeless, immutable, immovable and perfect.’ Having this conviction, where is polarity of virtue and sin for me, or birth and death, or heaven and hell, or bondage and liberation? ‘All the illusory universes rise, exist and disappear in me.’ To remain unaffected in this way is *vichara-vairagyam* or dispassion arising from right contemplation.

““Brahman is beginningless and immutable. It is not tainted or limited by anything. I am Brahman and Self-existent. Therefore, I am not subject to change, limitation or other afflictions.’ With this conviction, setting at naught the mind’s dispositions and the allure of names and forms, keeping the mind steady without concerns and worries like the unflickering lamp or waveless ocean and remaining at one in complete identity with the Brahman is *nirvana-vairagyam* or the dispassion of emancipation.

“These kinds of *vairagya* which lead a person to Self-knowledge, the *summum bonum* of human life, are possible only for supremely eligible souls. Other kinds of dispassion, not conducive for the attainment of the final beatitude, are pointless. Whatever falls within the ambit of thoughts and words, understand, O king, is the fancy of the mind.

“The Reality which transcends the mind is beyond the description of Vedas and adored by all gods. The Self is the eternal, immaculate, Truth-Knowledge-Bliss. It is extolled as the Supreme Absolute, the Primordial Being. Those who are united with It alone revel in true bliss and enjoy ultimate liberation from all bondage.

“O beloved ruler of Krauncha, by subduing the senses and body and by annihilating the ‘I’ thought, partake of the elixir of Knowledge and be fulfilled; just as the chakora bird is completely satiated with merely gazing at the moon or, to put it poetically, fulfilled by drinking the moonbeam. O supreme ruler! May you remain oblivious of bodily existence and its movements and be absorbed in the highest state, filled with divine rapture to the brim in the secret cave of the heart within. Just as the moon casts its cool radiance on the world at eventide, may the cool radiance emanating from your blissful state spread its soothing light all around! O king! May you always abide in this *paripoorana* state, in the absolute Perfection within!”

When Jayadeva Swami, the great preceptor, concluded his advice, the king prostrated at his divine lotus feet, touching them to his eyes. Looking upon him as the supreme Lord, he spoke with humility, “O supreme teacher, adorned by nectar-like words! O pure one adored by all, the friend of lowly people like me! How can a dull-witted person like me comprehend or practice such complex and sublime teachings?”

The Swami replied, “Beloved of the citizens! To experience the bliss of Brahman, one should either worship a Personal Deity or practice meditation on the Formless. Then all the past impressions which bind a soul to the body and world will be reduced to ashes, like dry leaves falling in the fire. With purification, beneficent propensities will come to the fore and enable you to see clearly the wretchedness of this transient life. Then, you will obtain the guidance of the Sat-Guru and the way to eternal life will be revealed. As you engage your soul and body in the service of the noble teacher, karmas that bind you to the present existence will scatter away like the clouds dispersed

in a raging storm. This will uplift you and equip you to contemplate ceaselessly, like the continuous flow of oil when it is poured from one vessel to another, on the *mahavakyas*, the great four aphorisms taught by the teacher. By this practice, your mind will attain unwavering fixity like the steady flame of the lamp in a windless place.

“Thereafter, under the direct guidance of the exalted teacher, if you contemplate continuously on the *mahavakyas*, it will be revealed to you that the indwelling Witness which illumines everything and observes dispassionately the deceitful play of mind and senses in waking and dream states, the false claim of the ego as the experiencer of these states, appropriating ownership of the body-mind-intellect complex to itself and the primordial ignorance that holds the *jiva* to ransom, is the same all-pervading Brahman. Then, your ignorance will flee like darkness at dawn when the sun spreads its rays.

“The chasm between the Real and unreal will become evident. ‘The body is transient, but I am eternal; the world is full of sorrow, but I am the embodiment of bliss; mind and senses are fickle, but I am steadfast and immovable; air sustains the body, but I am the substratum of the whole universe; the *jiva* is a fragment, I am the undivided essence; ignorance is the empty void, I am the undifferentiated Pure Awareness.’ In this way, you should reflect deeply and bring peace to the agitated mind. All doubts will come to an end by this deliberation.

“Since you, the Self, have no connection with the body, you will be freed, for all time to come, from the polarities of right and wrong, bondage and liberation and birth and death, which are merely the notions that originate in the body-mind complex. ‘The Indweller in all *jivas* is the Witness of all, I am that Brahman, I am Unborn and therefore Deathless; I have no form, therefore, I undergo no change or mutation; since there is no will or desire, there is no distraction of mind; there is no death for me, therefore, I have no fear; I exist everywhere equally in full measure and am beyond time and space and therefore, I have no country or home, or past-present-future. While I am eternal, indestructible and immutable, the passing show of the world is like a jugglery.’ With constant reflection in this vein, O dear disciple, may you reach the certainty that you are verily Brahman!

“Once this certitude is attained, just as the fear of a snake superimposed on the rope in twilight is dispelled when a lamp is lit, you

will discard the perverted notion that the world is real, and that you are the body and you are in bondage, therefore, liberation is to be pursued, etc. Then what fear have you of birth and death of the body which is brought forth due to predispositions of the mind? Wherever you are, be it the forest or city, your body, as decreed by its *prarabdha*, has to go through its share of pleasure and pain. Unless it is ordained otherwise, however much one may pursue a pleasant experience, it will not come to him; nor will the pain leave him even if he runs away!

“When indifference to the body, born of this knowledge, arises, all desires and initiatives of the mind disappear like a swarm of locusts leaving a hole. Mind is the deep lake from which the fishes of innumerable desires arise. When the conduits of senses are not fed, the stream of desires becomes dry without the senses to nourish it; just as the crane swallows the fishes when the river starts drying up. The annihilation of desire-ridden mind occurs, resulting in a mysterious stillness called *samadhi* or abidance in Brahman.

“In this Superconscious state, which is like a waveless ocean, Undivided bliss arises which is like shoreless ocean of eternal felicity. When one turns inward and loses all external consciousness, he is dissolved in the Witness and united with the Seer, pervading everywhere. Oblivious of the individual identity, all actions like talking and eating will appear as scenes in a distant dream. One’s state will be like that of a madcap or a child and even if the Trinity appears before such a person, he will realize that these are illusory forms. In the direct experience of the Self, there will be only pure bliss. This is beyond the states of *Salokyam*, *Sameepam*, *Sarupam*, and *Sayujyam* which are only planes of temporary liberation.

“O jewel among the kings! May you be freed from all desires! Understand well that Brahman is the *Ishta*, Guru is God, service to the Guru is the essence of all practices, Guru’s instructions are verily scriptures, listening to scriptures is the way to liberation, walking on spiritual path is the penance, penance yields the subtlety of contemplation, ceaseless contemplation leads to steadfastness, this fixity is Self-experience, Self-experience is Brahman, Brahman is eternal bliss and this perennial spring of joy is emancipation.

