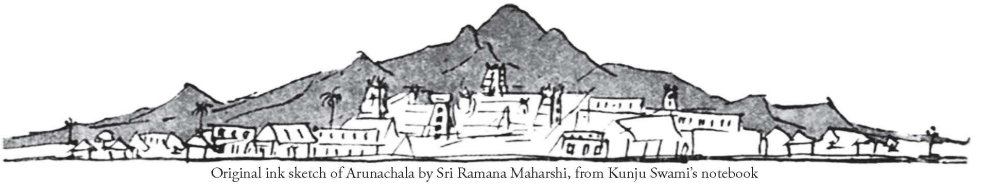
₹ 75/-

Mountain Path

Vol. 62, No. 1 January-March 2025



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

Mountain Path

FOUNDED 1964 BY ARTHUR OSBORNE
VOLUME 62, NO. 1, JANUARY 2025

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Annual Subscription
(4 issues):

₹ 300 (India)
₹ 75 (single copy)
US$ 30 (all other countries)

Life Subscription
₹ 6,000 (India)
US$ 500 (Foreign)

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 They should be in English, original, and previously unpublished.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

37. ॐ योगीशाय नमः

OM yogiishaaya namaH

He who is the king of Yogis.

A famous line from the *Bhagavad Gita* says, "Wherever there is Sri Krishna, the Lord of all Yogas, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be unending opulence, victory, prosperity, and righteousness. Of this, I am certain."

According to the contemporary depiction of a yogi, it is easy to understand why Lord Siva should have the title of "Lord of Yoga" or "King of Yogis": he is almost always depicted sitting in meditation, holding a japa mala and a yogi's traditional *kamandalu*. His hair is tied up in an ascetic's *jata*. He is smeared in holy ash. But then, why should Lord Krishna, whom we see wearing gold, going to war, and making love, be privy to the same title? We are prompted to ask what it means to be a yogi, and what exactly is yoga.

Bhagavan himself affirmed the famous line from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, "*yoga chitta vritti nirodha*," or, "Yoga is to check the mind from changing." When the mind has become still, when it does not change, then where can there be the concept of any others? In fact, if one is to experience this state at this very moment, it will be clear that there is simply no room for Lord Siva or Lord Krishna. There is only That.

Who are we? Who is Arunachaleswara? Who is, or is not *Yogisah*? He is indeed the experience of unending opulence, victory, prosperity, and righteousness, which is the experience of the Self itself.

It is fitting to end with a quote from Bhagavan recorded in *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*[1]:

"Question: In what asana is Bhagavan usually seated?

Ramana Maharshi: In what asana? In the asana of the Heart. Wherever it is pleasant, there is my asana. That is called *sukhasana*, the asana of happiness. That asana of the Heart is peaceful, and gives happiness. There is no need for any other asana for those who are seated in that one." — S. Lazar

[1] Letter #108, *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, Suri Nagamma, Sri Ramanasramam.

The Ultimate Guide to Bhagavan's Teachings:

Essential Ashram Literature for Every Seeker

In my last editorial, I shared that the Ashram administration is determined to serve devotees by providing them with the tools they need to deepen their connection to Bhagavan. One key tool is access to the right spiritual literature, preserved in both accuracy and authenticity, which can keep devotees focused on Bhagavan's path.

Today, we are flooded with information and material. Quotes from Bhagavan flash across our Facebook and Instagram feeds, and short videos with his messages fill our YouTube and TikTok apps. When we finally have the time and attention span to delve deeper, we are faced with an overwhelming choice of longer videos and books. Sometimes, we read a book highly recommended by a popular spiritual teacher on YouTube, only to find ourselves more confused.

There seems to be a dichotomy—on one end, some books are filled with philosophy, technical Vedantic terms, and complex logical arguments, making it seem like Bhagavan's teachings are out of reach unless we dedicate ourselves to years of Vedantic study. On the other end, we are told it's so simple: that we are already self-realized, and we just have to "be" (*summa iru*). That nothing matters, no effort is needed, no reading required—since we are already in the jaws of our tiger Guru, and he will take care of us!

Adding to the complexity, many contemporary teachers claim to be part of Bhagavan's lineage and offer interpretations of his teachings through their own lenses, attributing these perspectives to him. With the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), this challenge is compounded — how can we distinguish between what is truly aligned with Bhagavan's teachings and what might be an AI model's inference?

That is why, in this editorial, I hope to provide seekers with a comprehensive list of Bhagavan's literature that bears the stamp of his authority—his own compositions, translations, and works he reviewed during his lifetime. These are the texts devotees can rely on and find solace in at every stage of their spiritual journey. Repeated study of these works would suffice.

Let's begin with the *Collected Works*, a golden treasure, Bhagavan's prasadam to us. This book covers the gamut of Bhagavan's compositions in prose, poetry, dialogue, and song. It caters to spiritual seekers at all levels of maturity, allowing each person to engage with its content according to their own capacity.

Bhagavan, known for his uncompromising standards, would have appreciated the need for a definitive collection of literature, particularly in our era of information overload. T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, who wrote the preface in Tamil, emphasizes this crucial insight. He says, "I had concluded the Preface in the following way: 'It is hoped that this work in the form of Bhagavan's Grace will give to all who aspire to eternal Truth, the Liberation in the form of gaining supreme Bliss shaped as the taking away of all sorrow.' Maharshi said, "Why have you said 'It is hoped'? Why not say 'It is certain'?" So saying, He corrected with His own hands my '*nambukiren*' into '*tinnam.*' Thus Sri Maharshi set His seal of approval to the book, giving to His devotees that great charter of Liberation in the form of His Teaching (*upadesa*) which leaves no trace of doubt about it in the mind."[1]

Here are the contents of this masterpiece that every sincere seeker should read and re-read:

Works Authored by Bhagavan:

Core Works in Prose: Although these early works were written when Bhagavan was a young lad of around 20, they carry the authority

[1] *At the Feet of Bhagavan,* T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, Sri Ramanasramam.

of his full spiritual knowledge. These three seminal works are in a Q&A format, compiled by Bhagavan's early devotees:

Self-Enquiry (*Vichara Sangraham*): This is the first work Bhagavan ever wrote, around 1901, when he was only about 22. These are responses to questions put to him by Gambhiram Seshayya.

Who am I? (*Naan Yaar?*): These are responses to questions asked by Sivaprakasam Pillai, written during the same period as *Self-Enquiry*.

Spiritual Instruction (*Upadesa Manjari*): Sri Natanananda's notes of a conversation that took place between Bhagavan and his devotees. Bhagavan reviewed the work.

Poems Authored by Bhagavan:

Five Hymns to Arunachala (*Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*): These profound and moving poems are packed with bhakti and jnana. Mere chanting of these hymns, which were spontaneous outpourings of Bhagavan, composed not of his own volition but by divine will – can transport devotees to higher planes of consciousness.

The Essence of Instruction (*Upadesa Saram*): Muruganar requested Bhagavan to compose a poem on Lord Siva's teachings to the Rishis of the Daruka forest, highlighting that liberation is achieved not through action but through the renunciation of action. Bhagavan crafted 30 verses, which together form a spiritual masterpiece. These verses guide seekers on various paths to liberation, with Self-enquiry and surrender being highlighted as the most effective approach.

*Reality in Forty Verses & Supplemen*t (*Ulladu Narpadu & Anubandham*): These 80 verses represent the most comprehensive exposition of Bhagavan's teachings. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to Muruganar for eliciting most of these verses from Bhagavan (with some in the *Supplement* being Bhagavan's translations of Sanskrit verses from other Advaitic texts) and arranging them into a continuous poetic sequence. Devotees who cultivate an appreciation for these verses will have their questions answered and their doubts dispelled.

Five Verses on the Self (*Ekatma Panchakam*): These were the last verses composed by Bhagavan, at the instance of the devotee Suri Nagamma.

Miscellaneous and Occasional Verses: These beautiful, jnana-filled verses include *The Song of the Poppadum* (*Appalam Paatu*), *Self-Knowledge* (*Atma-Vidya*), and other poems composed for special occasions or at the requests of devotees.

Adaptations and Translations:

The Song Celestial (*The Bhagavad Gita*): Bhagavan selected and arranged 42 verses from the original text to serve as guidance for devotees. This collection captures the core essence of the scriptural masterpiece.

Translations from the Agamas – *Atma Sakshatkara* and *Devikalottara*: Bhagavan translated both of these Agamas spontaneously. Each Agama stands as an outstanding expression of the Advaita standpoint.

Translations from Shankaracharya: These include *Dakshinamurthy Stotra, Guru Stuti, Hastamalaka Stotra, Atma Bodha, Vivekachudamani,* and *Drik Drisya Viveka*. Bhagavan declares that Shankara and Dakshninamurti are manifestations of the One Self and that it is Shankara himself, abiding in him, who composed the Tamil translation of his Sanskrit works. He translated these works either spontaneously or at the request of devotees who could not read Sanskrit and required a Tamil translation.

Other Translations: These include *Vichara Mani Mala*, a compilation of the salient points from *Vichara Sagara*, a voluminous work. This selection of verses was made by Bhagavan at the request of the devotee Arunachala Mudaliar.

Works Reviewed by Bhagavan:

*Maharshi's Gospel***:** Compiled by Maurice Frydman, this work contains Bhagavan's precise and excellent responses to seekers' questions, organized by topic.

*Guru Vachaka Kovai***:** Muruganar collected Bhagavan's verbal teachings and recorded them in four-line Tamil verses. This book leaves out the questions from devotees and visitors to the ashram which may have prompted Bhagavan's teachings and instead focuses solely on preserving the authoritative declarations of the master.

Bhagavan then meticulously edited the work, adjusting sequences, adding revisions, and incorporating new verses. His careful attention ensures the content reflects his full approval.

Diaries of Devotees:

Devotees' diaries are precious, documenting events and dialogues with Bhagavan at Sri Ramanasramam. These notes reveal not only his deep wisdom but also his humor, compassion, and spiritual greatness. They highlight his humanity and simplicity, offering practical insights into applying his teachings in daily life and showing that his wisdom is accessible and relevant. Notable works include:

- *Day By Day with Bhagavan*: A. Devaraja Mudaliar
- *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*: Sri Munagala Venkataramiah
- *Guru Ramana*: S.S. Cohen
- *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*: Suri Nagamma
- *Sri Ramana Reminiscences*: G.V. Subbarammayya

Biographies:

These are extremely well-researched accounts of Bhagavan's life. Since Bhagavan's life was, in essence, his ultimate teaching, these biographies give us an intimate insight into the endless lessons and pointers that can be gleaned from his life-long abidance in the Self.

- *Self Realization*: B.V. Narasimhaswami
- *Sri Ramana Leela*: Krishna Bhikshu
- *Sri Ramana Vijayam*: Suddhananda Bharati

These are what I consider the core works of Bhagavan. Beyond these, the Ashram has published a treasure of literature over the past 100 years, including reminiscences of devotees (such as Kunju Swami, Kanakammal, Major Chadwick), commentaries on texts in the Collected Works (such as those written by Lakshmana Sharma, Kanakammal, Muruganar), summaries of Bhagavan's life and teachings (such as those written by Arthur Osborne, Prof. K. Swaminathan), and more. *The Mountain Path* quarterly journal and *Saranagati* monthly newsletter are also valuable resources.

The Parayanam:

Most of the works in the *Collected Works* are part of the Ashram Parayanam. Since the days at Virupaksha cave, Bhagavan's devotees have chanted these works, attesting to their purifying effect on the heart, mind, and soul. The parayanam continues to be chanted at the Ashram every evening at around 6:00 pm in Bhagavan's Samadhi Hall. The Ashram also live-streams the parayanam on our YouTube channel, making it accessible to devotees worldwide.

Conclusion:

A visitor once asked, "May I believe that there is nothing more to be known now, so far as the technique of sadhana is concerned, than that which has been written in your books from time to time? This question arises from the fact that, in all other systems of sadhana, the sadguru unfolds some secret technique of meditation to his disciple at the time of initiation, or *diksha*, as it is called."

Bhagavan replied, "There is nothing more to be known than what you find in books. No secret technique. It is all an open secret, in this system."[2]

This assurance from Bhagavan confirms that his literature contains all the wisdom a seeker needs. In a world full of spiritual noise, these core works are your true guides. Embrace them with trust and confidence — they are here to support you on your journey.

May these treasured texts brighten your path and bring you closer to the heart of Bhagavan's teachings. Enjoy the journey!

In humility and devotion,

Venkat S. Ramanan

[2] *Day by Day with Bhagavan,* Devaraja Mudaliar, Sri Ramanasramam.

Yogic Systems – Bhagavan's View

Dr. S. Ram Mohan

Yoga, as a concept, can be approached from two perspectives: (1) as a goal and (2) as a spiritual practice, or *sādhana*. From the first perspective, Yoga is seen as a union with the higher Self, the ultimate goal being Self-realization. In Indian Yogic tradition, cosmic consciousness, or the Universal Self is the fundamental reality that permeates the perceived individual Self. It is analogous to waves in an ocean of consciousness. Yoga is the means by which cosmic consciousness, or the Self is realized. While different schools of Yoga agree that the goal of Yoga is Self-realization, they offer varied depictions of this state of realization.

In Indian philosophy, Yoga has always been intricately connected with philosophical teachings. For instance, the work of Sri Aurobindo, an Indian philosopher and yogi, highlights how Yoga can serve as both a method and the primary focus of philosophical exploration.

Yoga is defined as the cessation of the mental modifications or fluctuations (*chittavṛtti nirodha*). Patanjali, in his *Yoga Sutras*, asserts that the ultimate aim is to realize the natural Self, which is the pure observer (*drasta*), rather than the doer. The term, *chittavṛtti nirodha*, meaning the stilling of the mind, leads to samādhi, a state of profound absorption where the practitioner experiences unity with the Self. The practice of Yoga across its various forms emphasizes the renunciation of ego and attachment, blending renunciation (*nivṛtti*) with active engagement (*pravṛtti*). Figures such as Krishna and Shiva serve as

Dr. S. Ram Mohan is the author of numerous articles on Bhagavan's teachings and is currently the editor of *Ramanodhayam*, the Tamil magazine of the Ramana Kendra in Chennai.

paradigmatic models in Yogic traditions, symbolizing this balance. This synthesis is notably exemplified in the *Mahābhārata*, where offerings to Shiva reach Krishna and vice versa.

Yogic practices—such as meditation, surrender of ego in Bhakti, selfless action (Karma Yoga), and Self-inquiry (Jñāna Yoga)—are intended to bring one into alignment with the inner Self. At the same time, they expand consciousness, enabling the individual to connect deeply with others and the entire creation. In this way, Yoga transcends personal limitations (*upādhis*) and integrates the universe within the self. This expansive understanding is referred to as *advaita bhāvana* (non-dualistic consciousness) or *maitri bhāvanā* (universal love), an insight that Ramana Maharshi also underscores in his writings.

The term Yoga comes from the root "yuj," meaning "to unite." This is the same root as the English word "yoke," suggesting that the goal of Yoga is the union of the individual soul with the universal consciousness. In many religions, especially Eastern traditions like Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, and Hinduism, different types of yogic experiences are detailed, and Yoga serves as a spiritual discipline to attain the highest reality. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa demonstrated the syncretic nature of Yoga by experimenting with various forms, showing that they all lead to the same goal. Swami Vivekananda later provided an inspirational interpretation of the different types of Yoga, and Sri Aurobindo, in his work *The Synthesis of Yoga*, proposed an integral method for synthesizing these diverse paths.

Yoga, as a practical discipline, goes beyond theoretical knowledge. It is a consciously adopted system aimed at deepening one's experience of reality. In India, Yoga has been both a method of verifying philosophical insights and a source of inspiration for spiritual and philosophical thinking. Religions have adopted and modified Yoga to fit their devotional aspects, as seen in Bhakti Yoga, where devotion is the path to the transcendent.

In the book *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo outlines four essential steps to attaining perfection in Yoga. These are (1) knowledge of the truth (sastra), (2) passionate and persistent action guided by knowledge, (3) spiritual experience facilitated by the teacher or guru, and (4) the right timing (acknowledging that spiritual unfoldment occurs in cycles).

Swami Vivekananda defines Yoga as a method of accelerating human evolution. While nature progresses toward the same goal at its own pace, individuals can intensify their efforts to reach this end sooner through Yoga. Sri Aurobindo notes that Yogic methods resemble scientific experimentation in that they are based on regular practice, analysis, and consistent results. He emphasizes that through Yoga, one realizes the identity of subject and object, and in this realization, the Self awakens to the knowledge of the Self.

Even intense emotions like anger can serve as channels for Yogic evolution. Ramana Maharshi teaches that when one is fully aware of their anger, it can lead to Self-realization. Sri Aurobindo similarly points out that being absorbed in thought can cause the thinker to lose awareness of the thought itself.

Yoga is a transformative process that elevates the physical, vital, and mental aspects to the divine level. This transformation requires different methods for each aspect: action for the physical, exercise for the vital, and meditation for the mental. These three aspects must be coordinated to achieve an integral realization of the Divine.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna summarizes the three primary forms of Yoga: Bhakti Yoga (devotion), Karma Yoga (selfless action), and Jñāna Yoga (wisdom). Ramana Maharshi, in his *Upadesa Saram*, also expounds on these three paths, emphasizing that they all converge in the realization of the Divine.