“O supreme leader among men! You must have perfect faith in God, Guru and the scriptures. You must repose implicit and total faith

in the Preceptor. I reiterate, you must have unreserved *shraddha* or burning faith. Devotion to and faith in *Ishta* will rid you of all sins. Faith in and surrender to Guru will reward you with pure Knowledge. Lack of faith in the scriptural truth will deprive you of the treasure of Knowledge, just as the girl who has not attained maturity is robbed of motherhood. Faith is maturity; instruction of the Guru is sperm; Knowledge is the conception; and child is the bliss of Brahman.

“Without Guru’s grace, even scriptural studies will bear no fruit. Until one reaches the self-forgetful state, one must have unshakable and total faith in all the three – Guru, *Ishta* and scriptures - for the blossoming of Brahmic bliss. The moment one becomes the recipient of complete grace of the Guru, that very moment rises the blazing sun of knowledge in him, destroying the darkness of ignorance and revealing the radiance of the soul. All mental afflictions will evaporate, all karmas will drop away. The instructions of the Guru on the esoteric knowledge will drive away the primordial ignorance. O blessed monarch! Such is the glory of the company of the Sants. ▲

(To be continued)

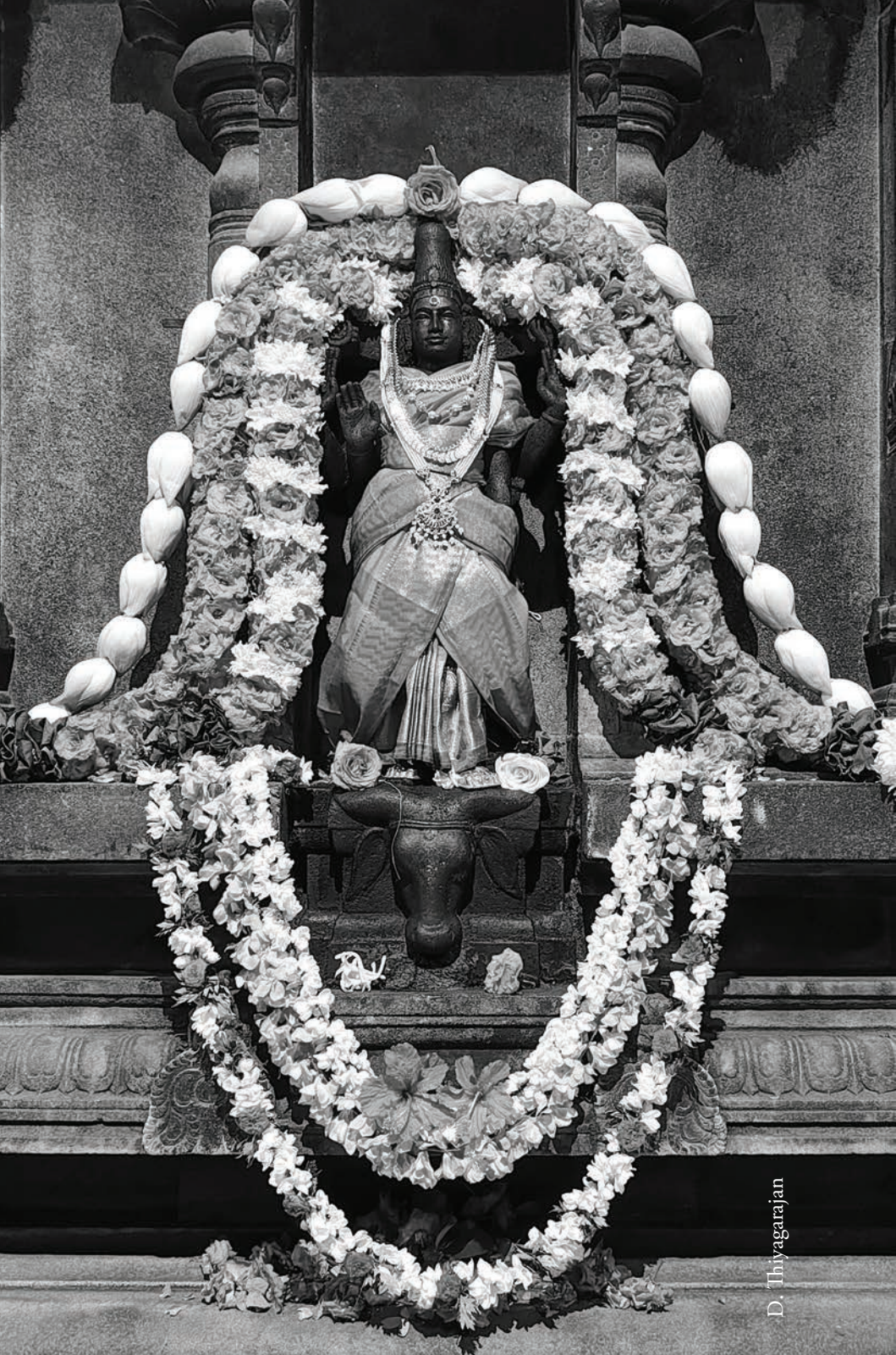
Happily Blind

Suresh Kailash

The dust of your feet has cleansed
the dust from my eyes,

It doesn’t matter anymore to me
if clouds cover the sky,

I’ve seen the sun that shines inside,
now, Ramana, I’m happily blind.



The Paramount Importance of Self-Attention

Part Fifty-One

SADHU OM
AS RECORDED BY MICHAEL JAMES

1st April 1979

Sadhu Om: Bhagavan once told the following story:

A very sincere and dispassionate aspirant once approached a *guru* and asked how he could see God. The *guru* instructed him to do *pūjā* every day for two years, so he returned home and with intense devotion and one-pointedness he did as he had been told. After two years, however, he had still not seen God, so he returned to his *guru* and told him that though he had done *pūjā* every day, he did not seem to derive any benefit thereby. ‘No’, his *guru* assured him, ‘you have achieved the fruit of your efforts’. Humbly accepting this assurance, the disciple asked whether there was anything further he could do to see

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, sriramanateachings.org.

God, in response to which his *guru* gave him a *mantra* and told him to do *japa* of it constantly for two years. With love and intense longing to see God, the disciple began to do constant *japa*, and after two years he was able to keep his mind fixed on the *mantra* so firmly that it did not wander elsewhere, but he was still not satisfied, so he returned to his *guru* and said that in spite of all his efforts, he had still not seen God. ‘Good’, his *guru* replied, ‘you have achieved the fruit of your efforts’. Surprised to hear this, the disciple again asked whether there was anything more he could do to see God, so his *guru* taught him how to do *dhyāna* and asked him to meditate in that way for two years. After doing as he had been taught for a further two years, the disciple returned to his *guru* and said that in spite of meditating with single-minded love, he had still not seen God. ‘Good’, his *guru* replied once again, ‘you have achieved the fruit of your efforts’.

Being unable to understand why his *guru* always replied in this way, the disciple asked: ‘For six years I have tried my best to follow your instructions, but I have not been able to see God, and it seems to me that I have not achieved any other benefit. However, you always assure me that I have achieved the fruit of my endeavours, so may I ask, what is the fruit that I have achieved?’ Hearing this question, his *guru* was pleased and replied: “The fruit of all your efforts is that you have learnt that doing *pūjā*, *japa* or *dhyāna* is not the means to see God. If you had continued doing *pūjā*, *japa* or *dhyāna* with intense love for long enough, God may have appeared before you in name and form, but seeing him thus is not seeing him as he actually is, because what he actually is is pure being-awareness (*sat-cit*), which is always shining within you as ‘I am’. That is, you yourself are God, so you cannot see him as he actually is without seeing yourself as you actually are. Therefore to see him you must turn within to find out who am I”.

As Bhagavan explained in verses 3 to 7 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*, doing *pūjā*, *japa* or *dhyāna* without desire for any fruit but only for the love of God will not give liberation but will purify the mind and show

the way to liberation, and in this order each of these three is more efficacious in purifying the mind than the previous one. That is, more efficacious than *niṣkāmya pūjā* is *niṣkāmya japa*, and more efficacious than *niṣkāmya japa* is *niṣkāmya dhyana*, but in each of these practices, what purifies the mind is not the action itself but the love with which it is done, because the same actions could be done with desire for some fruit, in which case they would not purify the mind.

What does he mean in verse 3 by saying that doing *niṣkāmya pūjā*, *japa* or *dhyāna* for the love of God ‘will show the way to liberation’ (*gati varī kāṇbikkum*)? By purifying the mind, these practices will give us the clarity to understand that God cannot be limited to any name or form, because he is the infinite whole, so nothing can be other than him, and hence he cannot be other than ourself. Therefore the way to liberation is not to meditate on anything other than ourself but to meditate on ourself alone, with the understanding that ‘he is I’, as Bhagavan says in verse 8 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

Rather than *anya-bhāva* [meditation on anything other than oneself, particularly meditation on God as if he were other than oneself], *ananya-bhāva* [meditation on nothing other than oneself], in which he is [understood to be] I, certainly is the best among all.

‘Meditation on what-is-not-other’ (*ananya-bhāva*) means meditation on ourself alone (*svarūpa-dhyāna*), which is self-investigation (*ātma-vicāra*), and this is the best among all practices of devotion (*bhakti*) and all forms of meditation (*dhyāna*), because meditation on anything other than ourself is a mental activity, whereas meditation on ourself alone is cessation of all mental activity, since the nature of ego is to subside and dissolve back into pure being (*sat*) by attending to itself alone, as Bhagavan implies in verse 9:

By the strength [intensity, firmness or stability] of [such] meditation [namely *ananya-bhāva* or self-attentiveness], being in *sat-bhāva* [the state of being], which transcends [all] *bhāvanā* [meditation in the sense of mental activity], alone is *para-bhakti tattva* [the nature, reality or true state of supreme devotion].

Since God is pure being, we cannot know him as he actually is by any amount of doing but only by just being (*summā iruppadu*), and

in order to just be, we must cease rising as ego. As Bhagavan implies in verse 25 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, the nature of ego is to rise, stand and flourish by ‘grasping form’, which means by attending to anything other than itself, but to subside and dissolve back into its source by attending to itself alone:

Grasping form it comes into existence; grasping form it stands; grasping and feeding on form it grows abundantly; leaving form, it grasps form. If seeking, it will take flight. [Such is the nature of this] formless demon ego. Investigate.

‘If seeking, it will take flight’ (*tēḍiṇāl ōṭṭam piḍikkum*) means that if ego seeks to know its own reality by investigating who am I, it will thereby subside and disappear, because we seem to be ego only so long as we are ‘grasping form’ by attending to anything other than ourself, whereas if we attend to ourself, we will find no such thing as ‘ego’ but only pure being-awareness (*sat-cit*), which is what we always actually are, as he implies in verse 17 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

When one investigates the form of the mind [namely ego, its root] without forgetting, there is not anything called ‘mind’.

This is the direct path for everyone whomsoever.

God is our own very being, so he is not anything other than ourself, but by rising as ego we have limited ourself as a set of adjuncts, namely a body consisting of five sheaths, and hence we mistake ourself to be something other than God, as Bhagavan points out in verse 24 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

By [their] being nature [that is, because the real nature of each of them is pure being, ‘I am’], God and soul are just one *poruḷ* [substance or *vastu*]. Only *upādhi-unarvu* [adjunct-awareness, namely the adjunct-conflated awareness ‘I am this body’] is [what makes them seem] different.

Therefore we can see or know God only by knowing ourself as we actually are, namely as pure being-awareness, ‘I am’, devoid of all adjuncts, as he says in the next verse:

Knowing oneself without adjuncts is itself knowing God, because [he is what is always] shining as oneself.

What he implies in the final clause of this verse, ‘because of shining as oneself’ (*tāṇ-āy oḷirvadāl*), is that God is what is always shining as our own real nature (*svarūpa*), which is pure being-awareness, ‘I am’, so as such he is the light that illumines our mind, thereby enabling it to know both itself and all other things. Therefore we can know God as he actually is only by turning our mind back within and thereby immersing it in him, as he teaches us in verse 22 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*:

Except by, turning the mind back within, completely immersing it in God, who shines within that mind giving light to the mind, how to fathom God by the mind? Consider.

If we want to see God in any name and form, it is possible to do so by worshipping him in that name and form, but seeing him thus is not seeing him as he actually is. The only way to see him as he actually is is to investigate and know the reality of oneself, thereby dissolving in his reality and becoming one with him, as Bhagavan says in verse 8 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*:

Whoever worships [it] in whatever form giving [it] whatever name, that is the way to see that [nameless and formless] *poruḷ* [the one real substance, which is the reality of both God and oneself] in [that] name and form. However, [by] investigating [or knowing] the reality of oneself, [and by thereby] dissolving [or subsiding] in the reality of that true *poruḷ*, becoming one [with it] alone is seeing [it] in reality. Know.

We experience the appearance of names and forms only when we rise as ego, as in waking and dream, and not when we do not rise as ego, as in sleep, so names and forms are all just a mental fabrication (*manō-kalpanā*) and therefore have no existence independent of ego, in whose view alone they appear, as Bhagavan implies in verse 4 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*:

If oneself is a form, the world and God will be likewise; if oneself is not a form, who can see their forms, and how [to do so]? Can what is seen be otherwise than the eye? The [real] eye is oneself [one’s real nature], the infinite [and hence formless] eye.