Bhakti Yoga, or the Yoga of devotion, has deep roots in Indian spirituality, as evident by the hymns of the Vedas. The seers of the *Rig Veda*, for instance, offer prayers from the depths of their hearts, cultivating a devotion that evolves into knowledge (Jñāna Yoga). This synthesis of devotion and wisdom is a recurring theme in the Vedic texts, where the realization of the ultimate reality is often facilitated by a combination of surrender with love and Self-enquiry.

The synthesis of Yogas is also present in the *Upanishads*, which direct individuals to recognize the immanence of God in all things (Bhakti Yoga) and to engage in the world with detachment (Karma Yoga). The *Isa Upanishad*, for example, emphasizes the interconnectedness of Jñāna, Karma, and Bhakti, illustrating that these paths are not separate but part of a unified process of spiritual realization.

In contrast to the Vedic gods, who are often seen as unhelpful in the quest for wisdom, the Upanishads focus on the personal experience of the indwelling Atman (Self). The Atman is subtle and profound, and it is only through intense practice and self-control that one can realize its presence. This process of Self-enquiry culminating in the realization of the Atman forms the essence of Jñāna Yoga.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* speaks of three forms of reality, with Brahman, the ultimate reality, being the highest. Brahman is both subtler than the subtle and greater than the greatest, transcending all dualities. In the eastern religious traditions, God is both transcendent and immanent, and the ultimate aim of Yoga is to merge with this divine reality. The *Yajur Veda* also emphasizes this truth, stating that the face of reality is hidden by a golden lid, and through Yoga, one can remove this veil to realize the divine within.

In conclusion, the synthesis of the various paths of Yoga—Karma, Bhakti, and Jñāna—leads to the realization of the highest truth. Whether through action, devotion, or wisdom, Yoga provides a comprehensive approach to spiritual evolution, enabling individuals to transcend their limitations and realize their oneness with the Divine. This syncretism is not only a philosophical concept but a practical guide to living a harmonious and meaningful life. This syncretic understanding of Yoga, blending various elements from different traditions, is a central feature of Indian spiritual heritage. Through the disciplined practice of Yoga, one can attain liberation, transforming both the individual and the world. ▲

The Maharshi – Kulachala

KAYS

Arunachala Revealed

That Bhagavan was Arunachala incognito became abundantly clear over time. Natanananda records Bhagavan saying, "Whoever sees me with the same eyes as mine and the way I see myself is the one who has truly had my darshan."[1] How did Bhagavan see himself? When gazing intently at Arunachala Hill through binoculars, he responded to someone's inquiry, "I am looking at my own Self." His eyes were described as "immaculate space that beholds immaculate space."[2] Whenever Bhagavan tested his pen, it always wrote the word "Arunachala." His signature tune was "Arunachala Ramana." This non-dual identity was ultimately revealed by Amritanata Yati: "In the Heart Lotus of all beings, from Hari and Brahma, He who revels as Atman, as Pure Being – the Paramatman – is Arunachala Ramana."[3]

A lady devotee named Shanti, wishing to dedicate a Sanskrit verse to Bhagavan but lacking sufficient scholarship to compose one, prayed to Bhagavan for guidance. With his grace, she was inspired to write a verse[4]:

stitaprajnam eesham param nirvikalpam
shivam suddha buddham chidananda rupam
mahajnana deepam sukam nitya muktam
aham Ramana Maharshim tam namami.

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[1] *Ramana Darsanam.*
[2] *Ramana Arunachala,* Sadhu Om.
[3] *Arunachala Pancharatna.*
[4] *The Mountain Path,* June 1987.

After perusing it, Bhagavan, with a tender expression, asked her to replace the words 'Ramana Maharshim' with 'Sonasailakritim,' demonstrating that he was none other than the Lord himself.

Sankarananda Bharati's Ashtottaram on Bhagavan begins with "Sonaparvatheedasaya namaha," which means "Obeisance to the Lord of the Hill – Sona Sailam." Muruganar, in his very first decad written before meeting Bhagavan, exclaims, "Deserting the form of the Hill unknown to the two Gods, Thou hast come assuming a human form."[5] Sadhu Om declares, "Arunachala is indeed Ramana. The form of Arunachala, the form of Self, Being is Ramana."[6] Arunachala is the Heart, and the art of reaching and Being the Heart, as taught by Bhagavan, is the Art of the Heart.[7]

Bhagavan has proclaimed, "The Finality of the universe is God Arunachala. In the end, everybody has to come to Arunachala."[8] He further remarked, "The people who come here are brought by some mysterious force, and the same force leads them on."[9] This applied to him as well, as he said, "Once a man has surrendered here, he belongs here. Wherever he may go, he shall return, for this is the door to Liberation."[10] However high a bird soars over the vast seas, it must eventually return to land. Arunachala and Bhagavan, forcefully pulling jivas to themselves as *uyir vali kantham*,[11] still the ripples of thought waves, leading to the blossoming of the lotus in the Heart.[12]

The mere mention or sight of Arunachala would send Bhagavan into ecstasy, overflowing with love. He was Arunachala, the very Self he adored. This love of the Self for the Self manifested in the divine melody of the *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam,* a hymn praising his own Reality. It stands as a supreme example of divine mysticism, the testament of one whose mind merged in the effulgence of Arunachala. In truth, the Self, Arunachala, preempted the Self, Ramana, in

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[5] *Desika Padikam.*
[6] *Arunachala Liṅgāṣṭakam.*
[7] *Hardhavidya.*
[8] *Talks*, Talk 2.
[9] *Vachanamritam.*
[10] *The Power of the Presence*, Part III, p. 252.
[11] *Arunachala Padikam*, v. 10, first line.
[12] *Arunachala Padikam*, v. 10, second line.

singing praises through the *Ramana Stuti Panchakam,* five poems on Bhagavan. Many devotees believe that Satyamangalam Venkatarama Iyer is Arunachala incognito.[13] The fascinating connection between their names points directly to their oneness. The qualities Bhagavan extolled in Arunachala through his soul-stirring litany, *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* are the very same that Venkatarama Iyer attributed to Bhagavan. Both express a torrent of bliss born of supreme love, proving that Advaita is Ananda.

Bhagavan's boundless compassion manifested as a perennial cascade of love and grace, evoking a powerful response in all who beheld him. Muruganar aptly states, "The Red Hill that celestials like Varuna pay obeisance to, the Hill that shines, destroying the darkness of delusion, we call Venkata – The Temple of Compassion." The task of crossing the ocean of births is impossible without divine help and grace. In this spiritual journey, a tangible form on which to focus and from which to receive Grace proves immensely helpful in the beginning. Both the Hill and Bhagavan, as embodiments of the Supreme, graciously presented their physical forms to captivate our hearts and guide us. Bound by the silken cord of grace, they lead us on the Mountain Path to Self-Realisation – the ultimate goal of all religions – performing miracles along the way. His support is immediate for the devout, sweet to the surrendered, and he nullifies future births. Through his look, smile, and words – all emanating from his divine essence – Bhagavan assured us that the realisation of the Supreme Truth is a natural experience for all.[14] This divine heritage, the immovable Brahman of the *Upanishads*, awaits everyone. Both the Hill and Bhagavan serve as links between the real and unreal, embodying grace as both the guide and the goal.

Bhagavan was described as "The expanse of supreme love, a single drop from this surging ocean can bring peace to the beings of many

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[13] Satyamangalam Venkatarama Iyer visited Bhagavan during his early days of Virupaksha Cave on Hill. This was his one and only visit. When B.V. Narasimhaswami attempted to track him down in order to interview him for the biography of Bhagavan titled *Self-Realisation*, he found no one had ever heard of Venkataramana Iyer in the small town in which the man had said he lived. *The Power of Presence*, Volume I, page 143.

[14] *Athi sulabham.*

diverse worlds."[15] Even as he praised Arunachala as "more loving than the begotten mother," he was the Father, Mother, and Guru combined for most devotees. Suddhananda Bharati described Bhagavan as "the reappearance of my mother as the very form of Bliss, Chit, and Self."[16] Devaraja Mudaliar proudly declared himself to be 'ரமண சேய்' (*Ramaṇa cēy*), meaning "the child of Sri Ramana." The reenactment of miracles reported in *Arunachala Mahatmya* by Bhagavan offered further convincing proof of his non-dual identity with the Hill.

An elderly yet devout cripple, a relative of T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, used to circumambulate the Hill despite his disability. Vexed by the ill-treatment he received, he decided to leave Tiruvannamalai once and for all. As he reached the outskirts, a young Brahmin appeared before him, rudely snatched away his crutches, and said, "You don't deserve these." To the cripple's astonishment, he regained the use of his legs.[17] Bhagavan remarked that he knew this case personally and compared it to a story from the *Puranas*, in which a lame sage named Pangunni had his legs restored by Arunachala, who was disguised as an old man.[18] Another miraculous incident involved a girl who was robbed of her jewelry. Suddenly, an old man appeared, rescued her, escorted her home, and then disappeared.[19] Similarly, a newcomer to town was misled by a cart-man with evil intentions. As she was being taken to a remote location, two constables appeared, rescued her, and escorted her to safety. However, no one in the local police department was aware of these constables or of the incident itself.[20] When Devaraja Mudaliar asked Bhagavan about these miracles, Bhagavan did not deny them but remained silent, which only confirmed his role in these events.

One particularly remarkable incident underscoring the non-dual identity of Lord Arunachala and Bhagavan involved Rudraraj Pandey from Nepal. When he went to the Arunachaleswarar temple for darshan, the gates were opened, and he was led into the dark inner sanctum. Instead of the traditional lingam, he saw Bhagavan's image,

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[15] *Ramana Puranam*, lines 531-36.
[16] *Tangakkai*, p. 423.
[17] *My Recollections*, Devaraja Mudaliar, p. 123.
[18] *Talks with Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 464.
[19] *Ibid*.
[20] *My Recollections*, Devaraja Mudaliar, p. 122.

his face smiling and his eyes radiant. Not just one, but hundreds of Maharshis with smiling faces appeared before him, and Pandey declared, "I went to see the Lord, and I found the living Lord as he graciously revealed himself."[21]

By citing the namavali *Yoga Pattabhiramaya Namaha* from *Dakshinamurti Ashtottara*, Bhagavan not only gave darshan as various Gods to devotees according to their desires, but also revealed himself as Lord Kothanda Ramana of the Hill of Jnana. Using the Brahmastra of "Who Am I?," Bhagavan enabled devotees to conquer the ten-headed asura Ravana of the ego.

The *Puranas* proclaim that the benefits of chanting the name of Arunachala are immeasurable, and so too is the potency of Bhagavan's name. Both grant liberation by mere remembrance.[22] Bhagavan's name represents the undivided, unitary experience of the Self, or Arunachala, or the "I." This remembrance makes those who chant the name revel similarly in the one True Form of objectless Awareness.

Muruganar assures us that "even a dumb person will sing poems, live and vibrant; a lame man will run and cross mountains; the poisonous creeper of evil karma will wither away merely by the chanting of his name." This power of Bhagavan's name will accrue by his grace. Muruganar further assures that the one Name known to lead us to Deliverance is Ramana Namam. It encapsulates the content of the four Vedas and the essence of the ever-existent "I." Hence, constant mental repetition of the name leads to the realization of the "I" as Ramana, the Satguru.

The Ashram pivots one's attention to the Hill, which forms the majestic backdrop, while the Mountain seems to announce the Holy Abode of Bhagavan. His advent served to rekindle in the hearts of the people an abiding faith in all the spiritual glories of Arunachala. By remaining as all these, Bhagavan revealed the full grandeur of Arunachala. Bhagavan emphatically asserted that every particle of the Hill is equally holy when someone asked for a stone from the part of the Hill considered to be most sacred.

The same blazing radiance of Arunachala, which dispels darkness, reigns within the sacred environs of the Ashram. The Ashram, sanctified

[21] *Golden Jubilee Souvenir*, p. 168.
[22] *Smaranath Arunachala.*

by the footfalls of Bhagavan, is indeed a holy garden of jnana. The atmosphere of both the Hill itself and the ashram are identical, both vibrating with Truth, stillness, and the effulgence of jnana. This immensity of silence and fullness of presence impacts newcomers in mysterious ways, imparting knowledge that cannot be acquired through books. Both Arunachala and Bhagavan shine as the Holy Gurus.

Furthermore, Arunachala symbolizes the path of knowledge, and Bhagavan's mission was to restore that path. Both Arunachala and Bhagavan nourish the surrendered with inner strength and sweet grace, and they breathe the quiescence of Vedanta. Their abidance in silence demonstrates that nothing exists beyond this eternal quiescence. Both indeed are the *Holy of Holies*, as Muruganar says. He declares that he desires neither Vaikuntha, the celestial world, nor a royal throne, nor even the supreme grace that yields bliss, but instead longs to be born as a flower that adorns Sri Ramana, a butterfly in his garden, a fish in the Ashram tank, or a lark singing the glory of his Grace.[23]

After Bhagavan, the loving embodiment of jnana and love, merged into Arunachala, the natural manifestation of jnana, he continues to shine eternally in the imperishable macrocosmic form of Arunachala. Their irresistible call continues to claim seekers, and the silence they emanate awakens a desire and power to rise above the limitations of the body.

Any contact with the Hill, the tangible form of the true content, is indeed *satsang*. Similarly, any interaction with Bhagavan — whether by remembering him, reading about him, or reciting his works — constitutes true *satsang*. When either Bhagavan or Arunachala are approached with love and devotion, something profound and unfathomable is awakened or illuminated within. The ocean of Grace and Light rises and envelops seekers in its blissful nectar, manifesting its secret of bliss spring as a personal experience. Thus, the Hill and Bhagavan stand as Holy Beacons, with their unwavering flames guiding all who seek the truth.

It is no surprise that bees swarm in battalions to this garden of *satchitananda* — Bhagavan and Arunachala — to drink deeply from the nectar of bliss and joy. Let us offer the most fitting prayer of thoughtless awareness in the Temple of our Hearts to both – Kulachala. ▲

[23] *Prarthanaip Paththu.*

The True Karma Yogi

By Dr. T.N. Krishnaswami

Karma yoga is the doctrine of right activity and teaches us how to work without identifying ourselves with the worker. To the worldling, such identification is the only motive for action. He always identifies himself with the doer. Karma yoga is the technique of inner development which helps a man to remain alert amidst the entangling and hypnotising influence of life. It prevents him from being absorbed by the apparent aims of life. It teaches him that it is not in reality he who acts but a power passing through him. The Maharshi said,"Doer-ship pertains to the body; but you are not the body, so you are not the doer. Man is moved by another Power but he thinks he moves himself. He should make no effort either to work or to renounce work. Such effort is itself bondage." Whether to work or not is not left to a man's choice; it rests with a higher Power.

Karma yoga is based on the truth that attending to the inner Self involves also attending to one's outer duties. Non-attachment is the basic principle, but this does not mean indifference. It means a conscious separation or aloofness from external life. It means not being stirred by desires (which are always of the ego) but letting true nature act freely through one. Acting under the spur of desire is a form of slavery and never brings peace. The karma yogi acts with the same zest as the ignorant person whose incentive is the fruit of his actions, but his motive is different. He asks nothing for himself, seeks nothing, but yet is active in life. He realizes that he is just an

This article is taken from the 1965 January issue of Mountain Path.

actor playing his role in life. He acts freely in whatever walk of life he may be placed. He does not fall asleep and mistake the part he is playing in the drama for his true identity. He does not let his role play him. He does not use life's events for gratification of desires or moan over frustrations, both of which are manifestations of the ego, but practises non-identification. This frees him from the prison of the ego.

He is no longer a mass of habits, nor is he weighed down by duties to be discharged. He does not believe in the reality of himself as an individual. He has shaken off the delusion of an individual self and therewith the resultant delusion that this non-existent individual decides and acts. Everything happens as impersonally as dust carried by the wind. He knows that life is not explicable by itself. This theoretical understanding helps him to subdue his ego in practice. In whatever activity he may be engaged, he constantly rejects the impulses which make up the ego until it becomes as powerless as the moon in the daylight sky.

He works on himself by refusing to be led by the impulses of the ego, which insist on an out-going life. He knows that he is Spirit and that the ego is the cause of perplexity, making him identify himself with the activities of the body. The Maharshi says, "A man should not give up worldly activities but should give up desiring things for himself." He also says, "The motto should be: active life, selfless actions and continuous awareness of 'I.' The mind that is aware of 'I' may well attend to work of any kind. Such a mind is well protected. He who engages in the activities of life with the conviction 'I am the Self, I am not the body' is a karma yogi." A man should make no plans, for God, who has sent us here has His own plans and they alone will work. Does a karma yogi seek Liberation? No; how can there be liberation for one who was never bound?

The karma yogi finds himself in the midst of an alien world. Life to him is as insubstantial as a dream. The guiding principle of his life is that it shall not be made to subserve his 'I'-concept. Any other service he will gladly do. He will not work with or for the ego. He is a co-worker with the higher Power. He works neither for himself nor mankind but as a willing tool in the hands of God. His work may therefore be termed worship or sacrifice. But how is he to find this higher Power or to know its will?