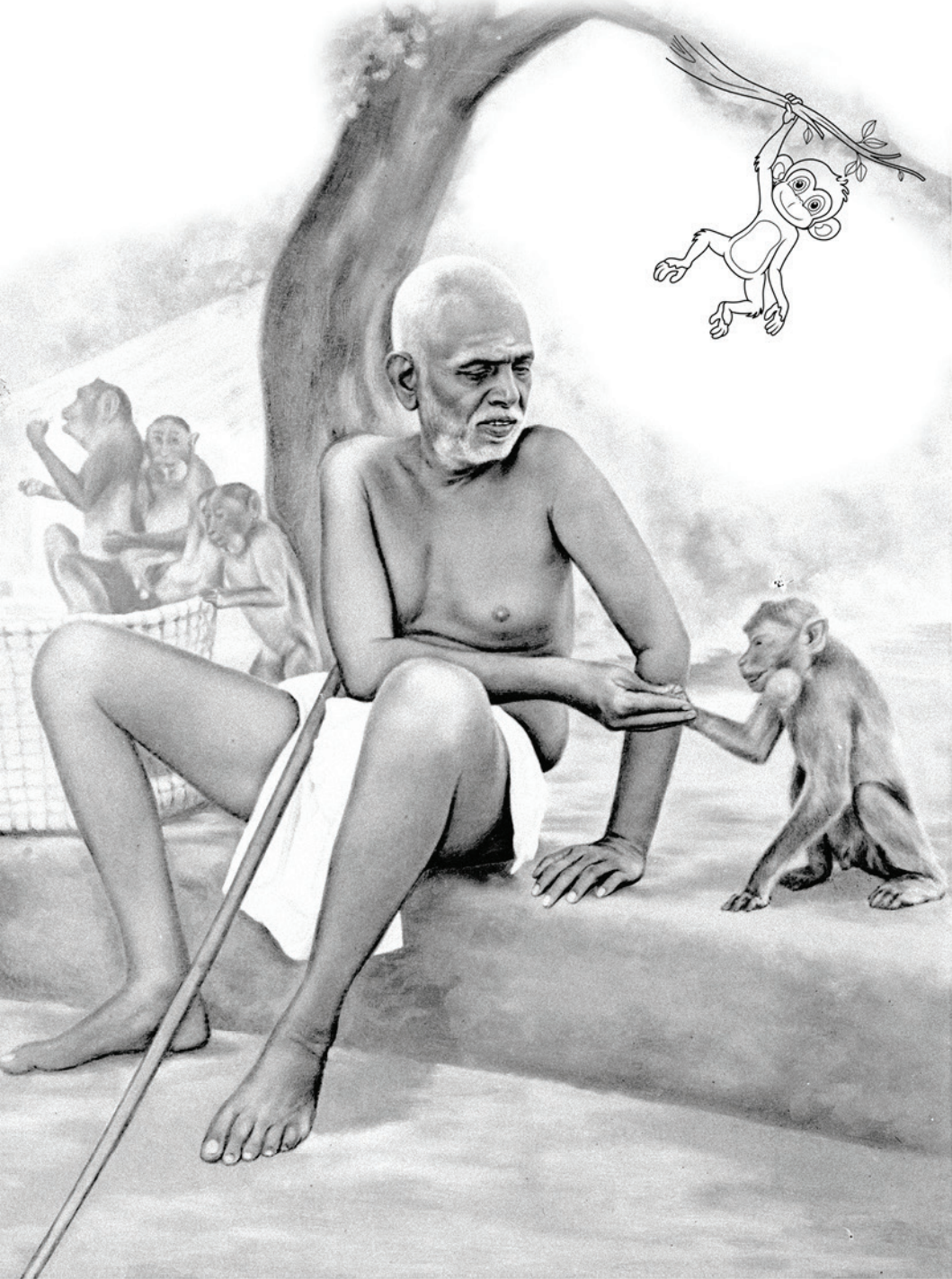
‘If oneself is a form’ (*uruvam tāṇ āyiṇ*) means if we rise as ego, thereby grasping the form of a body as ourself, and ‘if oneself is not a form’ (*uruvam tāṇ aṇḍrēl*) means if we do not rise as ego and therefore do not mistake ourself to be a form, so the implication of the first two sentences of this verse is that we can see the world and God as forms only when we rise and stand as ego. This is why he asks rhetorically in the next sentence: ‘Can what is seen be otherwise than the eye?’ (*kaṇ alāl kāṭci uṇḍō?*). Here he uses ‘*alāl*’ in the sense of ‘otherwise than’ or ‘of a different nature than’, and ‘*kaṇ*’ (eye) is a metaphor for awareness, so what he implies in this sentence is that whatever is seen or known cannot be of a different nature than the awareness that sees or knows it. Therefore, since ego is an awareness that knows itself as ‘I am this body, a form of five sheaths’, whatever it knows will also seem to be forms. However, ego is not real awareness, because real awareness is infinite and hence formless, as he implies by saying ‘The [real] eye is oneself, the infinite eye’ (*kaṇ adu tāṇ, antam-ilā kaṇ*), so since all forms are finite, in the clear view of this infinite awareness, which is ourself as we actually are, no forms can ever appear.

Therefore, if we see God in name and form instead of seeing ourself as infinite awareness, what we are seeing is not God as he actually is but only a ‘*maṇōmayam ām kāṭci*’ (a mental vision or ‘sight which is composed of mind’), as he says in verse 20 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*:

Leaving oneself [namely ego], who sees [all things other than oneself], oneself seeing God is seeing a mental vision. Only one who sees oneself [namely one’s real nature], the origin [base or foundation] of oneself [namely ego], is one who has seen God, because oneself [one’s real nature], [which alone is what remains] when oneself [namely ego], the origin [root or foundation of all other things], goes, is not other than God. ▲

(To be continued)

Nondi's Corner



Hello young adults and children!

This is Nondi, a monkey devotee of Bhagavan. Welcome to the October 2024 edition of the 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 Highest Bliss: How the World is our Teacher

Bhagavan shared the inspiring story of Dattatreya to illustrate the nature of the highest happiness — divine bliss that transcends any earthly joy we can imagine. Dattatreya gained wisdom from everything he observed in the world around him. We should strive to be like Dattatreya — dedicated seekers of truth and bliss, eager to learn from the world.

*—This is from Day by Day with Bhagavan
(22-11-45 Morning).*

Bhagavan explained that the highest possible happiness a human being can attain, or even the happiness experienced by the ten higher grades of beings up to Gods like Brahma, is like mere foam in the vast ocean of the bliss of the Self.

Imagine a man in perfect health, at the peak of his life, endowed with immense wealth and power, blessed with intellect and abundant resources, and married to a beautiful and faithful wife. Consider his happiness.

Each higher grade of being above man experiences a hundredfold greater happiness than the grade below. Yet, the supreme happiness of all eleven grades of beings combined is nothing more than foam in the flooding ocean of divine bliss.

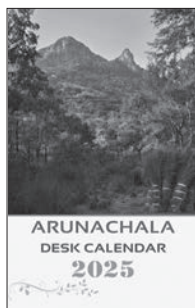
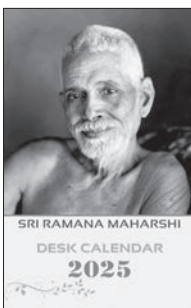
In this connection Bhagavan narrated the following story:

A king was passing through a forest with all the pomp and pageantry of his army and retinue behind him. He came across a man with not even a codpiece on, lying on the ground with one leg cocked over the other. The man was laughing, seemingly supremely happy and contented with himself and the world. Struck by the man's happy

state, the king sent for him. However, when the king's men approached the nude ascetic and delivered the king's message, he took absolutely no notice and continued in his ascetic bliss. Upon hearing this, the king himself went to the man, but even then, the man took no notice. Realizing this must be no ordinary man, the king said, "Swami, you are evidently supremely happy. May we know the secret of such happiness and from which guru you learned it?"

The ascetic replied, "I have had twenty-four gurus. Everything—this body, the earth, the birds, some instruments, some people—has taught me." He explained that all things in the world can be classified as either good or bad. The good taught him what to seek, and the bad taught him what to avoid. This ascetic was Dattatreya, the avadhuta. ▲

DIARY AND CALENDARS - 2025



The wall calendar has six sheets (12 pages) of the photographs of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. The special days of ashram are mentioned in the calendar. The calendar is approximately 16 inches in width and 23 inches in height. Price: ₹120.

Two desktop calendars are available containing six sheets (12 pages) of the photographs of Arunachala and Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, respectively. They are 6.5 inches in width and 10 inches in height and contain quotations for each month from Bhagavan's teachings. Price: ₹120.



Sri Ramanasramam Diary 2025 - The diary consists of 365 pages with quotations both in English and Tamil based on the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and 12 full page photographs of Bhagavan. Price: ₹ 275.

available at <http://bookstore.gururamana.org>

Youth Corner

Here's a personal account from our young friend Hari Chandana from Hyderabad about how she came to Bhagavan and what Bhagavan means to her. Chandana is currently an undergraduate student at Chaitanya Bharathi Institute of Technology, Hyderabad. She enjoys singing.

RAMANULU

The eternal love, the ultimate, supreme. No matter how much we try to describe it, words never suffice. I do not know where to start. Since my childhood, I have known Bhagavan through my dad. One fine day, he went to a tailor's shop and saw a picture of Bhagavan. He asked who it was; little did we know that our lives were going to be changed forever.

I am Hari Chandana from Hyderabad, and I am currently studying engineering. I was probably six years old when I first visited heaven — Arunachalam. I did not know anything about Bhagavan and Arunachalam then; it was just like a normal trip to me. But later, by listening to the stories and songs about Bhagavan, I felt peace, and I felt more connected to Bhagavan than anyone else in this whole world. As we cannot go to the Ashram very frequently, he showed us a way to stay connected with him: Sri Ramana Kendram at Hyderabad. We used to and still go to Kendram every Sunday and listen to the discourses by many senior devotees. We serve and decorate Kendram for special occasions. I am very blessed to have experiences from my childhood, like going to Kendram with my father on a two-wheeler very early in the morning, just after drinking a glass of milk.

Since my childhood, I have been good at studies. Then came my exam after my high school (i.e., 10+2 years). The results of my JEE (the national entrance exam for engineering) did not meet the expectations of many, and that was the worst phase of my life. I had never faced such disappointment before and could not handle it. But Bhagavan never let go of my hand and walked with me through the hardest phase. Sometimes, I used to wonder why this happened to me, but the next second, I felt like Bhagavan was always there and would show me the path. And yes, he did. Now I am attending my dream college.

One thing that makes me happy is hearing the words, “We are going to Tiruvannamalai.” I am the most excited one and go to Bhagavan and say thank you for letting us come. I have so many memories of the Ashram. Whenever I was at the ashram, after my meditation, I used to open *Aksharamanamalai*, read it continuously and write it daily. Eventually, I was able to remember some of the verses. I was very thin when I was a child, and when we went to take the prasadam in the Ashram, Seenu anna (a staff in the kitchen) used to make me laugh by putting no rice because I used to sigh while eating rice. This happens every time I go to take prasadam at the dining hall, and I come out smiling, because even Bhagavan used to play with kids and cute little animals. I have a memory associated with each and every place in the Ashram, especially the goshala. I used to take a book and go sit there to read stories of Bhagavan and Gomatha Lakshmi. Whenever I read a story, I imagine Bhagavan by closing my eyes, and that gives me pure joy.

While reading stories, I got to know that Bhagavan always asked devotees if they have had food, and the very next question was whether they had completed *giripradakshina*. I understood the importance of *giripradakshina* only

from such instances. One cannot get over the beauty of Arunachala Hill, and no matter how many times we do the *pradakshina*, we still want to do it twice, thrice, and so on. I am very blessed to have had the opportunity to do *giri pradakshina* from a very young age. The last 4 kilometers of *pradakshina* are very hard because of the rocks, but every time, I feel like Bhagavan is walking beside me. The irony is that we do not have leg pain the next day.

One fine day, the last day of one of our trips, and we had completed the *giri pradakshina* that morning. I do not know why, but I had this feeling to do 108 *pradakshinas* around the Mother's shrine. I completed the *pradakshinas* of Bhagavan's samadhi too, even though I was shocked. I remembered Bhagavan throughout.

Bhagavan's teachings have had a profound impact on my life. They have helped me find peace within myself by showing me that the answers I seek are already within me. Instead of looking outside for happiness or solutions, I've learned to turn inward through self-inquiry, discovering a sense of inner calm and clarity that guides me through life's ups and downs. His teachings have taught me to embrace the present moment and to let go of worries and attachments, leading to greater contentment and fulfillment in my daily life. Whenever a problem comes, I do not look at it as a burden and worry about it much; I accept that it is karma, and it is going to happen even if you try to stop it.

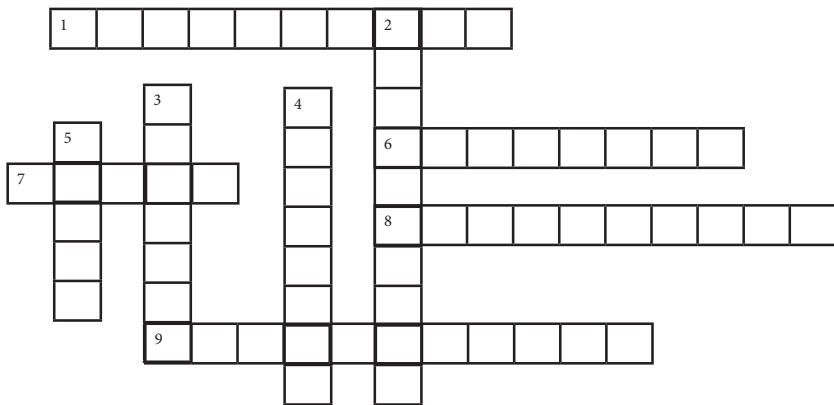
I feel incredibly fortunate to be walking this path, and I cannot picture spending my Sundays any other way than listening to Bhagavan's talks. Tiruvannamalai and the ashram hold a special place in my heart, and I cannot envision any journey that does not lead me there.

Sri Ramanaarpanamastu.