It is enthroned in his own mind. He feels it in his consciousness. It is by constant contact with it that he derives life and light. For the ignorant worldling it is veiled by pre-occupation with the ego's desires and fears (and all desires and fears are of the ego). Nothing has to be achieved to make it available; the only work to be done is to clear the cloud of egoism that obscures it.

The karma yogi recognizes the work that has to be done and is ready to do it as an act of worship. Thus he turns whatever work he does into divine service. The Maharshi says, "Haven't men achieved great things in this impersonal way?" Their achievements are in the world, but they live in God.

Throughout his activity, the karma yogi keeps in view the indivisible totality underlying all actions of all actors. His ego does not dictate his actions, but they are not for that reason limp or feeble. They may even be terrible and monstrous in the eyes of worldlings, for destruction also may be a necessary undertaking. "Yoga is skill in action," no matter what that action may be. The karma yogi responds to actions and situations spontaneously because his personal will is dead. It is the personal will that insists on the fruits of one's actions. The karma yogi is moved by a Divine Will which is Universal Harmony.

It is not necessary for the karma yogi to deny himself proper clothes, good food, and satisfactory living conditions. Asceticism is undertaken as a means of war against the ego, but without understanding it leads nowhere and may even be seized upon by the ego; In fact, if there is understanding, asceticism is not necessary. The *Gita* rejects it. King Janaka is an example of a karma yogi who had no need for austerities. Either a king or a beggar may be a karma yogi, but it is not easy for either. The Maharshi says, "Willpower should mean the power to meet success or failure with equanimity." It should be used to destroy self-will. Inner detachment with outer activity, being — "in the world but not of it" — is the motto of the karma yogi.

The actor and his actions both issue simultaneously from one Source-Substance. He is just as much not-self as his actions. The Maharshi often explained that the mind can attend to outer activity at the same time as to the 'I' or Self. This is dhyana, and it is only the activity of one who is immersed in dhyana that can properly be called karma yoga. The actor and his activity and the emotions

which give rise to his activity—love and hate, fear and desire—are all phenomena passing like a film on the screen of the Self. Bhagavan said, "Let the body accomplish the work for which it came. The work allotted to it will be extracted from it. Everyone must take his allotted share and play his role in the life drama." Karma yoga is the calm detached state where the Self is an observer of the activities of the pseudo-subject who is the apparent actor. This right view fully and securely held is termed Liberation or Enlightenment. The karma yogi striving towards this final consummation is ever on his guard against his deadly enemy, the ego, which he may have to detect and expel in many various masks. When finally and securely attained the absence of ego is itself the presence of God, for God is no-ego, and no-ego is God. ▲

Prayer of Evolution

Suresh Kailash

My spider mind spins its web,
to trap the iridescent fly,

To consume it and feed on wings,
on which it freely flies,

I still don't know I too am trapped,
in this intricate web I weave,

Ramana, change me into a caterpillar,
and the butterfly it can be.

Advaita Primer

Part Ten

Analogies - III

M. Giridhar

In the first article of this series, we examined why we should study Advaita Vedanta. In the subsequent articles, we have examined the concepts of *jīva*, nirguna (without attributes) Brahman, jagat (world), and *saguṇa* Brahman (*iśvara*). Advaita Vedanta is known for its emphasis on non-duality, asserting that the ultimate reality (Brahman) is devoid of distinctions and that the individual soul (Atman) is fundamentally one with it. Various analogies are employed within Advaita Vedanta to elucidate these profound metaphysical ideas.

We had initially examined the most-often quoted and cited analogy, which is the rope and the snake (*rajju-sarpa-nyaya*). The purpose of this analogy[1] is to explain the most important, yet most misunderstood, concept of superimposition (*adhyasa*), i.e., mistaking one thing for another due to ignorance (*avidyā*). Consciousness is the fundamental nature of reality. Just as a snake is mistakenly perceived as a rope, the world is a superimposition on attributeless consciousness. Without realizing this, one mistakenly attributes absolute reality to what is seen, heard, smelled, touched, and tasted, when in truth, they are merely perceptions and apparent modifications of consciousness.

A common illustration in Advaita Vedanta is the analogy of a person walking at night who mistakes a post (*stambha*) for a ghost (*nara*) due to darkness and imperfect eyesight. This analogy, called the Ghost in the Post (*stambha-nara-nyāya*), illustrates a key concept

[1] "When a rope is mistaken for a snake, the snake does not exist apart from the rope, yet the snake is superimposed on the rope due to ignorance." *Vivekachudamani*, Verse 110.

in Vedanta philosophy. When light arrives, the post is seen clearly, and the mistaken ghost disappears. Similarly, Brahman is the eternal, unchanging reality. Our ignorance (*avidyā*) overlays the changing world onto Brahman, akin to mistaking a ghost for a post. In doing so, we attribute more reality to the changing phenomena than to the changeless substratum, Brahman. This analogy illustrates the concept of superimposition *(adhyāsa*), where one thing is falsely perceived as another.[2]

The analogy of Silver and the Shell / The Silver and the Nacre (*śuktirajata-nyāya*) is a famous illustration of superimposition (*adhyāsa*). Just as we mistakenly perceive nacre as silver[3], we mistakenly perceive the ever-changing world as our unchanging Self (Atman). This analogy encourages us to look beyond superficial appearances to discover the true reality. These analogies highlight the superimposition of the unreal (*mithyā*) on the real (Brahman). According to Advaita Vedanta, ignorance (*avidyā*) leads us to mistake our true Self for the body-mind-ego complex. Self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*) dispels this ignorance and reveals the true nature of reality.

The cause of this misperception is *avidyā*, or ignorance, arising in the mind. This is illustrated by the analogy of The Color in the Crystal (*sphatikavarna-nyāya*). Just as a clear crystal, which is pure and colorless, appears colored when placed next to a colored object, the attributeless Brahman seems to acquire the attributes of the limiting adjuncts (*upadhis*)[4] such as the three bodies (gross, subtle, and causal) and the three states of experience (waking, dreaming, and deep sleep). This superimposition makes Brahman appear finite and limited. The ego, identifying with the finite body-mind complex, then seeks fulfillment through various worldly experiences, much like a

[2] "Avidya or nescience, consisting in the superimposition of the non-Self (*anātman*) on the Self (*ātman*) or of the attributes of the one on the other, is the root cause of all false notions." *Brahma Sutra Bhasya*, 1.1.1

[3] "The mother-of-pearl appears as silver. Similarly, Brahman which is the Absolute and Blemishless Existence, Consciousness and Bliss being enveloped by ignorance, manifests itself as the creations in the world." Adi Shankara in the debate between him and Mandana Misra.

[4] "Just as the scarlet color of the *japā* flower is falsely ascribed to the white crystal (*sphatika*) stone, so also this entering of the semblance of Life is falsely ascribed to Life." *Taittriya Upanishad*, Chapter 3.1.

clear crystal might mistakenly believe it is taking on the attributes of a wilting rose.

One of the essential qualities for spiritual progress is discrimination (*viveka*), which involves distinguishing between what is real (sat) and what is unreal (*asat*). The analogy of the Mirage and the Water (*mṛgatṛṣṇikā-nyāya*) is often used to illustrate this concept. This analogy highlights the illusory nature of the world and suggests that worldly pleasures are transient and ultimately lead to suffering.

Just as a mirage appears to be water but is merely an illusion caused by the sun's rays, the world appears to be a source of lasting happiness but is actually a projection of ignorance. When Self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*) reveals that the world is unreal and incapable of providing permanent peace and happiness, one ceases to fervently pursue its objects, thereby avoiding the inevitable pain and suffering that follows.

The mirage analogy[5] serves to underscore the recognition that the sensual pleasures, name, and fame offered by the world are false promises. By understanding the transient nature of worldly desires, one is encouraged to seek lasting peace and liberation through Self-knowledge.

Just as the mirage illustrates the illusory nature of the material world, the Blue Sky Parable (*akashanilima-nyāya*) serves as another analogy used in Vedanta to convey how the reality can be misperceived. Just as the sky appears blue to the human eye, even though it lacks inherent color, our perception of the world around us is not always an accurate reflection of reality.[6]

In Vedanta, this analogy is frequently employed to underscore the illusory nature of the material world. While our senses and mental constructs shape how we perceive the world, its true essence is Brahman—the unchanging, eternal ultimate reality. Just as one comes to understand upon deeper reflection that the sky isn't truly

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[5] "These and Maya itself know thou to be the non-Self, and therefore unreal like the mirage in a desert." *Vivekachudamani*, v. 123.

[6] "But for delusion there can be no connection of the Self – which is unattached, beyond activity and formless – with the objective world, as in the case of blueness etc., with reference to the sky. Therefore the universe does not exist apart from the Supreme Self; and the perception of its separateness is false like the qualities (of blueness etc., in the sky)." *Vivekachudamani*, v. 195, 235.

blue, a spiritual seeker, through profound contemplation and self-inquiry, realizes the true nature of the Self. This realization leads to the dissolution of false perceptions of separation and an appreciation of the non-dual nature of reality.

Another perspective on this parable compares Brahman to the clear, expansive sky. Like the sky, Brahman is infinite and omnipresent, stretching boundlessly in all directions. The sky remains unchanged and undivided, despite the varied shapes and objects—clouds, birds, planes—that appear within it. Similarly, Brahman remains undivided and unmodified, though the world of names and forms exists within it.

Just as the sky is pure and unaffected by whatever happens in it, Brahman is absolutely pure and untouched by the happenings of the world and all its activities. The sky cannot be tainted or polluted by anything; while smoke may temporarily cover a portion of it, the sky itself remains inherently pure. Similarly, sins and impurities may cloud our perception of Brahman, but they do not affect Brahman itself. Just as the sky serves as the unchanging backdrop for everything in space, Brahman serves as the pure, infinite, eternal backdrop of existence on which the entire phenomenal world operates.

Brahman is the underlying omnipresent reality that is non-dual. Brahman is present everywhere, even within the limitations of the body-mind complex. This is illustrated by the analogy of The Space and the Pot (*ghaṭākāśa-nyāya*).[7] The same space that pervades the entire universe also exists inside a single pot. The space within the jar can seemingly be differentiated from the total space due to its being enclosed by the jar. However, the space is not affected by the partition created by the jar's shell. When the jar is broken, the space inside the jar merges with the total space, having undergone no change at any time. Just as space pervades both inside and outside a pot, Brahman is present everywhere, both within and outside the individual. This analogy emphasizes the omnipresence of Brahman.

The first step in recognizing Brahman that it is unattached to emotions and ego. The analogy of The Lotus-Leaf and the Water

[7] "As, when a jar is broken, the space enclosed by it becomes palpably the limitless space, so when the apparent limitations are destroyed, the knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman Itself." *Vivekachudamani*, v. 565.

(*padmapatra-nyāya*) illustrates this concept effectively. Just as rainwater falls on a lotus leaf but rolls off without wetting or attaching to it, Brahman remains untainted by the countless worlds, experiences, phenomena, emotions, and thoughts that appear within its scope. Just as water does not wet the lotus leaf, so too do virtues and vices taint the Self. This highlights the unchanging and eternal nature of Brahman. The Air and the Scent (*vatagandha-nyāya*) analogy also emphasizes the nature of Brahman as being unattached. Just as air carries scents without becoming scented itself, Brahman supports the universe without being affected by it.

The second step in understanding Brahman is that we recognize that duality is only seemingly real but is actually unreal. The underlying unity of reality is illustrated by the analogy of The Gold and the Ornaments (*kanakakundala-nyāya*). All things are ultimately made of consciousness. This analogy demonstrates that the various names and forms of this world are only seemingly different, for all are essentially nothing other than consciousness. Just as bracelets, bangles, and other items made of gold are not different from gold, so too the universe proceeding from the Imperishable (Brahman) is not different from it.[8]

Another illustrative analogy is that of the Clay and the Pot (*mrittika-ghata-nyāya*). A potter takes a lump of clay (*mṛttika*) and molds it into a pot (*ghaṭa*). Before it was shaped into a pot, it was clay. Even after assuming the form of a pot, its essence remains clay. The pot may change shape, break, or be reshaped, but fundamentally, it is always clay.[9] Just as clay manifests as a pot, Brahman manifests as the universe and all its diverse forms, including the body-mind complex. Each form is inseparable from Brahman, just as the pot cannot exist apart from the clay. This analogy underscores the central teaching of Advaita Vedanta that Brahman alone is real, and the world of forms is perceived as real due to ignorance of Brahman, the ultimate reality from which all emerges. The universe is a manifestation of the

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[8] "That Reality which (though One) appears variously owing to delusion, taking on names and forms, attributes and changes, Itself always unchanged, like gold in its modifications - that Brahman art thou, meditate on this in thy mind." *Vivekachudamani*, v. 262.

[9] "All transformation has speech as its basis, and it is name only. Clay as such is real." *Chandogya Upanishad,* 6.1.4.

unchanging Brahman, just as a pot is a form of clay. There is no true separation between them. Ignorance leads us to mistake the temporary forms (the pot) for ultimate reality (the clay).[10]

The analogy of The Wave and the Ocean (*samudrataranga-nyāya*) says that, although countless waves roll in the vast ocean, and each wave can be distinguished from the others and perceived separately, all are merely water and are not separate from the great ocean itself. In reality, all are one; the difference is only apparent. This analogy illustrates that all the innumerable apparent individuals (*jīvas*) in this universe, though perceived to be separate, are in reality made of the same substance as the singular ocean of consciousness, whose nature is existence-consciousness-fullness (*satchidananda*). In truth, their diversity or difference is only apparent, not actual.[11]

The question of why the single Reality appears as duality is addressed by the analogy of The Sun and Its Reflections (*sūrya-bimba-nyāya*). This analogy demonstrates that non-duality is the one reality manifested through many forms. Just as there is only one sun illuminating all the worlds, yet it is reflected in various bodies of water such as ponds, tanks, and rivers, so too is there only one absolute existence, which is limitless consciousness (Brahman). The sun's reflections may vary, but the sun itself remains singular and unchanging. Similarly, Brahman, the absolute reality, is reflected through various limiting adjuncts (*upadhis*) as the myriad worlds and apparent individuals (*jīvas*). From this perspective, the universe is merely *pratibimba* (reflections) of the One Reality.[12]

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[10] "All modifications of clay, such as the jar, which are always accepted by the mind as real, are (in reality) nothing but clay. Similarly, this entire universe which is produced from the real Brahman, is Brahman Itself and nothing but That." *Vivekachudamani*, v. 251.

[11] "Imagine that the whole cosmos is a vast ocean, and in that ocean there are waves. Some of the waves are huge and some of them are very small, maybe only ripples. But it is the same water. Similarly, there is one Existence, but we see diversity. This diversity, however, is only in name and form. It is not real. Underlying the diversity is one Existence, and that Existence is our own Self." *Chandogya Upanishad*, 7.25.1.

[12] "The wise man leaves aside the jar, the water and the reflection of the sun in it, and sees the self-luminous sun which illumines these three and is independent of them." *Vivekachudamani*, v. 219.

The analogy of The Butter in the Milk further illustrates the omnipresence of Brahman. Just as butter or ghee is inherently present in every drop of milk, even though it is not immediately visible, Brahman pervades every aspect of existence, though it is imperceptible and attributeless. The potential for butter resides in the milk, and similarly, Brahman is the underlying reality of everything, concealed within worldly appearances and requiring the means of knowledge to be revealed. The focus on worldly pursuits often obscures the consciousness of Brahman, but it remains the essence of existence itself.[13]

The analogy of The Chandelier and the Electricity (*pradeepakshakti-nyāya*) illustrates Brahman as the basis of all existence. Just as a chandelier consists of bulbs of different colors and forms, but all the light originates from a single source of electricity, Brahman is the singular, non-dual reality that underlies the diversity of the universe. The light from the chandelier, though varied in hue, depends on the common source of electricity. Similarly, all forms and worlds, though diverse, depend on the limitless, non-dual consciousness (Brahman) for their existence.

The analogy of The Spider and the Web (*ūrnaṇābhi-nyāya*) illustrates Brahman as both the source of creation and the manifestation of the world.[14] Just as a spider spins its web from its own silk and can retract it back into itself, the world is an extension of Brahman and is entirely one with it. The web, made from the spider's own substance, reflects the spider's essence. Similarly, the universe emerges from Brahman and is essentially Brahman manifesting in various forms. This analogy demonstrates that consciousness alone is real, and the world is a projection of this singular consciousness.[15]

Meditation on Brahman is central to Advaita Vedanta, as emphasized by the analogy of The Wasp and the Insects (*bhramara-kīta-nyāya*). The wasp, by stinging and thus poisoning the insects it brings to its hive, makes these insects continuously feel its presence. The insects, now

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[13] "Like the butter hidden in milk, the pure consciousness resides in every being that ought to be constantly churned out by the churning rod of the mind." *Amritabindu Upanishad,* v. *20*.

[14] *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*, 6.1.