HERE'S THIS ISSUE'S FUN CORNER

Crossword Puzzle

Find places along the Madurai - Tiruvannamalai route, the journey Bhagavan took as a 16 year old boy



ACROSS

1. Famous for its handloom weaving industry in Vellore district (10)
6. Known for its historical fort (8)
7. Major city and commercial hubs (5)
8. Birthplace of Kanchi Paramacharya (10)
9. Former jasmine flower capital in Sivaganga district (11)

DOWN

2. Serves as a connecting point to many important cities (10)
3. Home to Venugopala Parthasarathy temple (7)
4. Birthplace of the mathematician Ramanujan (8)
5. Industrial town (5)

Life Events of Bhagavan: Match the event with the correct date

Event		Date
Arrival at Arunachala		June 18, 1948
Death experience in Madurai		December 30, 1879
Bhagavan's Mahanirvana day		December 28, 1945
Bhagavan composed Atma Vidya Keertanam		May 19, 1922
Kumbhabhishekam of Mathrubhutheshwara Temple in Bhagavan's presence		July 17, 1896
Cow Lakshmi attains samadhi		September 1, 1896
Bhagavan's birth date		March 17, 1949
Echammal passes away		September 1, 1939
Golden Jubilee New Hall inaugurated		April 14, 1950
Mother Azhagammal's Mahanirvana		April 24, 1927

Shloka: Sri Ramana Ashtottaram

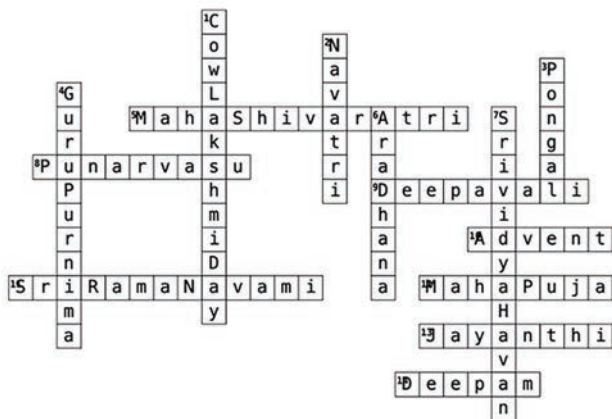
Let's continue to memorize this wonderful composition by Sri Viswanatha Swami. These are 108 names of Bhagavan used to worship him. As each name is uttered by way of invocation, a flower is offered in worship. Let's memorize one name at a time and understand its meaning. Here's Name 4:

ॐ अखण्ड संविदाकाराय नमः

Om akhaṇḍa saṁvidākārāya namaḥ

Meaning: The embodiment of whole, unbroken Awareness. He perceives no separation between his being and the universal being.

Solutions to July 2024 crossword puzzle and anagram puzzle



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. The day Lord Shiva appeared as a column of light

Down

1. Anniversary of Bhagavan's favorite 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)

PAIL HMRATTI

UDPARIDA PEETLM

GUAMAAT SHAMRA

RNVUAA GMIANL

AMYLAYUKN TKAN

OSAN AMTIHTR

NIGA MANILG

APMCMAAHAIN EIRSHN

DAI NLIAAAAMN PTLEME

HNIUSAITMDRAK NIERHS

PALI TIRTHAM

DRAUPADI TEMPLE

GAUTAMA ASHRAM

VARUNA LINGAM

AYYANKULAM TANK

SONA TIRTHAM

AGNI LINGAM

PACHAIAMMAN TEMPLE

ADI ANNAMALAI TEMPLE

DAKSHINAMURTI SHRINE

Letter from an old devotee to Nondi

Dear Nondi,

I write to you a “letter” as from a little girl aged 6. Thank you for this space for children and young people. Sri Ramana Maharshi has bestowed upon them his very special dristi (gaze).

Sri Ramana’s Luminous eyes lit up the life of this six year old girl. In 1949 she saw Sri Ramana face to face! I am that little girl, now aged 81!!!

Sri Ramana’s luminosity made known to me, all that I did NOT know, and, all that I knew became mysterious. That is my Smriti, memory experience. My Shruti experience is the silence.

That night the meal was served in silence, eaten in silence. In that room were about 5 adults and me, the only child. Sri Ramana watched over us, (the only visitors/pilgrims), and the Ashram ‘dwellers’ who cooked and served us superb food. Sri Ramana sat on a bed, leaning upon a few pillows; I saw that *jjyoti*, *ātma jjyoti*, *svayam jjyoti*.

That light has guided me. Light of Light, self-illuminated light, soul filled with light.

I send to the children connected to Sri Ramanasramam.

My Love and Prayers.

Arati Banerjea



QUESTION & ANSWER

QUESTION: In Talk 11 of Talks with Ramana Maharshi, the question asked is “Can destiny (karma) ever come to an end?” To this question, Bhagavan replies, “The karmas carry the seeds of their own destruction in themselves.” Can you please share your thoughts on the import of Bhagavan’s response?

Karma, as understood in many spiritual traditions, is action driven by the intention of achieving a specific result. Individuals perform actions based on their personal intellect, desires, and calculations, hoping these will bring contentment. However, the results often do not meet expectations, leading to frustration. Even when the desired outcomes are achieved, they frequently fail to provide the anticipated satisfaction.

Ramana Maharshi’s statement, “Karma carries within itself the seed of its own destruction,” encapsulates the futility of seeking fulfillment through action. The actor, or the individual performing the actions, is intrinsically linked to these actions and cannot change them without undergoing personal transformation. As long as the individual remains unchanged, their actions will continue to be futile, perpetuating a cycle of disappointment.

Despite numerous attempts and varied strategies, individuals often find themselves trapped in this cycle. Actions, no matter how enhanced or modified, tend to lead to the same unsatisfactory results. This realization eventually compels the actor to recognize the necessity for profound self-change. The process of escaping this cycle involves a dissolution of the current self, a transformation akin to a psychological death (*manonasa*).

Essentially, the more individuals strive for fulfillment through action, the clearer it becomes that true contentment cannot be achieved this way. The relentless pursuit of specific results ultimately leads to an awareness of one’s limitations and the need for transformation. This insight aligns with Ramana Maharshi’s teaching that karma contains the seeds of its own destruction.

From a positive perspective, Bhagavan refers to engaging in the karma allotted to us in life to achieve *vasana kshaya*, the eradication of latent tendencies. According to this view, we cannot escape our allotted karma;

instead, we must face and discharge it properly. By doing so, the related *vasanas* (desires and tendencies) are exhausted, and the desire to engage in new karma is diminished, effectively destroying the seed of karma.

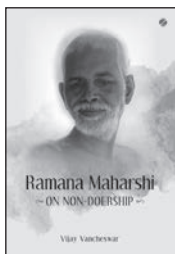
An illustrative example is King Janaka, who ruled without renouncing his duties. We can remember Lord Krishna's advice to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, where salvation is found through engaging in one's righteous duties. Bhagavan teaches that Ishvara, the dispenser of karma's fruits, assigns karmas conducive to spiritual progress, presenting individuals with opportunities to gradually reduce their karmic burdens caused by negative *vasanas*.

The results of past good deeds can set one on the right path, while the results of bad karma lead to unhappy situations. These challenging situations, viewed as the grace of the Lord in a negative sense, can prompt introspection. Realizing that outcomes are beyond personal control, individuals seek to understand the reasons behind their suffering, ultimately finding the right spiritual path.

This perspective underscores the importance of inner work and self-awareness in spiritual growth. By recognizing the limitations of seeking fulfillment through external actions and results, individuals can turn their focus inward. Self-inquiry becomes a crucial tool that can help dismantle the ego, revealing the deeper, true Self that is untouched by the fluctuations of karma. As this realization deepens, individuals experience a profound shift in how they relate to their actions and the world. Actions are then performed not from a place of seeking personal gain, but from a state of inner peace and alignment with a higher purpose. This transformation not only breaks the cycle of disappointment and frustration but also brings a lasting sense of fulfillment and harmony.