[15] "Just as a spider projects its own web and then re-absorbs it into its own body, so also That One Reality projects this variegated universe and then absorbs it back into it." *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1.1.7.

always aware of the wasp, eventually become one with it. This analogy illustrates that meditation on the oneness of reality, encapsulated in the statement *tat tvam asi* (You are That), leads to Self-realization. The *jīva* (individual self) ultimately recognizes that the perceived separation from the Whole is an illusion, and the true nature of reality is non-dual.[16]

Meditation is not about seeking to acquire anything new but about removing ignorance. The analogy of The Woman and the Necklace (*strī-mālā-nyāya*) is used here. A woman who forgets she is wearing her prized gold necklace around her neck searches frantically for it, only to be reminded by her husband that it is already with her. Similarly, the seeker searches for completeness, peace, and happiness through external pursuits and experiences, not realizing that these qualities are inherent within. Both gross experiences (such as pleasure or status) and subtle spiritual experiences are distinct from one's true self. The search for fulfillment in external objects is misguided, as one's true nature is already present, obscured only by ignorance.[17]

The analogy of The Seed and the Tree (*bīja-vṛkṣa-nyāya*) highlights the inter-connectedness and cyclical nature of existence. The seed is both the origin of the tree and the tree's source of future seeds, illustrating the interdependence between cause and effect. This cyclical relationship underscores that all phenomena are interconnected, with each form implying a corresponding source.

The futility of asking uninformed questions is exemplified by The Teeth of a Crow (*kākadanta-nyāya*). Searching for the teeth of a crow is pointless because crows do not have teeth. This analogy illustrates that questions such as "Why did a perfect God create an imperfect world?" are inherently flawed until one attains Self-knowledge and understands the true nature of God and existence. Such questions become irrelevant once the underlying reality of absolute consciousness is realized.

Maya, or illusion, obscures Brahman, as demonstrated by The Smoke and the Fire (*dhūma-agni-nyāya*). Just as smoke, though originating from fire, can obscure its light, maya veils the clear

[16] "The meditator affirms his being Brahman and thus becomes Brahman actually." *Moksha Gita* 4.3.

[17] "It is not new. It amounts to elimination of ignorance and nothing more." *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 245.

recognition of Brahman and creates the illusion of diversity. Maya manifests within Brahman, presenting a world of apparent multiplicity, while Brahman remains the singular, unchanging reality. This analogy emphasizes that Brahman is the essence behind all forms and the foundation of the universe.

The Thread and the Necklace (*sūtra-mālā-nyāya*) analogy illustrates the unity underlying diversity. The beads of a necklace are strung together by a single, though invisible, thread. This thread, while not visible, binds and supports the beads. Similarly, Ishvara (God) is the unseen but essential reality that connects and sustains all forms and existence. This analogy emphasizes that Brahman is the fundamental reality that underpins the apparent diversity of the universe.

The *jīva*, or individual self, is contrasted with the body-mind complex through The Wearer and the Apparel (*vāsā-varaṇa-nyāya*) analogy. Just as a person changes their clothes while remaining unchanged, the *jīva* discards old bodies and assumes new ones, while remaining pure consciousness. This illustrates that the *jīva* remains unaffected by the changes and eventual death of the body.[18]

The Chameleon (*kṛkālasa-nyāya*) analogy underscores the non-dual nature of reality. A chameleon changes colors to blend with its environment, yet it remains the same chameleon. Those who only see the chameleon in one color may mistakenly believe it is only that color, while a broader observation reveals its true nature. This analogy illustrates that while the world presents various forms and dualities, the underlying reality (Brahman) remains singular and unchanging. The jnani perceives the oneness of Brahman despite the apparent diversity.

The Two Thorns (*dvāṅgulī-nyāya*) analogy is used to illustrate the removal of ignorance through knowledge. Just as one thorn can be used to remove another from the foot, ignorance and its negative effects are removed through the cultivation of wisdom. Dualities and misconceptions are transcended once Self-knowledge is attained.

The Two Birds (*dvau pakṣī*) analogy depicts the relationship between the *jīva* and Paramatman (Supreme Self). Two birds reside in the same tree; one indulges in the tree's fruits, while the other remains

[18] "As a person puts on new garments, giving up old ones, similarly, the soul accepts new material bodies, giving up the old and useless ones." *Bhagavad Gita*, 2.22.

detached and content.[19] This illustrates that while the individual self (*jīva*) is involved in worldly experiences, the true Self (Paramatman) remains detached and unaffected, observing the experiences from a state of completeness.[20]

The Barber and His Son (*kṣaurika-putra-nyāya*) story highlights how attachment clouds judgment. It reflects a man's natural fondness for his own possessions, no matter how ugly or undesirable they may seem to others. The analogy originates from a story where a king asked his barber to find the most handsome boy in the kingdom. The barber, charmed by his own son's appearance — despite his deformities — presented him to the king. This illustrates how attachment to worldly things and experiences creates a distorted sense of self and reality, hindering one's ability to realize the true nature of Brahman.

The Stone and the Mud (*aśma-loṣṭa-nyāya*) analogy shows that value is subjective and dependent on context. Mud is soft compared to stone but hard compared to cotton, demonstrating that objects are value-neutral and their perceived worth is relative to what they are compared against. This emphasizes that value judgments are inherently subjective.

The Worms and the Poison (*viṣa-krīmi-nyāya*) analogy illustrates the relativity of value and happiness. Worms thriving in poisonous substances find contentment in their environment, which would be detrimental to others. This highlights that what is valued or desired is relative and influenced by one's ignorance of a higher truth.

The Crow and the Fruit (*kākātāla-nyāya*) analogy cautions against mistaking coincidental events for causation. The simultaneous occurrence of a crow landing on a branch and a fruit falling is merely coincidental, not causal. This reminds us to avoid jumping to conclusions based on observed correlations and to recognize the spontaneity and unpredictability of life.

The Star in the Sky (*arundhati-nyāya*) analogy demonstrates the gradual approach to Self-knowledge. A faint star is identified by first

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[19] "Two birds, inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit, the other looks on without eating." *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3.1.

[20] "On the same tree man sits grieving, immersed, bewildered by his own impotence (*anîsâ*). But when he sees the other lord (*îsâ*) content and knows his glory, then his grief passes away." *Svetâsvatara Upanishad*, 4.7.

pointing to a brighter one, symbolizing the step-by-step evolution from physical practices to the realization of Brahman. This analogy highlights the method of superimposition and negation (*adhyāropa-apavāda*) used in Vedanta to reveal the true nature of reality.

Just as the post is mistaken for a ghost, we often mistake our true self for the body-mind complex and the world due to ignorance (*avidya*). We chase after sensory pleasures, similar to a person fleeing from an imagined ghost. With the dawn of Self-knowledge, the light reveals that the dualistic, ever-changing world exists inseparably from Consciousness. Consciousness has always been the singular, unchanging reality, just as the post remains a post. Our fears and efforts arise from ignorance, just as the person's fear of the ghost stems from misunderstanding.[21] Thus, this analogy illustrates how ignorance creates illusions and obscures the true nature of the self. Removing ignorance dispels the error and unveils Brahman, much like light reveals the post. It underscores the central tenet of Advaita that Brahman alone is real, and the ever-changing world is a transient appearance born of *avidya*. The essence is Brahman without a second.[22] The illusion of being separate from Brahman leads to the common human pursuit of prominence, wealth, beauty, love, and recognition, as individuals attempt to quell the existential angst of feeling small and alone in the vast universe.

Vedanta teaches that our mind projects its own limitations onto the world, creating the illusion of separateness from Brahman. The need for Self-knowledge is emphasized. In our ignorance (*avidya*), we often mistake the transient forms (*mithya*) for reality (*satyam*), just as one might mistake the pot as something distinct from the clay and assume that the pot has an existence independent from the clay. When the light of Self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*) dawns, we realize that our true nature is not the body-mind complex but Atman, the Self. Just as recognizing the pot as clay dispels the illusion of the pot's separateness, realizing our identity with Brahman dispels the notion of our separation from the ultimate reality. Consciousness, like clay, remains the singular,

[21] "He who knows that this body is the city of Brahman, and that Brahman dwells in it, does not grieve." *Chandogya Upanishad*, 8.1.1.

[22] "Brahman is the only reality, the world is illusory, and there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and the individual self." *Vivekachudamani*, v. 20.

unchanging reality, even as the forms it assumes, like the pot, appear and disappear. All our fears and desires stem from ignorance, mirroring the mistaken belief in the pot's separation from clay. This analogy vividly illustrates how ignorance creates illusion and conceals the true nature of the Self. Removing ignorance reveals Brahman, just as recognizing the pot as clay reveals the clay's inherent nature.

We summarize various analogies. When we lack correct knowledge, we might mistake a rope for a snake or a post for a ghost.[23] Similarly, the lack of knowledge of Brahman, which is pure consciousness, leads us to perceive consciousness as the universe. Just as all gold ornaments are essentially gold,[24] all objects born of Brahman are always Brahman. The deluded might mistake a rope for a snake, nacre for silver,[25] mud for a pot, thread for cloth, gold for an earring, water for a wave, a tree trunk for a person at night, a mirage for water, wood for a house, and iron for a sword. Similarly, the ignorant person mistakes the Atman for the body. Just as we falsely imagine a blue color in the formless void of the sky, we falsely imagine the entire universe in Brahman. Waves, foam and tides are expressions of water,[26] and different copper vessels are expressions of copper. Similarly, all appearances in the universe are expressions of Brahman. Clay, in a particular form, is named and perceived as a pot, and thread as cloth.[27] Brahman is understood as the universe similarly. Pot and cloth are just names given to clay and thread in specific forms. When these names and forms are dropped, only clay and thread remain. Likewise, Brahman is recognized by dropping the names and forms in the universe and seeing everyone as Self.[28] Sea

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[23] "The real nature of the rope being known, the appearance of the snake no longer persists; so the substratum being known, the phenomenal world disappears completely." *Aparokshanubhuti*, v. 96.

[24] "Just as a thing made of gold ever has the nature of gold, so also a being born of Brahman has always the nature of Brahman." *Aparokshanubhuti*, v. 51.

[25] "Just as a rope is imagined to be a snake and a nacre to be a piece of silver, so is the Atman determined to be the body by an ignorant person." *Aparokshanubhuti*, v. 70.

[26] "What was denoted by the term 'water' alone before the manifestation of foam as such is denoted by the term 'foam' after its manifestation, though really foam is nothing but water." *Aitareya Upanishad Bhasya*,1.1.

[27] "Just as earth is thought of as a jar (made of it) and threads as a cloth, so is Atman." *Aparokshanubhuti*, v. 71.

[28] "He sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings." *Isavasyopanishad*, 6.

water processed into salt solidifies, and when dissolved back into the sea, it loses its name and form. Similarly, a realized soul loses its name and form and dissolves into Brahman[29] and no more doubts remain.[30]

Brahman appears limited just like space in a pot.[31] The sun reflects in different waters and may appear stable or unstable, clean or unclean, depending on the water's nature. The sun itself remains unaffected, shining with its natural splendor. Similarly, Brahman, though appearing in different ways due to its association with different adjuncts, remains unaffected and shines forth in its true nature.[32] It is the inherent quality of fire to be hot, give light etc., and similarly, existence, consciousness, bliss, permanence, and purity are the inherent properties of Atman/Brahman.

These analogies aid in making abstract concepts more accessible, allowing individuals to grasp the essence of Advaita Vedanta and its assertion of the ultimate unity underlying the apparent diversity of the world. The Silkworm and the Cocoon (*aṭavī-vṛkṣa-nyāya*) analogy represents the journey from entrapment to liberation. The silkworm's cocoon, created from its own threads, symbolizes the ego and ignorance that entraps us. Just as the silkworm can break free from the cocoon, we too can liberate ourselves by recognizing our true nature as Brahman. This analogy emphasizes the importance of overcoming ignorance and attachment to transcend the cycle of birth and death (*samsāra*) and realize our true nature as pure consciousness.

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[29] "A person who has realized that he is the Self (Brahman) becomes one with Brahman, just like salt dissolved in water." *Sata Sloki*, v.46.

[30] "When that Self, which is both high, as the cause and low as the effect, is realized as "I am this", then the knot of the heart is cut, all doubts are dispelled and all accumulated karma is destroyed." *Mundakopanishad*, 2.2.8.

[31] "The *jīvas* appear as many, different from one another and limited beings, only because of the limiting adjunct, the intellect, just as the space inside a pot, though not different from the total infinite space, appears to be limited by the size of the pot." *Kathopanishad*, 5.9 and 5.10.

[32] "Brahman is not at all affected by the nature of the reflecting medium, the mind, and ever remains the same and immutable. *Sata Sloki*, v. 51. "Just as the sun, the eye of the whole world, is not tainted by the defects of the creatures on earth or by the defects in the external world, so also, the one Self, the indweller of all beings, is not affected by the sorrows of the world, because the Self is transcendental." *Kathopanishad*, 2.2.11.

Analogies play a crucial role in Advaita Vedanta by simplifying complex metaphysical concepts, making them accessible to the seeker. Since Advaita's core teaching revolves around the non-dual nature of reality — the oneness of Brahman (the ultimate reality) and the Atman (the Self) — analogies help illustrate how this abstract truth can be understood by the human mind.

Analogies like these aid in dissolving intellectual doubts by bridging the gap between the tangible and intangible, leading to a clearer comprehension of the ultimate truth. They provide a concrete framework for contemplating the abstract nature of Advaita's teachings, such as the oneness of the self (Atman) and Brahman. By using familiar objects and experiences, analogies make these subtle, often paradoxical ideas more relatable and easier to grasp.

However, our aim in Advaita is not merely to understand the philosophy intellectually. The ultimate goal is liberation (*moksha*) — to escape samsāra, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, which is driven by ignorance (*avidya*) and attachment. In this journey, analogies serve as stepping stones, but they must lead beyond intellectual comprehension to direct experience.

True realization occurs when the seemingly separate self, which identifies with the ego and body-mind complex, recognizes itself as non-different from the limitless, eternal, and boundless Self (Brahman). This is not just an intellectual conclusion but a profound experiential shift. The analogies used in Advaita Vedanta, while helpful, must eventually be transcended, allowing the seeker to move from understanding to direct experience — the dissolution of the ego and the recognition of one's true nature as the infinite consciousness.

Grace is essential in understanding Advaita Vedanta because the realization of non-duality transcends intellectual effort. While study and contemplation are necessary, ultimate knowledge is revealed only when the mind is purified and the ego's hold is loosened. Grace opens the heart and mind to the truth that cannot be grasped through reasoning alone.

Thus, while understanding Advaita through analogies is possible and extremely valuable, true realization can only occur through the grace of our Guru, Arunachala Ramana. ▲

Tirukkuṛaḷ: The Wisdom of Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar

M.R. Kodhandram

8. அறவாழி அந்தணன் தாள்சேர்ந்தார்க்கு அல்லால்
பிறவாழி நீந்தல் அரிது.
aṛavāzhi andaṇan tāḷ-sērndārkku allāl
piṛavāzhi nīndal aridu.

Meaning

It is very difficult to cross the ocean of birth without surrendering to the feet of a Sage who has reached His destination and who is an ocean of Virtue and Wisdom (and following His teachings).

[பிறவாழி = பிறவிக்கடல், the ocean of birth; பிறவாழி நீந்தல் அரிது = It is very difficult to cross the ocean of birth; அறவாழி = who is an ocean of virtue and wisdom; அந்தணன் = one who has reached his destination, a Sage; தாள் சேர்ந்தார்க்கு அல்லால் = without surrendering to the feet]

Commentary

Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar is consistently emphasising the value of surrender to the Sadguru or God. Here, he is telling us that it is very difficult to cross the ocean of birth and death without surrendering to the feet of a Sadguru. A Sadguru is different from a Guru in that he has already reached the supreme destination, which is to attain the Self. He is abiding in the Self as a *jivanmukta* and He is still there as a *videhamukta* even after giving up his body. Whereas a Guru is not necessarily a liberated person though he is evolved and has the experience of the Self. He has not yet reached the supreme destination and is still on the Path. He knows the path clearly and is in a position

to guide others from the outside. In fact, it is only the Sadguru who guides us through the outer guru. Only the Sadguru can help a sadhaka in his inner journey as he has already become one with the Self.

The knowledge which the outer guru gives is like the fire that ignites a rocket launch. But during its flight, it is guided by the scientist from the mission control to its destination. Similarly, during the practice of the teachings and sadhana, it is the Sadguru who guides the sadhaka to his inner destination, the Self. He has already reached the destination and achieved the purpose of life; therefore, he can help others also to reach the destination when they pray to him. Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar refers to him as *andaṇan* which means one who has reached the destination (*andam*) and become one with it (*aṇan*).

The outer Guru shows you the way by teaching you all that is required for your spiritual progress. He also helps to push the mind inside from outside. Thereafter, it is the Sadguru, the inner Guru, who can help you when you actually practise the teachings and do the Sadhana to reach the Self within. He pulls the mind from within when you do the Sadhana. He is an ocean of virtue and wisdom as he has become one with the Self. Ocean indicates a limitless nature. His qualities of virtue and wisdom are limitless. Therefore, he can help us to lead a life of virtue and wisdom like him so that we do not add any more karmas in our life.

When we lead a life of virtue and practise the teachings given by the Guru/Sadguru, we would be able to reach our destination which is the Self by the Grace of the Guru and Sadguru and attain the Supreme Knowledge, or jnana through abidance in the Self. If we do not reach the final destination at the end of our lifespan, which is to merge with the Self and become one with it, we have to come back to this world again in yet another body and go through all the miseries of *samsara* once again. It is like how a student who fails in a class has to go back to the same class till he passes all the exams. Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar is using the term 'ocean of birth' to impress upon us the numerous births (*janmas*) we have taken in this world in different forms in our life's journey and yet unable to reach our true and ultimate destination. It also indicates the magnitude of the task that is before us. The ocean is full of waves, so too, life in this world is full of ups and downs. To cross such a turbulent ocean of *samsara* we need the help of an able

boatman who knows the way thoroughly. That is the role of a Sadguru. In *Aksharamanamalai*, Stanza 79, Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi says, "O Arunachala, graciously protect me so that I may not (struggle) like a ship tossing in a great storm (in the turbulent ocean of samsara) without a captain (or Guru to steer it to safety)."

Thus, the Guru is the captain of our ship of life. And without an able Guru/Sadguru to protect us and guide us when we are facing big troubles, we may sink in life. This is what Bhagavan is indicating in this stanza. Without the guidance of a Guru and Sadguru, our progress will be only limited and we cannot attain the highest goal of Liberation. Our life is full of ups and downs like the waves of the ocean. It is not like a smooth ride on an expressway. Every now and then we face different problems and situations which can trouble us immensely. At all such times, if we don't have the right knowledge, strength of mind, or support, we may struggle and at times sink and be ruined. The situations we face may be small or big and they are due to the karmas we have created in the past fructifying now as per our *prarabdha*. If we have the support of a Guru or a well-wisher who can guide us properly at this juncture, we will be able to see through the problem without getting much affected.

Thus we need to surrender to our Guru and Sadguru with faith and devotion and practise his teachings to cross this ocean of birth and death in which we are caught for numerous *janmas*, and reach the other shore of no return.

9. கோளில் பொறியில் குணமிலவே எண்குணத்தான்
தாளை வணங்காத் தலை.
kōḷ-il poṛiyil guṇam-ilavē eṇguṇattān
tāḷai vaṇaṅgāt talai.

Meaning

All the knowledge a person has gained will be of no value, as it will not become an experience (as Wisdom) without (surrendering) in devotion to the feet of a (Sadguru) of glorious virtues (and obtaining His Grace).

[கோளில் = will not (become) an experience; பொறியில் = in the Knowledge, the knowledge one has; குணம் = merit, value, virtue,

character; இலவே = without; எண் = glory, knowledge, number, several, numerous; குணத்தான் = having virtues; தாளை = feet; வணங்குதல் = to worship, devotion; தலை = person]

Commentary

This is similar to the second *Kuṛaḷ*. It is not enough if you just read books and acquire knowledge. It is only information. You need to ponder over the knowledge obtained thoroughly to develop the right understanding. Subsequently, you need to apply it in your day-to-day life and only then will it transform your life. Knowledge unapplied in action is an utter waste and would only be a burden in the head and add to one's vanity. Suppose you study Civil Engineering, will somebody employ you straightaway to build a bridge on a river? Your employer will prefer only the person who has prior experience in bridge construction. Therefore, knowledge alone is not sufficient but we need to apply it in practice and gain experience. The knowledge should become a feeling in you. Only then, you will be confident and capable of executing similar jobs in the future. Suppose you have learnt all about an apple from a book, would you be able to know what an apple is? Unless you taste the apple yourself, your knowledge will be of no use.

Thus we need to experience what we have learnt and only then the knowledge will become our own and this is known as Wisdom. Is there not a difference between a knowledgeable person and a wise person? Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar is teaching us so many morals and ethics in *Tirukkuṛaḷ*, but can we put them to practice straightaway? We need the Grace of the Lord and *punya* karmas for achieving success.

Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar says that in order to apply our knowledge to practice, we need to surrender in devotion to a Sadguru and only by his Grace we would be able to practise the knowledge we have gained and elevate ourselves. He describes the Sadguru as one who has glorious virtues (எண்குணத்தான்). The term எண்குணத்தான் also means a number of virtues or numerous virtues. He has so many wonderful qualities such as compassion, kindness, charity, divinity, knowledge, clarity, love, patience, forgiveness, etc., which we should try to emulate. Only then we would be able to evolve in life. The term எண்குணத்தான் also means knowledge plus character. There are many who have the knowledge but not the character, like Ravana.

Thus, a Sadguru is one who not only has the supreme knowledge due to Self-Realisation but also a great character worthy of worship and emulation as he has attained the highest state of evolution. We have to surrender to such a Sadguru with devotion and faith and obtain his Grace to progress faster on the spiritual path of no return. Otherwise, all the knowledge we have gained will not be fruitful to gain the ultimate experience of Self-Realisation which alone would liberate us from *samsara*.

10. பிறவிப் பெருங்கடல் நீந்துவர் நீந்தார்
இறைவன் அடி சேராதார்.
piṛavip peruṅkaḍal nīnduvar nīndār
iṛaivan aḍi sērādār.

Meaning

None can cross the great ocean of birth (except) those who surrender to the feet of God.

[பிறவிப் பெருங்கடல் நீந்துவர் = swim or cross the great ocean of birth; நீந்தார் = cannot swim or cross; இறைவன் அடி சேராதார் = who have not surrendered to the feet of God]

Commentary

Again and again, Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar is emphasising the importance of surrender to the Lord in order to cross the great ocean of birth and death. He says that we cannot cross this ocean and reach the other shore except by the Grace of the Lord who is referred to as *iṛaivan* which means one who is spread everywhere (இறைந்து இருப்பது) or all-pervading. We need the help of an experienced captain to take this boat of life across the turbulent ocean of samsara. If we surrender ourselves to the feet of the Lord in devotion and hold on to Him in faith, he would come in the guise of a Guru and guide us to safety. God helps his devotees only through a Guru.

Therefore, we need to pray to God to give us a Guru who will show us the way to Liberation. The Guru does not come into our life whenever we want but only when we deserve it. Thus we need to become deserving of a Guru by doing a number of *punya* karmas and keeping our prayers and devotion strong to the Lord. Then a Guru will walk into our life and guide us so that we may be able to cross the great ocean of samsara and

achieve the purpose of life. Surrender is the best way to overcome the mighty ego. And only through the destruction of the ego can we reach the feet of God who shines as the Self, or Atma in the Hearts of all. The Self is the real Guru or Sadguru for all. He alone guides us through a Guru so that we may seek Him and unite with Him in our own Heart. This is the way to cross the ocean of *samsara* which is huge or great and attain Mukti. Those who do not surrender to the Guru or God will have to struggle in the ocean of *samsara* and probably drown in it to be born again and again. Thus, we not only need to put in self-effort, but also surrender to our Guru and Sadguru and hold onto them always to gain their Grace, to overcome all the obstacles on our path and reach the other shore of no return to *samsara*.

2. Greatness of Rain

11. வானின்று உலகம் வழங்கி வருதலால்
தான்அமிழ்தம் என்றுணரல் பாற்று.
vāninḍṛu ulagam vazhaṅgi varudalāl
tān-amizhdam enḍṛuṇaral pāṭṛu.

Meaning

Only because of rainfall, life in the world is sustained; (hence,) it must be considered as the nectar of life.

[வான் = rain; வானின்று = மழையிலிருந்து = from rainfall; தான் = only; உலகம் வழங்கி வருதலால் = life in the world is sustained; அமிழ்தம் என்று உணரல் பாற்று = (hence), it must be considered as the nectar of life]

Commentary

Here Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar has used the word *amizhdam* (or *amrit*) to describe rain. The word not only means nectar or ambrosia but also food and water. Water is that which keeps life going in this world and without it, life would become extinct. That is why it is known as nectar because it keeps you alive. It is the main food that sustains life. You can live without other foods for many days but not without water. Even those who fast will continue to drink water as it is so essential for survival. Thus it is indispensable and valuable to life. And water comes only through rains. Moreover, water is required for agriculture

to provide food for all. Thus we need to realise the value of water and try to conserve it for our benefit. We should not waste water in any way as you are aware how water has become a scarce commodity in many places due to urbanisation and population explosion. We should also not pollute water bodies as they are indispensable for the sustainment of life on this planet.

16. விசும்பின் துளிவீழின் அல்லால் மற்றாங்கே
பசும்புல் தலைகாண்பு அரிது.
visumbin tuḷi-vīzhin allāl maṯŗāṅgē
pasumpul talai-kāṇbu aridu.

Meaning

If showers do not fall from the sky, it will be very difficult (even) for a green blade of grass to show its head.

[விசும்பின் = from the sky; துளிவீழின் அல்லால் = if showers do not fall; மற்று ஆங்கே = அசைகள், expletives; பசும்புல் தலை காண்பு அரிது = it will be very difficult (even) for a green blade of grass to show its head]

Commentary

Grass is something that grows very easily in any soil with even little rain, but even this will not grow when there are no showers from the sky. If even grass fails to grow, you can imagine what will be the state of other crops and plants which require much more water for their growth. If grass is not available, even the cows which give us milk will find it difficult to survive. Thus Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar is showing us the importance of rains to sustain life in the world. In today's world it is all the more relevant because of excess population which leads to problems of shortage. We have also destroyed much of the forests which contribute to rains and their percolation into the soil. Therefore, we need to wake up and protect our water resources and environment very carefully.

17. நெடுங்கடலும் தன்நீர்மை குன்றும் தடிந்தெழிலி
தான் நல்காதாகி விடின்.
neḍuṅkaḍalum tan-nīrmai kunḍŗum taḍindezhili
tān nalgādāgi viḍin.

Meaning

Even a large ocean will diminish in its natural quality if the rain clouds after drawing water from it fail to give it back.

[நெடுங்கடலும் = Even a large ocean; தன் நீர்மை குன்றும் = will diminish in its natural quality; எழிலி தடிந்து = the rain clouds after drawing water (from the ocean); தான் = it; தான் நல்காது ஆகிவிடின் = if it fails to give it back, fails to pour it out]

Commentary

The water from the ocean evaporates by the action of the sunlight and rises high to form the clouds, which pour down as rains to form the rivers, which once again go back to the ocean from where they originated. Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar says that if the clouds do not give back the water they take from the ocean, the ocean will shrink in size and quality. It may become more saltish which may affect the creatures living in the sea and the plants growing in it. Even if the rainwater is prevented from flowing back to the sea through numerous dams, etc., the sea water will become saltier and it will affect the water quality in the lands nearby. The water in these areas will become saline and thus uninhabitable. But what Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar is telling here is only metaphorical. We all take so many things from society as we grow up in life. We take the help of the government, parents, relatives, teachers and friends in ever so many ways. And we need to repay these in our own way when we grow up and start earning. We need to contribute to the society which helped us to grow in life. Only then, our society will thrive and our future generations will be able to derive the same benefits as we got. What Sage Tiruvaḷḷuvar is saying here is that the social capital will diminish, if those who draw from it fail to return it when they have the means.

Thus we all need to help others in the society who may be underprivileged so that they too will be able to receive all the benefits of life such as education, employment and health care. Therefore, we need to work hard and contribute to our capacity physically, financially and intellectually for the society to progress and prosper. Those who go abroad after being educated here should invest part of their earnings in their home country and also contribute intellectually by sharing their knowledge with others for

the welfare of the country which had educated them. They should not forget their country which had helped them to grow. Thus we should show our gratitude to the society by ploughing back our earnings and knowledge for the betterment of the society. Then only we would have repaid our debts to society. Moreover, such a contribution will give us good karmas that would help us in our progress and happiness.

20. நீரின்று அமையாது உலகெனின் யார்யார்க்கும்
வானின்று அமையாது ஒழுக்கு.
nīr-inḍṛu amaiyādu ulagenin yār-yārkkum
vān-inḍṛu amaiyādu ozhukku.

Meaning

For all in the world, life cannot be sustained without water, and without rains, water resources will not be sufficient (to last long).

[யார் யார்க்கும் நீர் இன்று அமையாது உலகு எனின் (எனின் is அசை, an expletive) = For all in the world, life cannot be sustained without water; ஒழுக்கு = water flow; வான் இன்று அமையாது ஒழுக்கு = without rains, water resources will not be sufficient]

Commentary

When there are no rains, there will not be replenishment of water in the wells, tanks, dams, rivers, etc., and hence all the water resources will dry up in the course of time. Water flow from these sources cannot be sustained to produce crops or generate electricity, and they may be sufficient only to provide drinking water for the populace because without water, life itself cannot be sustained in the world. Therefore, drinking water always gets priority over irrigation needs. Thus we can understand the value of rains for the survival of life and prosperity. Also, we should realise the value of conserving all the available water without wastage or pollution. We should also desilt all the water bodies so that more water can be stored and the water can flow unhindered to reach the extremities of the cultivable land. This is the way to progress and prosperity of a nation. ▲

(to be continued)

D. Thiyagarajan

Essence of Sri Ramana Paravidyopanishad

Part 4 – Only the Sage is Truly Awake

Annotated by V. Krithivasan

Meeting point of deep sleep and waking

The discussion of *avastha traya,* the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep that keep revolving in our daily lives, was taken up in the previous part. The substratum on which these states alternate is Pure Consciousness and is referred to as *Turiya* (the Fourth) to distinguish it from the other three. *Turiya* is the only Reality, as it is permanent and changeless; it is present all the time, but Maya throws a veil on Reality, as it were, and hides it from our vision. The next verse says that this veil is lifted for the briefest of moments revealing the Pure Being-Consciousness in the junction between sleep and waking. This revelation holds great significance for the aspirant and when he follows up on this teaching in order to experience this junction himself, he accelerates his progress in reaching the goal of Self-realization.

सन्धौ सुषुप्तेरथ जागरस्य चिद्रूपिणी निर्मनना स्थितिर्या ।
सा सुस्थिरा चेद्भविता कथञ्चित् सैवोच्यते मुक्तिरिति प्रबुद्धैः ।। (32)

sandhau suṣupteratha jāgarasya cidrūpiṇī nirmanānā sthitiryā |
sā susthirā cedbhavitā kathañcit saivocyate muktiriti prabuddhaiḥ ||

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

If that mind-free consciousness, which is at the meeting point of deep sleep and waking somehow becomes continuous, the State that then dawns is declared by the sages to be the State of Deliverance.

Bhagavan calls it as the 'transition state' and has referred to it in a number of dialogues with devotees:

Just on waking from sleep and before becoming aware of the world there is that pure 'I-I.' Hold to it without sleeping or without allowing thoughts to possess you. If that is held firm it does not matter even if the world is seen. The seer remains unaffected by the phenomena.[1]

The 'I-thought' is only limited 'I.' The real 'I' is unlimited, universal, beyond time and space. They are absent in sleep. Just on rising up from sleep, and before seeing the objective world, there is a state of awareness which is your pure Self. That must be known.[2]

The Self is pure consciousness in sleep; it evolves as *aham* ('I') without the *idam* ('this') in the transition stage; and manifests as *aham* ('I') and *idam* ('this') in the waking state. The individual's experience is by means of *aham* ('I') only. So he must aim at realisation in the way indicated (i.e., by means of the transitional 'I')…In the transitional state, the *aham* ('I') is *suddha* (pure), because *idam* ('this') is suppressed. *aham* ('I') predominates. Why is not that pure 'I' realised now or even remembered by us? Because of want of acquaintance (*parichaya*) with it. It can be recognised only if it is consciously attained. Therefore make the effort and gain consciously.[3]

'I-thought' and 'this'-thought are both emanations from the same light. They are related to *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* respectively. In order to have the Reflected Light (pure *sattva)*, free from *rajas* and *tamas*, it must shine forth as 'I-I,' unbroken by 'this'-thought. This pure state momentarily intervenes between sleep and waking. If prolonged it is cosmic consciousness, or even

[1] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 196.
[2] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 311.
[3] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 314.

> Isvara. This is the only passage to the Realisation of the Self-shining Supreme Being.[4]
>
> When a person wakes up from sleep the head is raised and there is the light of awareness. This light was already there in the heart which is later reflected on the brain and appears as consciousness. But this is not particularised until *ahankar* steps in. In the undifferentiated state it is cosmic (i.e., cosmic mind or cosmic consciousness). This state lasts usually for a minute interval and passes off unnoticed. It becomes particularised or differentiated by the intrusion of the ego and the person says 'I'. This is always associated with an entity (here, the body). So the body is identified as 'I' and all else follows.[5]

Interestingly, many Vedantic texts draw attention to this transition state between sleep and waking and the importance of prolonging this state in order to become familiar with the ultimate state of Realisation.

"If one meditates keenly on the state that prevails at the end of waking and just before sleep, he attains unending happiness."[6]

"Between waking and sleep, there is a junction in which there is neither the unconscious dullness of sleep nor the form-taking tendency of mind. A close observer of this Pure Self Awareness will realise the True Self and the unreality of *bandha* and *moksha*."[7]

"With a keen intellect, notice the state between sleep and wakefulness, the interval between the recognition of one object after another or gap between two perceptions. This is the real Self, inhering in which one is no longer deluded. Unaware of this truth, people have become inheritors of sorrow."[8]

> Of particular interest is the experience of a devotee,[9] who writes:
>
> There are other opportunities when we could experience this pure 'I' consciously. One such is during the tiny gap between

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[4] Talk 323, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Sri Ramanasramam.
[5] *Ibid.,*Talk 513.
[6] *Yoga Vasishtam.*
[7] *Srimad Bhagavatam*, 7th Skandham, Yati Dharmam.
[8] *Tripura Rahasyam,* 9- 94, 95.
[9] '*Hunting the I*', Lucia Cornelssen, Sri Ramanasramam.

two thoughts, when the attention has given up its hold on one thought and not yet caught the next one. But since we have never trained our attention this way, we will hardly succeed in our attempt. There is a better chance to catch it between sleeping and awaking. It is very important to try it, if you are serious in hunting your 'I.' Take care of a few conditions: Try at night just before you fall asleep to keep the last thought your intention to catch as the first thing of all on waking in the morning the experience of your true "I." Another condition: You should take care not to awaken too abruptly such as by an alarm clock, and also not to jump headlong into your daily routine. The moment you awake, don't stir, but remember your intention from last night. You will succeed after a few attempts. And what is possible once even for a moment can be extended by practice. This experiment gives you the advantage that you now know the aim of your endeavour. It will help you in your further *sadhana* like leavening in the dough.