The seed of karma, whether from good or bad actions, eventually directs individuals towards seeking a higher purpose. This right direction involves losing the sense of personal doership (*kartrutva bhāva*). When this sense is lost, karma no longer affects the individual. This is consistent with the teachings of Ramana Maharshi and the broader spiritual wisdom that true liberation comes from inner transformation rather than external actions. Thus, karma itself carries the seeds of its own destruction. ▲

BOOK REVIEW



RAMANA MAHARSHI: ON NON-DOERSHIP

ZEN Publications, Mumbai 400 053, India;

pp.70; Rs.120;

ISBN: 978-93-9325-484-9.

[https://www.amazon.in/Ramana-Maharshi-](https://www.amazon.in/Ramana-Maharshi-Non-Doership-Vijay-Vancheswar-ebook/dp/B0CW1H3J3C)

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[B0CW1H3J3C](https://www.amazon.in/Ramana-Maharshi-Non-Doership-Vijay-Vancheswar-ebook/dp/B0CW1H3J3C)

Ramana Maharshi: On Non-Doership by Dr. Vijay Vancheswar offers an insightful exploration into the philosophy and teachings of one of India's most revered spiritual figures, Ramana Maharshi. The book delves deeply into the concept of non-doership, a core tenet of Maharshi's teachings, which emphasizes the dissolution of the ego and the realization that the true Self is beyond action and doer-ship.

Ramana Maharshi, a revered Indian sage, extensively taught about non-doership, emphasizing that the true Self (Pure consciousness) is not the doer of actions, while the ego mistakenly identifies with the body and mind, assuming the role of the doer. He considered this sense of doership an illusion created by the ego, leading individuals to falsely believe they are responsible for their actions and their outcomes. Through the practice of self-inquiry, asking "Who am I?," Bhagavan advised tracing the sense of individuality back to its source to realize that the ego, and thus doership, is an illusion. The true Self remains as a witness, observing actions and experiences without attachment. He also suggested surrendering to the divine will, recognizing that all actions are carried out by a higher power, and thus experiencing peace and freedom from responsibility. Understanding these teachings helps one to transcend the binding effects of karma, as actions not attributed to the ego do not create further karmic impressions. Thus, one is led to liberation. Ramana described the state of non-doership as the natural state of being, where one acts spontaneously and appropriately without the sense of personal doership or concern for outcomes. His teachings on

non-doership ultimately guide individuals towards inner peace and freedom by encouraging them to recognize the true Self's uninvolved and unaffected nature, distinct from the ego's illusory sense of doership.

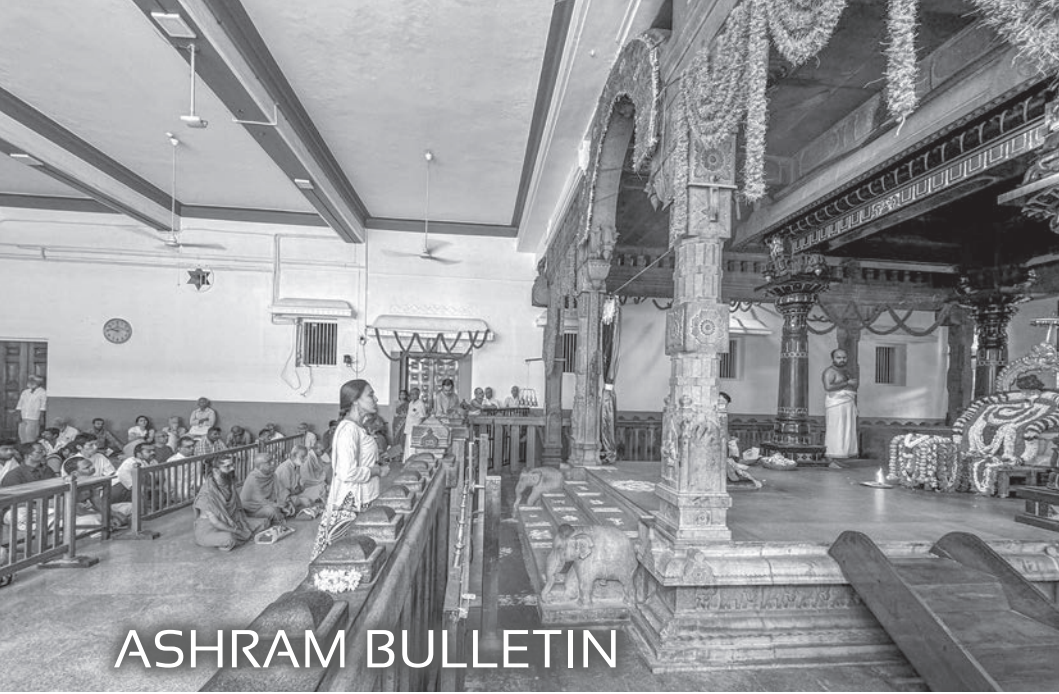
Dr. Vancheswar meticulously unpacks this complex idea, making it accessible to both seasoned practitioners and newcomers to Maharshi's teachings. He uses a blend of scholarly analysis and personal reflections, which adds a layer of relatability to the profound philosophical concepts discussed. The book is structured in a way that guides the reader through Maharshi's life, his awakening, and the subsequent teachings that emerged from his deep meditative insights.

One of the book's strengths is its ability to contextualize non-doership within the broader framework of Advaita Vedanta. Dr. Vancheswar draws parallels between Maharshi's insights and the ancient Vedantic texts, highlighting the timeless relevance of these teachings. He also addresses common misconceptions about non-doership, providing clarity on how it differs from fatalism or passivity.

The writing is engaging and thought-provoking, encouraging readers to reflect on their own lives and the nature of their actions. Dr. Vancheswar's reverence for Maharshi is evident, yet he maintains an objective tone that invites critical thinking and personal interpretation. The anecdotes and quotes from Maharshi interspersed throughout the book offer a direct connection to the sage's wisdom, making the philosophical discussions more tangible and grounded.

In conclusion, *Ramana Maharshi: On Non-Doership* is a profound and enlightening read that captures the essence of Ramana Maharshi's teachings. Dr. Vijay Vancheswar has succeeded in creating a work that not only honors the legacy of Maharshi but also provides practical insights for those seeking spiritual growth and understanding. However, it is only 56 pages, and those who have read books which contain the conversations of Bhagavan may not find this book to be very satisfactory, as it is only a reiteration of content found in other works written by Bhagavan.

— M. Giridhar



Veda Pariksha

On the evening of July 17, 2024, Vedic students from across India arrived at the Ashram to undergo three days of examinations conducted from July 18 to July 20) in Rig Veda, Krishna Yajur Veda, Shukla Yajur Veda, and Sama Veda. The exams included *mūla*, *pada*, *krama*, and *jaṭā pāṭhaḥ*. *Pariksha*, an ancient tradition, ensures the faithful transmission of various *Vedapāthas* across generations. The examinations were conducted smoothly and the processes of entering marks of the examinations, giving grades, generating certificates were all computerized. The certificates awarded through this process affirm and authenticate a Vedic student's training and proficiency.