No one is awake, except the Sage

निद्रालुरेवं सकलोऽपि जन्तुर्न कोऽपि जागर्ति हि जीव लोके ।
तीर्णाः तिसृभ्यो अज्ञतया विमुक्तो बुद्धस्तु जागर्ति तुरीयनिष्ठः ।। 34

nidrālurevaṃ sakalo'pi janturna ko'pi jāgarti hi jīva loke |
tīrṇāḥ tisṛbhyo ajñatayā vimukto buddhastu jāgarti turīyaniṣṭhaḥ ||

Thus, every creature is asleep; none in this world of souls is awake. The Sage, being established in Turiya*, has transcended the three states. Being free from ignorance, he alone is awake.*

Only the state of *Turiya* can be called as real wakefulness, not what we understand as *jagrat*, says the author. No doubt, self-awareness is present in full measure in the wakeful state, but it is also dominated by 'awareness-of-the-other', that is, awareness of the multitude of objects that make up our world, both our inner and outer worlds. In other words, objectifying consciousness is the mark of what we experience as the wakeful state. Objectification naturally leads to perception of differences, between oneself and others and amongst others. Where differences are perceived, perfection of the Supreme State is absent. "Real waking lies beyond the plane of differences," says Bhagavan.

The *jnani,* the awakened one, is always established in the Absolute Consciousness, bereft of all differences. He is free from ignorance, which is nothing but 'awareness-of-the-other.' Our ordinary wakeful state is characterized by what is known as *anyatha grahanam,* or catching hold of the non-Self. The following verse calls the wakeful state as a state of darkness.

तन्नक्तमुक्तं विदुषो हि विश्वं नक्तं तथाऽऽत्माऽविदुषो जनस्य ।
निष्ठामतस्तां सहजां तुरीयां जाग्रत्सुषुप्तिं निगदन्ति बुद्धाः ।। (36)

tannaktamuktaṃ viduṣo hi viśvaṃ naktaṃ tathā'tmā'viduṣo janasya |
niṣṭhāmatastāṃ sahajāṃ turīyāṃ jāgratsuṣuptiṃ nigadanti buddhāḥ ||

Hence it is said that this world is as night to the sage, whereas to the ignorant, the Real Self is as night. For this reason Turiya*, the natural state, is described as a state of waking sleep.*

The word 'night' in this verse indicates unawareness. The word has been used in the metaphoric sense and conveys the idea of darkness resulting from obstruction of vision. Just as the owl, owing to something inherent in its vision, sees only darkness even when the day is fully bright, in the same way, the *ajnani* is unaware of the Self-luminous, eternally conscious Self. On the other hand, being immersed in true awareness of the Self, the sage is unaware of the world as a separate entity. Therefore, the experience of the world for the ignorant man and its experience for the sage are as widely divergent as night and day. Awareness of the Self is day and its unawareness is night. The following verse in the *Bhagavad Gita* conveys the same meaning:

That which is night to all beings, in that state of Self-Realisation, the samyami (Yogi or seer) keeps awake. And that (the ever changing, transient worldly experience) in which all beings keep awake is night to the seer.[10]

Lakshmana Sarma introduces the word *jagrat-sushupti* (waking sleep) at the end of the verse. Bhagavan explains this term in the following conversation:

[10] *Bhagavad Gita,* 2.69.

Bhagavan: The incentive to realise can arise only in the waking state and efforts can also be made only when one is awake. We learn that the thoughts in the waking state form the obstacle to gaining the stillness of sleep. "Be still and know that I AM God." So stillness is the aim of the seeker. Even a single effort to still at least a single thought even for a trice goes a long way to reach the state of quiescence. Effort is required and it is possible in the waking state only. There is the effort here: there is awareness also; the thoughts are stilled; so there is the peace of sleep gained. That is the state of the jnani. It is neither sleep nor waking but intermediate between the two. There is the awareness of the waking state and the stillness of sleep. It is called *jagrat-sushupti*. Call it wakeful sleep or sleeping wakefulness or sleepless waking or wakeless sleep. It is not the same as sleep or waking separately. It is *atijagrat* (beyond wakefulness) or *atisushupti* (beyond sleep). It is the state of perfect awareness and of perfect stillness combined. It lies between sleep and waking; it is also the interval between two successive thoughts. It is the source from which thoughts spring; we see that when we wake up from sleep.

In other words, thoughts have their origin in the stillness of sleep. The thoughts make all the difference between the stillness of sleep and the turmoil of waking. It is beyond *jagrat* and sleep as well as in them. Go to the root of the thoughts and you reach the stillness of sleep. But you reach it in the full vigour of search, that is, with perfect awareness. That is again *jagrat - sushupti* spoken of before. It is not dullness; but it is Bliss. It is not transitory but it is eternal. From that the thoughts proceed. What are all our experiences but thoughts? Pleasure and pain are mere thoughts. They are within ourselves. If you are free from thoughts and yet aware, you are That Perfect Being.[11]

In reality, the Fourth State is the Only State

सज्जाग्रदादित्रयमस्ति येषां तेषां तुरीयाभिधया तदुक्तम् ।
सत् तुर्यमेवासदिदं त्रयं यत् तुर्याभिधा तस्य भवत्यसाधु ।। (37)

[11] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 609.

sajjāgradāditrayamasti yeṣāṃ teṣāṃ turīyābhidhayā taduktam |
sat turyamevāsadidaṃ trayaṃ yat turyābhidhā tasya
bhavatyasādhu ||

For those to whom the three states (waking, dream and sleep) are real, the Supreme State is mentioned as the Fourth State (Turiya). *But since* Turiya *alone is real and the others unreal, it is not appropriate to call it the Fourth state.*

It was explained earlier that *Turiya* is the substratum of the waking, dream and sleep states. Though it forms the basis of the other three states known to and experienced by all, to distinguish it from the other three, it is called the Fourth state (*Turiya* means 'fourth' in Sanskrit). This is the only Real state, as this state alone endures and does not come and go as the other three do. By calling *Turiya* as the Fourth, we are counting the Real state along with the three unreal states, which is illogical. For example, suppose a person has one child in real life and in his dream he dreams of having three children. Will he, on waking up, say he has four children in all? Can he count his dream children along with his real-life child? So, *Turiya* is a misnomer for the fundamental, Supreme State. For the *jnani, Turiya* alone prevails and the three states are seen for what they are – unreal.

Bhagavan: There are three states only, the waking, dream and sleep. *Turiya* is not a fourth state; it is what underlies the three. But people do not readily understand it. Therefore, it is said that this is the fourth state and the only Reality. In fact, it is not apart from anything, for it forms the substratum of all happenings; it is the only Truth; it is your very Being. The three states appear as fleeting phenomena on it and sink into it alone. Therefore they are unreal.[12]

What happens to the mind in deep sleep?

We experience the world through our five senses. The cumulative sensory information flowing through these physical and cognitive senses (hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell) enables us to form a world picture. The entity involved in processing this information and

[12] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 353.

in the formation of our experience of the world around us is the mind. The senses are active during the waking state and are suspended in the dream state. Mind itself becomes a substitute for the physical senses during the dream state and creates a dream world based on certain latent impressions. Thus, without the active involvement of the mind, neither the waking world nor the dream world can be experienced. The following verse explains this:

स्वप्नेऽपि जाग्रत्यपि चेष्टमानं मनः प्रपञ्चं सृजति स्वयं हि ।
गत्वा सुषुप्तौ बत बीजभावं भूयः प्रबोधे सृजति प्रपञ्चम् ।। 38

svapne'pi jāgratyapi ceṣṭamānaṃ manaḥ prapañcaṃ sṛjati svayaṃ hi |
gatvā suṣuptau bata bījabhāvaṃ bhūyaḥ prabodhe sṛjati prapañcam ||

In dream and waking, the mind, being active, creates the world by itself. In deep sleep it goes into seed form and, on awaking, creates the world again.

In the deep sleep state the mind, together with the senses, becomes inactive or dormant. Hence, the world is not experienced during sleep. However, the latent impressions or *vasanas* do not get erased. The potential for the mind to revive after awakening from sleep exists in sleep. Bhagavan uses an interesting metaphor to describe this:

> Just at nightfall the hen clucks and the chicks go and hide themselves under her wings. The hen then goes to roost in the nest with the chicks in her protection. At dawn the chicks come out and so does the hen. The mother-hen stands for the ego which collects all the thoughts and goes to sleep. At sunrise the rays emerge forth and are collected again at sunset. Similarly, when the ego displays itself, it does so with all its paraphernalia. When it sinks, everything disappears with it.[13]

Thus, the *vasanas* are preserved intact by the mind/ego in deep sleep. On emerging, the mind starts experiencing the external world again. The mind is said to exist in its seed form in deep sleep, meaning that it has the potential to sprout again.

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[13] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 286.

मनोन्ततो नश्यति नैव यावद् भवेदवस्थात्रितयं हि तावत् ।
मनोविनाशात् हि तुरीय निष्ठा यत्रान्ततः शाम्यति विश्वमेतत् ।। 39

manontato naśyati naiva yāvad bhavedavasthātritayaṃ hi tāvat |
manovināśāt hi turīya niṣṭhā yatrāntataḥ śāmyati viśvametat ||

Unless and until the mind becomes utterly extinct, these three states will continue to prevail. When the mind becomes extinguished, the Supreme State is won, wherein this world once for all ceases to appear.

The three states belong to the mind; they are unreal. The Real Self transcends these three states of deep sleep, waking and dream. As long as the mind is active, the three states will continue to alternate for the ordinary, ignorant person. The fuel for the engine called mind is unfulfilled desires, embedded in the form of *vasanas*, or accumulated tendencies. They transmigrate along with the *jiva* from life to life. To end the *samsaric* cycle and awaken into *Turiya*, the Real Self, the mind should become extinct, along with its seeds, namely, *vasanas*.

The Perfect State

आत्मैव यस्मिन्नभवत् समस्तं जानाति तस्मिन् बत केन किं नु।
इत्यात्मनः केवलतैव तुर्ये सन्दर्शिताऽस्ति श्रुतिशीर्षवाचा ।। 41

ātmaiva yasminnabhavat samastaṃ jānāti tasmin bata kena kiṃ nu|
ityātmanaḥ kevalataiva turye sandarśitā'sti śrutiśīrṣavācā ||

The Upanishadic text says: "'Where the Self is all there is, how and what does one know there' makes it clear that in the Supreme State, the Real Self is alone (as the One without a second)."

In the Supreme State which is non-dual in nature, knower, known and the process of knowing (that is, the *triputis*) are absent. Self alone exists in all its purity. According to the *Chandogya Upanishad*, this state is known as *Bhuma*, or Perfection.

"Bhuma is that in which one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else. That which is *Bhuma* alone is immortal. But that in which one sees something else, hears something else, knows something else is the finite, which is mortal – *yatra naanyat pashyati,*

naanyat shrunoti, naanyat vijaanati saa Bhuma. yatra anyat pashyati, anyat shrunoti, anyat vijaanaati so alpah."

"This *Bhuma* is the 'I' in all," is the instruction given to Narada by Sanatkumara in the *Chandogya Upanishad*. Muruganar has rendered this *Upanishadic* statement into a beautiful Tamil verse:

> எந்நிலையில் ஒன்றை எதிரிட்டுக் காண்பதிலை
> எந்நிலையில் ஒன்றை எதிரிட்டுக் கேட்பதிலை
> எந்நிலையில் ஒன்றை எதிரிட்டு அறிவதிலை
> அந்நிலையே பூமா அறி.[14]

Bhagavan has referred to *Bhuma* in his conversations.

> "*Bhuma* (Perfection) alone is. It is Infinite. There arises from it this finite consciousness taking on an *upadhi* (limiting adjunct). This is *abhasa*, or reflection. Merge this individual consciousness with the Supreme One. This is what should be done."[15]

> "All *upasanas* are ways to winning the state of *Bhuma.* One must not get stuck in the *upasanas* but must query 'Who am I' and find the Self."[16]

"O great master, where is the *Bhuma* situated? Which place?" asks Narada of Sanatkumara. He replies, "This great eternal All-Presence is situated in Its own Glory. Or perhaps, It is not 'situated' at all."

"sve mahimni pratishtitha, athavaa na mahimni."[17]

It cannot be that It is located in something else, that It is dependent on something else, that It has something else as its support, just as we have some support or the other in this world. How can the All-Pervasive Being be supported by something else! It is the support of all things. Its support is Its own Self. Such a misconception arises when one is thinking in terms of objects in this world. ▲

(To be continued)

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[14] *Guru Vachagak Kovai,* Verse 1005.
[15] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 68.
[16] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Talk 634.
[17] *Chandogya Upanishad,* 7-23-1.

The Paramount Importance of Self-Attention

Part Fifty-Two

Sadhu Om
As Recorded by Michael James

3rd April 1979

Sadhu Om: In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, chapter 10, verse 37, Krishna says 'Among the Pandavas I am Dhanamjaya [Arjuna]', and people generally take this to mean that he was praising Arjuna, but Bhagavan pointed out that this was actually one of many subtle pointers that he gave Arjuna, because if Arjuna had understood the significance of these words, he would have thought, 'If he is Arjuna, then who am I?', and would therefore have turned his attention back towards himself, thereby eradicating the false awareness 'I am Arjuna' and seeing that there is no 'I' other than Krishna.

Sadhu Om: Bhagavan's words in *Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai* have their own inherent power to nurture love in our heart and to induce in us an attitude of complete surrender, so even if one does not understand Tamil, it is beneficial to learn to recite these verses. For

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.

example, if one recites verse 79, 'மீகாம னில்லாமன் மாகாற் றலைகல மாகாமற் காத்தரு ளருணாசலா' (*mīhāma ṉillāmaṉ mākāṯ ṟalaikala māhāmaṯ kāttaru ḷaruṇācalā*), which means 'Arunachala, be gracious, protecting [me so that I am] not being [like] a boat tossing in a great storm without a helmsman', one's mind will thereby tend to subside, depending upon him as the helmsman of one's life, thereby enabling one to meekly withstand and remain unscathed by whatever spiritual, mental, emotional, social or physical storms, turmoils or disturbances one has to undergo.

Every verse of *Akṣaramaṇamālai* is a powerful *mantra* suitable for anyone who is following the path of self-investigation and complete self-surrender. But even more important than the *mantric* power of these verses is their meaning, so though they are effective even if one hears or recites them without knowing their meaning, their efficacy is greatly enhanced if one hears or recites them knowing and dwelling upon the meaning of each one of them. Their meanings are Bhagavan's thoughts, the Tamil verses themselves are his words, and walking around Arunachala was his deed, and hence the efficacy of each of these.

5th April 1979

Sadhu Om [in reply to someone who, recalling how some devotees who liked to do planchette reading found that they were unable to do so when Sadhu Om was present, remarked 'So *bhakti* is the most powerful weapon against lower spirits and such phenomena']: *Bhakti* is the most powerful weapon for anything, because even God is bound by the love of his devotees, as is illustrated by the following story:

When the war was approaching, the four younger Pandavas were all eager to fight, but Dharma [Yudhisthira] persistently suggested that they should avoid the war by finding a peaceful means to resolve the conflict. Krishna pretended to side with Dharma, and finally asked each of them to suggest a feasible means by which they could avert the war. None of them was able to do so, except the youngest, Sahadeva, who said that they could prevent the war only by shaving Draupadi's hair, breaking Arjuna's bow and Bhima's mace, and tying Krishna's feet. Krishna agreed, but asked how they could tie his feet.

In reply, Sahadeva sat down and began to meditate on Krishna with intense love, and after a while Krishna exclaimed: 'Enough, release me. I know you can bind me with your love, but I have come to this world to protect the righteous and establish *dharma* by destroying the evil-doers, so this war is necessary and should not be prevented'. Sahadeva replied: 'Yes, I know, but may I ask for a boon, namely that all five of us, Draupadi and at least one heir should survive this war'. Krishna then assured him that he would grant this boon, so Sahadeva released him. Therefore even God is rendered powerless before the true love of his devotees.

7th April 1979

Sadhu Om: In verse 30 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṟpadu Anubandham* Bhagavan says:

> Like those who [seemingly] hear a story [even though their] mind [is actually] going far away [and therefore not hearing the story at all], the mind in which [all] *vāsanās* have been erased is actually not doing [any action at all] even though [in the view of others it seems to be] doing [any number of actions]. [On the other hand] the mind that those soak [that is, the mind that is soaked with *vāsanās*] is actually doing [action] even though [it is seemingly] not doing [any action], [just as] even though movement has ceased here [that is, even though in the waking world they seem to be lying without movement in bed], in dream climbing a hill they fall in a pit.

However, during his bodily lifetime I once mentioned to some other devotees that Bhagavan never actually does anything, so he did not compose any works such as *Akṣaramaṇamālai* or *Uḷḷadu Nāṟpadu*, and he does not see or know anything other than himself, but they did not understand what I meant, so they became angry with me, saying that I do not understand anything about him. Though he appeared in human form and therefore seemed to know and do things just like us, what he actually is is just the infinite, indivisible, immutable and eternally silent space of pure awareness, so he never does anything or knows anything other than himself. However, most devotees find it very difficult to understand and wholeheartedly accept all the

implications of this truth, and it was even more difficult for those who saw him in human form and lived with him in that form day and night for many years.

As he says in verse 274 of *Guru Vācaka Kōvai*:

> Those who do not have [the clarity of] mind [or heart] to know that the *jñāna-guru*, who seems to be [or appears as] a human form [even though always] actually remaining firmly as the supreme space [of *sat-cit*, pure being-awareness], is [in fact] the formless one [namely *brahman*], are indeed the foremost in wicked conduct and sin.

Though many devotees lived with him for years or even decades, and though many of them were very sincere in their love for him, only a rare few were able to understand him deeply. Though in many of his verses and other writings he clearly indicated the real nature of the state of *jñāna*, and though he often said that *jñāna* alone is the *jñāni*, very few have considered carefully and deeply enough and thereby fully assimilated what he wrote and said.

In verse 30 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṟpadu Anubandham*, not only does he clearly indicate in the first half that the *jñāni*, in whose mind all *vāsanās* have been erased along with ego, their root, does not actually do anything even though seemingly doing any number of things, but also in the second half he makes it clear that an *ajñāni*, whose mind is soaked with *vāsanās*, is actually doing even when seemingly not doing anything. Will any aspirant who has understood this clearly feel inclined to sit in meditation for long hours at a stretch?

Sitting without moving and with eyes closed for many hours is relatively easy, but except in sleep or any other state of *manōlaya* [temporary dissolution of mind], can any *ajñāni* remain for hours without ever rising as ego to think of or know anything other than their own being? Until all our *vāsanās* have been completely erased, under their sway we will to a greater or lesser extent continue rising and engaging in mental activity, so rather than trying to remain without rising by clinging to self-attentiveness for hours at a stretch, we will find that it is more effective if we try intermittently but persistently to cling firmly to self-attentiveness for at least a few moments at a time.

8th April 1979

Sadhu Om: Even during waking and dream, when our attention is dwelling on second and third persons, we do not cease to be aware 'I am'. This fundamental knowledge 'I am' is the basis of the first person, the false awareness 'I am this body', which is in turn the basis of all second and third persons, because they are objects known only by this first person. Hence second and third persons appear along with the first person in waking and dream and disappear along with it in sleep, so as Bhagavan says in the fifth paragraph of *Nāṉ Ār?*:

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

Whether or not we are aware of anything other than ourself, we are always aware 'I am'. Awareness of other things (second and third persons) appears in waking and dream but disappears in sleep, whereas our fundamental awareness 'I am' exists and shines in all three states without ever appearing or disappearing. Therefore the only difference between waking and dream on one hand and sleep on the other hand is that in waking and dream we are aware of the appearance of things other than ourself, so we experience dissatisfaction and misery, whereas in sleep we are aware of no such appearance, so we do not experience any dissatisfaction or misery.

Therefore the only defect in sleep is that it is a state from which we seem to rise again. However it is only from the perspective of ego in waking and dream that we seem to have risen from sleep, because sleep is actually our natural and eternal state of pure awareness. So long as we rise as ego, sleep seems to be one among our three alternating states, so it seems to be temporary and hence defective, but if we investigate ourself keenly enough, we will see that we are actually just *sat-cit*, pure being-awareness, which never rises or undergoes change of any kind whatsoever, and thus it will be clear that sleep is not temporary but eternal, and hence not defective but perfect.

Since the only knowledge that exists and shines not only in waking and dream but also in sleep is our fundamental awareness of our own being, 'I am', this alone is what is real and what we actually are. Therefore, in order to know the reality that underlies and supports the appearance of these three states, all we need do is to keep our attention fixed firmly on this awareness 'I am'.

As Brahma and Vishnu discovered when they tried to find the uppermost and lowermost limits of Arunachala Siva, who had appeared between them as a column of fire, however high we may fly outwards or however deep we may sink within, we will always find that Bhagavan extends higher and deeper. Therefore, as Muruganar often used to say, we should never imagine that we have understood him fully. Only when he swallows us entirely in the all-consuming light of his grace will we know him as he actually is, but then we will no longer remain as anything in any way separate from him, so it is only he who knows himself as he actually is. ▲

(To be continued)

The Holy Feet

Sneha Choudhury

The Holy Feet
The twin feet of my Guru
Soft, dainty and lotus petalled
Come! Pay obeisance and hold on,
Steadfast, never let it go.

The world of senses swirls us
Round and round in delusion;
At His Holy feet when anchored,
Safe and secure are we!

Muruganar in His Own Words

Part Four

Hari Moorthy

Even though there was a suggestion that Muruganar might emulate the writing style of Manickavasagar, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, at no point, made any request for external renunciation by Muruganar or explicitly asked for the verses to be composed in Bhagavan's praise. Bhagavan's suggestion had a depth that contrasted sharply with the casual manner in which he expressed it. When Bhagavan asked, "Can't you write like Manickavasagar?" his directive was crystal clear in Muruganar's mind.

Initially, Muruganar was taken aback by the weight of the task ahead, but he embraced it with grace. He embarked on composing verses in a manner befitting a devoted soul, entrusting the entire burden of this creative endeavor to Bhagavan himself.

The scene described here unfolds like a mesmerizing painting on the canvas of existence, each detail carefully etched by the hand of a master poet. With a perfect mastery of language, this poet wields words like an artist's brush, delicately and precisely capturing the very essence of the moment. In doing so, he invites the reader to step into this scene and immerse themselves in its vibrant and evocative features.

As we delve deeper into the autobiographical verse, we can see Muruganar unveiling not only poetic revelations but also a declaration

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from Bhagavan himself. This declaration serves as a beacon, illuminating the exceptional status that Muruganar attained – a status that mirrors the characteristic humility and simplicity of Bhagavan's teachings. It was in this unassuming manner that Bhagavan imparted, and continues to provide, wisdom – conferring blessings, and enriching the lives of those fortunate enough to be in his presence.

... வென் மடமதி யெங்கே
மின்மினி தன்னொடு விண்மணி போலப்
புன்மதி யேனொடு பொருந்துமன் னார்தம்
கங்குலா மையல் கழன்றுமெய்ஞ் ஞானம்
பொங்குமான் மாநு பூதியெங் கேயென்
றிசைத்தே னிசைத்தது[1] மெய்த்தே னெய்த்தலும்
அசைத்தே மதியை யருளா லலர்த்தி (30-36)

Meaning: Where is my small mind, and where is Manickavasagar's jnana that dispels the darkness of ignorance and misery? To liken myself to him is akin to a firefly believing itself to be the radiant sun. With my mind steeped in humility, I grappled with these thoughts. As I spoke these words, Bhagavan Ramana, through His boundless Grace, illuminated my heart, causing it to blossom with newfound realization!

In this poignant and self-deprecating reflection, Muruganar's words humbly acknowledge the immense gap he perceives between himself and the erudite wisdom of Manickavasagar. Through vivid metaphors, he underscores this stark contrast. When he asks, "Where is my small mind, and where is Manickavasagar's jnana," he is essentially recognizing the vast spiritual divide that separates him from the eminent poet-sage. Manickavasagar's wisdom is likened to a radiant sun, a beacon of enlightenment that dispels the darkness of ignorance and suffering. In contrast, Muruganar sees himself as nothing more than a mere firefly, a tiny, flickering light in the vast expanse of the spiritual universe.

The metaphor of the firefly is particularly powerful. A firefly's light blinks on and off, unable to sustain illumination continuously. On the other hand, the radiant sun has illuminated the universe for countless

[1] A footnote in the book is located at this word, accompanied by a handwritten note by Bhagavan. Its meaning is further explained in this section.

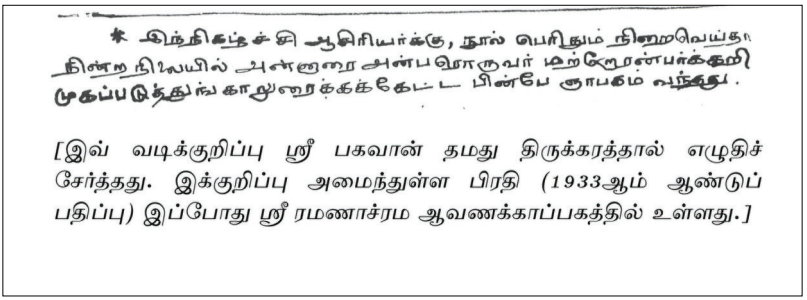
millennia and will continue to do so for many more. This metaphor beautifully symbolizes the nature of the ego, which often flickers and believes itself to be significant. However, the real and permanent source of everything – the Self – is an ever-shining presence, much like the unwavering light of the sun.

This self-comparison was not driven by concealed arrogance but rather by a deep sense of humility and self-awareness. Muruganar recognized the limitations of his own understanding and the vastness of the spiritual knowledge embodied by Manickavasagar. It was a recognition of his own smallness in the face of such great wisdom. As he grappled with these feelings of inadequacy and humility, Muruganar turned to Bhagavan Ramana. He spoke these words in the presence of his guru, seeking guidance and solace. And in response to his sincere introspection and heartfelt expression, Bhagavan's boundless Grace descended upon him. This divine Grace acted as a transformative force, illuminating Muruganar's heart. It was as if a flower, once closed under the weight of darkness and in the shadow of doubt, suddenly blossomed with newfound understanding and spiritual clarity.

This verse beautifully encapsulates the transformative power of divine Grace when the guru wishes a disciple to pursue a path of action He recommends. It illustrates how, in the presence of a true spiritual master like Bhagavan, even the deepest feelings of inadequacy can lead to an inner awakening and growth.

There is a footnote provided in *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* which includes a handwritten note by Bhagavan. It appears that Muruganar initially forgot about the entire incident of his hesitation and Bhagavan's subsequent grace that blossomed Muruganar's heart. It was only when Muruganar was reminded of this incident towards the end of writing the book, which had faced various obstacles in its progress, that he recollected this particular episode. He then composed this section of the verse to document the grace he had received from Bhagavan.

The precise translation of Bhagavan's handwriting is: "As the book faced numerous obstacles in its completion, the author, Muruganar, was reintroduced to this incident when a devotee of Bhagavan reminded him of it while introducing Muruganar to another devotee.


* இந்நிகழ்ச்சி ஆசிரியர்க்கு, நூல் பெரிதும் நிறைவெய்தா நிலை நிலையில் அன்னாரை அன்பரொருவர் மற்றோரன்பர்க்குமி முகப்படுத்துங் காலுரைக்கக்கேட்ட பின்பே ஞாபகம் வந்தது.

[இவ் வடிக்குறிப்பு ஸ்ரீ பகவான் தமது திருக்கரத்தால் எழுதிச் சேர்த்தது. இக்குறிப்பு அமைந்துள்ள பிரதி (1933ஆம் ஆண்டுப் பதிப்பு) இப்போது ஸ்ரீ ரமணாச்ரம ஆவணக்காப்பகத்தில் உள்ளது.]

It was at this point that Muruganar recalled and recollected the entire episode." This handwritten note is footnoted at the word "isaithathu" (**இசைத்தது**), which means "said" and can also mean "sang."[2]

The significance of Bhagavan's footnote in *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* cannot be overstated. It is an unequivocal confirmation of Muruganar's enlightenment. For someone on a spiritual journey, the realization of one's true nature and attainment of enlightenment is the ultimate goal. Such a realization is not something that can be easily forgotten or overlooked. However, Muruganar's temporary lapse in memory caused Bhagavan to include this incident in the book, with a handwritten note no less. It indicates its utmost importance. The fact that *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* had encountered obstacles and remained incomplete until this incident was brought to Muruganar's attention is significant. It suggests that this incident held the key to the completion of the book, and by extension, to Muruganar's spiritual journey.

When Muruganar recollected and incorporated this incident into the introductory poem, it was as if a missing piece of the puzzle had been found. The work on the book could then continue with renewed vigor and purpose. Bhagavan's will and guidance, often conveyed in subtle ways, played a pivotal role in this process.

In placing this incident at the very beginning of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, Bhagavan effectively endorsed Muruganar's enlightened status. He did so not through explicit words but through a powerful and significant gesture! This is referred to as '**கூறாமல்**

[2] It is unclear whether Muruganar has composed another verse related to this incident among his extensive collection of verses, if we interpret the meaning as "sang" in its literal sense.

கூறிய குறிப்பு,' meaning 'indicating without saying.' This affirmation resonates throughout the book, reminding readers that Muruganar was not just a devotee, but a realized soul who had touched the depths of spiritual awakening. Bhagavan's grace and guidance had played a central role in this transformation.

In a different context,[3] there is a notable incident where someone asked Bhagavan, "Did they sing to attain realization?" To this, Bhagavan reportedly replied, "No, they sang only after realizing it," in reference to Thyagaraja's compositions.[4] This insight into Bhagavan's perspective sheds light on the nature of Muruganar's prolific compositions. It strongly suggests that Muruganar's extensive body of work, including Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai, could only have been possible after he had achieved full realization himself. The concluding four lines of this poem, which we will now examine, provide further confirmation of this idea.

..... அருளா லலர்த்தி
என்னித யத்தே யிலங்கவ் விறைவன்
என்னது செய்கை யிலாதே ரமண
சந்நிதி முறைநூல் சாற்றினன்
தன்னது வாய்மை தழைத்தோங் கிடவே. (36-40)

Meaning: With His boundless Grace, my Lord Ramana has completely claimed my heart. Without any effort on my part, He himself composed the verses within *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, thus establishing and perpetuating His eternal truth.

Muruganar's words, "Bhagavan Ramana has entirely and irrevocably claimed my heart," indicate that His divine presence, like a brilliant sun, had illuminated every corner of Muruganar's being. In the radiant light of His love and wisdom, Muruganar's ego completely dissolved, and he, therefore, became a mere instrument of His will. Bhagavan's divine inspiration flowed through Muruganar like a river made up of honey and nectar, forming the verses that make up *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*. These verses are not just

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[3] *Cherished Memories* by T.R.Kanakammal.

[4] Bhagavan's full quote as noted by T.R.Kanakammal is, "Saint Thyagaraja and others did not attain realization through the songs they sang. Rather, their songs are the expression of the ecstasy within, the result of their realization of the ultimate. And that is the reason why they have survived the test of time."

words; they are living expressions of Bhagavan's eternal truth, succinctly capturing the silence that Bhagavan continues to radiate.

With each verse, Bhagavan etches His wisdom deep into the hearts of those who read or recite them, leaving an indelible mark of His divine guidance. The verses within this sacred text are not merely poetry; they are a direct channel to His presence, a timeless reminder of His eternal truth, and a source of solace and inspiration for all seekers on the path.

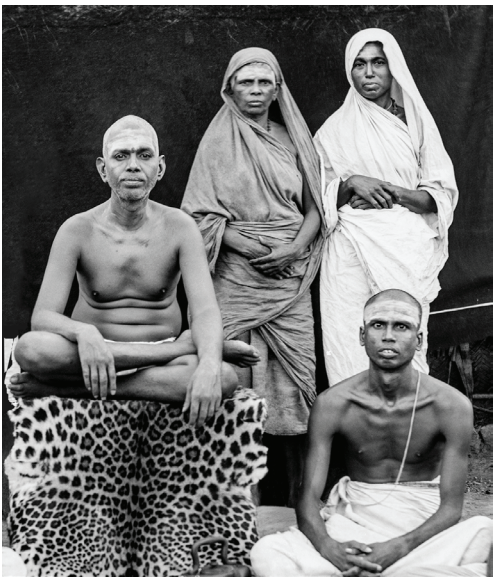
In this way, through the divine interplay of Bhagavan's Grace and Muruganar's surrender, Bhagavan composed the verses within *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, ensuring that His eternal truth would continue to shine brightly, guiding and uplifting all souls who are fortunate enough to encounter His teachings.

In these closing lines of the verse, Muruganar makes two resounding declarations: (1) Bhagavan had firmly established Himself in Muruganar's heart, and (2) this book, *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, was the outcome of his full realization, essentially composed by Bhagavan to propagate His message, with Muruganar serving as a conduit through which these compositions flowed.

Muruganar became akin to a beautiful reed through which the music of Bhagavan's wisdom and grace was played; and Bhagavan had taken up permanent residence in his heart. If Bhagavan were to choose a place to abide, what better abode than the surrendered heart of this devotee!

The 37th and 38th lines of this verse contain an expression that is pivotal in establishing Muruganar's complete surrender: "Without any effort on my part, He himself composed the verses in *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*." (என்னது செய்கை இலாதே ரமண சந்நிதி முறைநூல் சாற்றினன்).