Guru Purnima

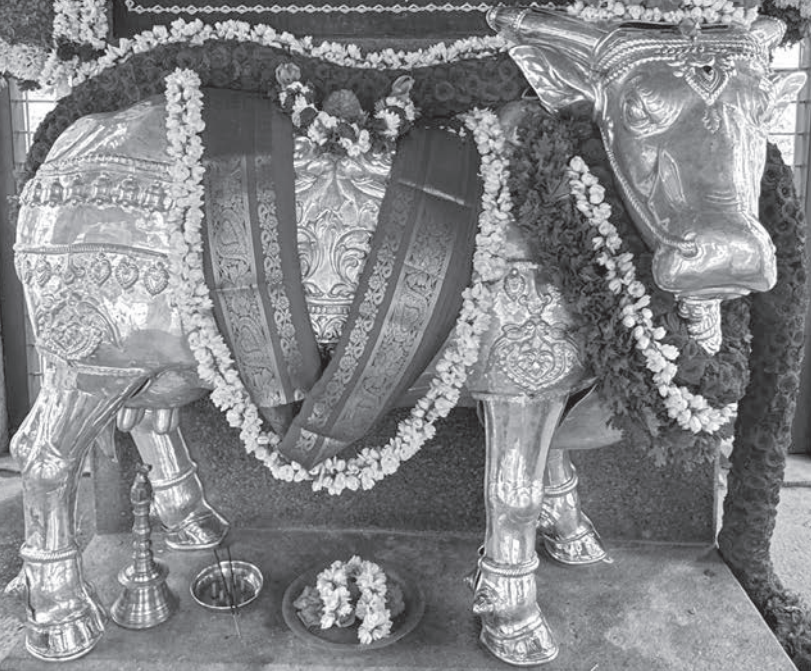
It is a tradition of the ashram to honor *sannyasis* on this day. Thus, on the occasion of Guru Purnima (21 July 2024), *sannyasis* were given new robes in the Samadhi shrine of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.

Bhagavan's words emphasize the importance of Gurus, "The Guru is both 'external' and 'internal.' From the 'exterior,' he gives a push to the mind to turn inward; from the 'interior,' He pulls the mind towards the Self and helps in the quieting of the mind. That is Guru's grace. There is no difference between God, Guru, and the Self."





பசுலக்ஷ்மி நம்பாண்தினம்
சருவதா ரிப்பேர்கொள் சம்வச் சாத்து
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பக்கத் துவாநசீவி சாகம் பசுவாமி-
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ஸ்ரீரமணபகவான் அருளியது.



H.C Khanna Day

The samadhi day of Sri Hari Chandra Khanna was observed on July 23rd. Devotees chanted Aksharamanamalai and conducted pujas at his samadhi, remembering him with devotion. Khanna, blessed by the grace of Ramana Maharshi, is among the rare devotees whose samadhi is located within the premises of the ashram.

Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni Aradhana

The Aradhana of Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni was grandly celebrated on July 25th in the New Hall with the chanting of Ramana Gita, one of his renowned works. Born on November 17, 1878, in Kaluvarayi near Bobbili in Andhra Pradesh, Ganapati Muni was hailed by Sri M.P. Pandit as “a luminary of the first magnitude on the spiritual firmament of modern India.” Ganapati Muni passed away in Kharagpur, West Bengal, on July 25, 1936.

Kunju Swami Aradhana

Kunju Swami's Aradhana was held on August 7th at his Samadhi in the Ashram. Devotees performed abhisheka over the samadhi linga while reciting Aksharamanamalai. In 1919, when Kunju Swami met Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, Bhagavan quoted from *Kaivalya Navaneeta*, “If you realize who you are, there is no cause for sorrow.” and then continued, “So if you come to understand who you are, then there is peace.” When Kunju said he did not understand what was meant by “know who you are,” Bhagavan went on to explain that the mind is only a bundle of thoughts and that if one seeks the source of all thoughts, they would be drawn into the Heart. Bhagavan then simultaneously pointed to his Heart. After hearing this, Kunju Swami never left the presence of Bhagavan. Kunju Swami lived a simple and austere life near Sri Ramanasramam, sharing his experiences with seekers until his samadhi at the age of 95 in 1994.

Independence Day

Independence Day was celebrated with grandeur in the Ashram. The President hoisted the flag, and sweets were distributed. Reflecting on the events of August 15, 1947, it was noted that the Ashram was adorned with a festive look of patriotism. On that historic day,

Bhagavan, with tears in his eyes, hoisted the tricolor flag atop the dining hall, a flag he had stitched with his own hands.

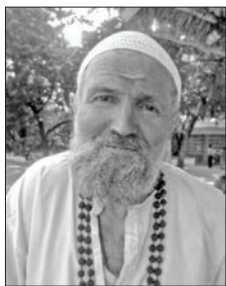
Advent Day

On September 1st, 1896, sixteen-year-old Venkataraman journeyed from Madurai to Arunachala in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, where he resided until his Mahasamadhi in 1950, a span of fifty-four years. In his Aksharamanamalai, verse 97, Ramana reflects: “From my home Thou didst entice me, then stealing into my heart didst draw me gently into Thine, (such is) Thy grace, Oh Arunachala.” This event is celebrated each year in grandeur by devotees from all over the country visiting the ashram.

Muruganar Day

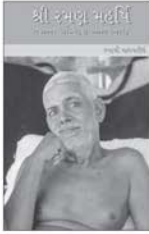
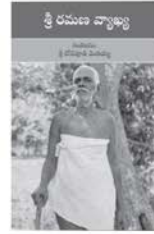
The Aradhana of Muruganar was celebrated on September 2nd. Born in Ramnad district in August 1890, Muruganar drew his poetic inspiration from Ramana’s presence and teachings. Composing more than thirty thousand poems, his works overflow with exceptional love, beauty and wisdom. Muruganar spent several years in Sri Ramanasramam, summarizing Ramana’s answers to devotees’ questions in four-line verses, were later edited by Ramana Maharshi himself. His writings are published in *Guru Vachaka Kovai* and *Padamalai*. Muruganar was absorbed into Arunachala in August 1973 on the Amavasai day.

Obituary



Sri Oleg M. Mogilever, affectionately known in Sri Ramanasramam as OM, was born in 1939 in Kharkov and obtained his Ph.D in Leningrad. He translated numerous books into Russian: *Collected Works*, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, *Letters*, *Day by Day*, *Maha Yoga* etc. Though his mobility was limited, he managed to come and stay in the Ashram for two months each year. After a long illness, he passed away in Jerusalem on 9th February 2024 at the age of 84. He is survived by two daughters and five grandchildren. ▲

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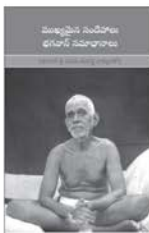
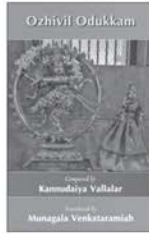
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