At this point, it is natural to have several questions in order to gain clarity on Muruganar's intentions and the nature of his surrender. What precisely does he mean by this surrender, and how does Bhagavan's permanent occupancy of Muruganar's heart manifest? Furthermore, what was the purpose behind Muruganar composing these verses if Bhagavan had already firmly established His presence within him?



Muruganar seated at the feet of Bhagavan.

Muruganar composed a beautiful verse[5] that answers these questions, and gives a verbal taste of his state of realization and the bliss he felt as Bhagavan took a permanent seat in Muruganar's heart.

பரத்தையே நம்பிப் பரத்தையே யெண்ணிப்
பரத்துக்கே நானடிமைப் பட்டேன் – பரத்தையே
பாடிப்பா ராட்டிப் பரமே சொரூபமாக்
கூடிக்கூத் தாடுகின் றேன்.

Meaning: By placing my complete trust in the divine and constantly contemplating the divine, I have become a humble servant of His divine presence, which has firmly established itself within me. I sing incessantly of His divine virtues and magnificence, dissolving into His divinity. I experience boundless joy as I sing and dance in bliss, fully immersed in His grace.

In another beautiful verse,[6] filled with kindness and wisdom, Muruganar explains the benefit of Bhagavan's permanent presence in his heart.

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[5] Verse 1524 in *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham, Volume 6.*
[6] Verse 300 in *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham, Volume 3.*

கொலுவகத்து வீற்றிருக்குங் கோமான் அருளால்
பொலிவுபெற்ற(து) ஆன்மானு பூதி – நலிவகற்றும்
போத சொரூபவருள் போகமார் சாந்தியொளிப்
பாதமே யாமுடைய பற்று.

Meaning: With Lord Ramana firmly established in the seat of my heart, my Self-realization now shines eternally. His grace has dispelled all troubles, illuminating my heart with a radiant light. To hold onto this inner vision is the everlasting treasure I have gained.

In the deep state of bliss that Muruganar experienced, it becomes evident that he had not actively striven to seek or achieve any particular state of bliss. This condition of absolute surrender highlights the necessity of complete helplessness and the exclusive dependence on the ever-present divine essence of Bhagavan, which continuously illuminates the hearts of all beings. Muruganar eloquently conveyed this perspective in another verse,[7] emphasizing that true surrender is not the outcome of conscious effort but the result of recognizing and acknowledging the omnipresent divinity that resides within us all.

யாதும் மனக்கவலை யின்றாக வென்னுள்ளத்தின்
மீதே யிறைவன் விளங்கலால் – யாதானும்
என்பொறுப்புச் சற்றுமின்றி யெல்லா மவன்பொறுப்பா
அன்பொளிர்வ தாயிற் றகத்து.

Meaning: In the spacious expanse of my heart, devoid of mental worries and imagery, Lord Ramana radiates His presence. He shines as the loving divine within my heart, of His own accord, with no need for any effort or burden on my part.

In another verse,[8] he experiences the divine presence of Lord Ramana, the embodiment of pure grace and wisdom, to permeate his very being. Having felt such grace from Bhagavan, he desired nothing further.

சாந்திநான் கண்டு தரித்தேன் சொரூபவருட்
காந்தியிலே சித்தங் கலத்தலால் – நீந்திக்
கடக்கருமா மோகக் கடலினின்று தப்பி
நடக்கலுற்றேன் ஞானவொளி நாட்டு.

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[7] Verse 1936 in *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham, Volume 5.*
[8] Verse 50 in *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham, Volume 5.*

Meaning: I experienced perfect bliss through my inner closeness to Bhagavan. As my mind remained in the inner radiance, I escaped the turbulent ocean of desires, which is challenging to navigate and cross, and found myself immersed in the serene realm of wisdom.

This emphatic verse solidifies our comprehension of Muruganar's bliss and elevated state of realization in the radiant presence of Bhagavan. Love resembles a ceaseless river, its currents forever surging and embracing all in its path, filling every crevice with its boundless abundance. This sense of abundance and love resonates vividly in Muruganar's words. As his heart brimmed with this overwhelming love and his mind remained free from the shackles of worries, Muruganar harbored but one desire, which he eloquently articulated in another verse.[9]

அடியேனுக்(கு) ஆசையென் ஆண்டான் பதத்திற்
குடியேற யாவரையுங் கூட்டல் – அடியனேன்
பெற்றபே றிந்திப் பெருநிலத்தோ ரெல்லோரும்
பெற்றுய்ய வேண்டும் பெரிது.

Meaning: This devoted soul retains but one desire – to witness all devotees surrendering at the feet of my Lord. The immense bliss experienced by this devotee should be accessible to every soul seeking refuge in this vast world. Such is the deep yearning.

Though he claimed to have crossed the ocean of desires, he did reveal one heartfelt longing: to be eternally immersed in the divine light and grace of Bhagavan. This desire mirrors the eternal quest of a sincere seeker for complete union with the divine.

Muruganar's aspiration likely arose from Bhagavan, as he had earlier described himself as an instrument of Bhagavan's divine will in carrying out the mission assigned to him. Hence, it is entirely appropriate for us to infer that Bhagavan's divine intent is for all beings to experience the perfect bliss of the Self — an ever-present and ever-accessible source of fulfillment for those who are willing to seek it. ▲

(To be continued)

[9] Verse 2014 in *Sri Ramana Jnana Bodham, Volume 5.*

D. Thiyagarajan

The Ninth Letter

Advait Shrivastav

'I' has always been of much importance. No wonder it is always written in uppercase. The root of suffering lies in 'I' and so does the root of actual happiness. Contrasting experiences are encountered depending on which 'I' is given importance: the 'I'-thought or the real 'I.' Maharshi imparts poetic guidance to overcome this very incorrect identification: "Give up the thought that this frail body / Is the Self. Pursue the Self / Which is eternal bliss. To seek It, / While cherishing the perishable / Body, is like trying to cross / A river using a crocodile / For a raft."[1]

The number 9 can be divided by 3 to yield 3. The ninth letter is 'I.' This is also experienced in three different forms throughout three phases that constitute a seeker's journey. First, it is experienced as the 'I'-thought, next as 'I-I,' and finally as the real 'I.' Sri Muruganar succinctly captures a pearl of wisdom:

> "The word 'I' seems to mean, at first,
> The body-bound ego. But this 'I'
> Appears and disappears.
>
> Looked at deeper, the correct import
> Of 'I' is seen to be the Self, which is
> The ego's ground and source."[2]

The 'I'-thought is a person's ego. The joyous name earned by 'I,' 'me,'and 'mine,' the burning flame suffered because of 'him,' 'her,' and 'them,' and the blame put on 'you' and 'they' are equally responsible for a person's sorrow and suffering since all make one identify with the body and mind. The problem lies in identifying with the ego. This false ID allows all incorrect identifications to enter.

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[1] *Guru Vachaka Kovai* (verse 125 as translated by Prof. K. Swaminathan).
[2] *Ibid.* (verse 717).

One spends time in thinking what one was, is, and will be instead of realizing what one has always been and will always be. The realization of the real 'I' makes one what one actually is. Maharshi says, "The ego is the I-thought. The true 'I' is the Self."[3] 'I' is the problem. 'I' is the solution. The practice of Self-enquiry helps in transcending the 'I'-thought (and thereby all thoughts) and realizing the real 'I.' This journey also involves a middle state. However, this state does not appear in the middle, but rather at the culmination of the journey.

One will get II (two) when I and I are combined. 'I' here refers to the worldly 'I'-thought which creates multiples. This is not the case when it comes to the real 'I.' The experience of the Self was explained as the experience of 'I-I' by Maharshi. One gets One (not two) by experiencing the Self in the case of 'I-I.' It must be noted that 'I-I' is a precursor to the eternal state of Self-realization or the realization of the real 'I.' 'I-I' is a bridge between the pure 'I'-thought and the realization of the real 'I.' Maharshi also used the Sanskrit phrase *aham sphurana* for 'I-I.' He says,"The state in which this mind clings to the Self and shines as the form of the Self is called the *aham-sphurana*. This *sphurana* cannot remain independently, leaving the reality. This *sphurana* is the correct sign of the forthcoming direct experience of the reality. However, this *sphurana* cannot itself be the state of reality. That source to which this *sphurana* clings, alone is called the reality."[4]

The real 'I' is eternal and infinite happiness. This bliss is therefore real. It is the source of everything and everyone. It can exist without everything but nothing can exist without it. Maharshi says, "God remains of the nature of the Self, shining as 'I' in the heart."[5] The great freedom fighter, poet, writer, and social reformer Subrahmanya Bharati talks about the occult import of Tamil words in his essay 'The Occult Element in Tamil Speech.' He states that the occult language is the language of the heart, and occultists "use the secular language in such a way that both the secular and occult meanings may sound simultaneously." This very combination can be seen in 'I,' though it is not a Tamil word. The real 'I' is the Self. The personal pronoun

[3] Talk 146, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*.

[4] Maharshi's reply to Ganapati Muni's letter dated 20 May 1931. Please see page 98 of *Mountain Path*'s April 1982 issue.

[5] Answer to the 4th question in *Self-Enquiry* (translated by T.M.P. Mahadevan).

'I' has no gender. It is neither masculine nor feminine. The Self has no gender. It is the same for men and women. What a marvellous relationship between language and spirituality!

The identification with the heavy body and the galloping mind makes man lose his actual identity as he races and chases with the objects in the ephemeral world. Life would get extremely difficult in today's world without 'e' which includes everything that is electronic. Even this article was sent by e-mail! One will, however, realize an esoteric truth on looking at the biggest picture. Everything will serenely happen without 'e'. It is the e-go that I am talking about. One must therefore practice moving without e-go. Connections are now seldom possible without an electronic entity in the times of online learning, online teaching, family video calls, long-distance relationships, and even broadcasts from temples. The practice of Self-enquiry strengthens one to avoid identifying with the body or mind. The e-go is eventually dissolved and the best connection with oneself is found. The digital 'e' has indeed caused some problems here and there but the psychological 'e' has caused all problems everywhere.

The journey from the 'I'-thought to the real 'I' through Self-enquiry does not involve going to high mountains or deep forests. It neither demands distance from family members nor does it ask for the renunciation of wealth, vehicles, and property. How can a journey from 'I' to 'I' involve 'it,' 'this,' 'that,' 'he,' 'her,' or 'them'? These features of Self-enquiry make it as unique as the Self. Maharshi says while talking about the 'I'-thought, "It is after the appearance of the first personal pronoun that the second and third personal pronouns appear; without the first personal pronoun there will not be the second and third."[6] It can therefore be said that the ninth letter is behind the creation of every written and spoken sentence. Self-enquiry will, however, ultimately reveal that the ninth letter is eternally and infinitely silent in the form of the real 'I.' ▲

[6] Answer to the 9th question in *Who Am I?* (translated by T.M.P. Mahadevan).

Sketch by Ghovi

The Blessed Life of Sant Jayadeva

Chapter Twelve - Part Two

King's Initiation into Brahmavidya

Nabaji Siddha

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....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 bliss of Brahman..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.

"O king, who is like god for the citizens! The body is inert and stupid. You are of the nature of Consciousness and eternal and auspicious Knowledge. The body-mind is of the nature of form, divided and full of desires. You are the perfect, undivided, formless, nameless essence. The body is subject to change and pairs of opposites. You are immutable, unalloyed bliss. O my beloved disciple-king! You are a noble soul. Should you any longer hang on to body-consciousness? Your essential nature is steadfastness, it is the Absolute beyond description. This is the real knowledge as imparted by the scriptures. The words of scriptures are the ultimate authority. Any other knowledge is nothing but stupidity. Complete absorption within is verily the state of Brahman. To remain without the sense of individuality is your gift of gratitude to the Teacher. This gift that you offer to the Guru has no parallel. Whatever superlative gift you give to any celebrity in the world is like dust.

"Can any dishonor or harm ever come to him who is free from 'I,' the sense of individuality? Even the Trinity cannot equal the glory of the *Brahmajnani* who shines with the blazing fire of knowledge. He occupies a place of distinction like that of great sages like Narada. It is the Light of Consciousness which infuses the life-force, activates the body and illuminates the *jiva*. Therefore, do not identify yourself with the body-mind complex but with the all-informing Spirit.

"Why are you obsessed with the body which is under the sway of *prarabdha*? Give up your attachment to the body from this moment onwards. Make a deep inquiry into the truth of your existence. He who engages in self-enquiry alone can attain eternal bliss. He who brings stillness to the wavering mind and whose vision travels beyond the three states of waking, dream and sleep, attains perennial joy. Just as deep sleep makes you forget the body-mind, *samadhi*, i.e. wakeful sleep, makes you oblivious of your material existence. You are ever-liberated in all three times of past, present and future.

If you succumb to doubt and uncertainty even after listening to my advice, you will be irrevocably bound in the cycle of birth and death. The three *gunas* and their play, the five elements and doer-ship are created by the illusory power, i.e. Maya. You are the Witness of all. You are the Brahman that permeates and pervades all the five elements and three *gunas*. You are beyond the illusion and, therefore,

not tainted by them. By the strength of deep enquiry into the nature of your Self, your *jivahood*, or 'I' sense will be erased. This is what the esoteric teachings of scriptures declare again and again!

O ruler of earth! This sublime experience is what is adored as the crowning achievement of life by all the Vedas, *Samhitas*, *Gitas* and other similar scriptures and *Puranas*. Those who deny the Supreme Truth will doubtlessly reach the realms of interminable sufferings and revolve endlessly in the wheel of transmigration."

Jayadeva Swami took the king and others to the temple of Lord Vishvanath and in front of the *sanctum sanctorum*, he proclaimed, "In the name of the Lord reigning in this city, I swear that there is no duality. Brahman alone exists."

The Lord, along with His consort Goddess Visalakshi, gave His divine vision to all and blessed them with the affirmation, "One alone exists. This is the ultimate truth in all scriptures."

Jayadeva Swami appealed to Lord Narayana to bestow His grace upon him.

> "O Divine Effulgence! You dwell in me,
> As the lamp of Knowledge,
> You remain as One without a second,
> You are the father and mother,
> Guru, and the loving God,
> To all beings on this vast earth.
> All is contained in You.
> O glorious Lord! I surrender myself to You,
> Deign to bestow Your grace on me!"

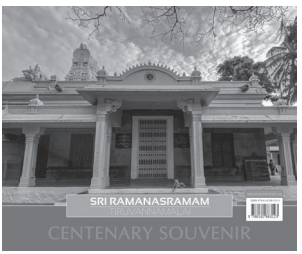
The Lord of Vaikunta, seated on the divine eagle along with Goddess Lakshmi, appeared there. He fondly embraced Jayadeva saying, "I put the stamp of approval on your teachings in the name of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which I expounded to Arjuna on the battlefield. I fully endorse your instructions to the king."

Narada and other celestial sages also confirmed this, saying, "What you have uttered is the subtle essence of *Bhagavatam*." They bestowed their benediction by raining down flowers with shouts of 'Victory! Victory!' Jayadeva Swami, the king and his retinue took leave of the people of Varanasi and returned to Krauncha.

Sant Uddhava and the other *siddhas* who were avidly listening paid their obeisance to Nabhaji and said in mellifluous accents, "You have filled our ears and hearts with nectar. Can anyone remain unmoved by the events in the life of Jayadeva Swami?"

Sant Nabhaji, the great lover of saints, uttered this benediction on all, "Those who recite or listen daily with devotion to this narrative on Jayadeva Swami will become the recipients of the grace of Lord Vasudeva and Lord Mahadeva. It will bestow on them the knowledge of Brahman, nature of *sattva* and the auspiciousness of eight-fold wealth."

After bidding farewell to the *siddhas* who were eagerly feasting on his narration, Sant Nabhaji became absorbed in the Self. ▲



CENTENARY SOUVENIR

This exquisite coffee table book is a visual homage to Bhagavan Ramana and the sacred grounds of his Ashram, presented with stunning artistry. Spanning 280 pages in an elegant 11 inch x 9 inch landscape format, the volume showcases over 400 breathtaking photographs, complemented by articles in English, Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati, and Telugu, celebrating the diverse linguistic richness of its readership. The book offers a meticulously curated chronicle of Sri Ramanasramam's remarkable journey, tracing its growth from a humble single hut in 1922 to its expansive form in 2023. Through a captivating fusion of archival photographs, rare artifacts, and profound narratives, readers are invited to traverse the ashram's transformative history. This magnificent volume not only honors the profound spiritual legacy shaped over a century but also captures the timeless essence of Bhagavan's teachings, preserved within the evolving sanctity of the ashram. This souvenir may be purchased either at the ashram's bookstore or online at http://bookstore.gururamana.org

Tamil Siddhas

Part Fifteen

Kaga Bhujandar: The Aadhi Siddha Amongst Siddhas

P. Raja

Long long ago, God knows how long ago, there was fun and fanfare on Mount Kailash. All the celestial beings were present — some danced, others drank soma juice, while many whiled away the time in various ways, all observed by the Trinity: Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, along with their consorts.

The swans of the mountain tasted the leftovers in cups and jugs, and so became dizzy with excitement. Siva and Parvati, who saw the pranky behaviour of the birds, fell in love with them. They took the shape of a crow and mated with one of the swans. The swan became pregnant and immediately yielded twenty-one eggs. All the eggs hatched instantly and out came twenty swans and a crow.

The lonely crow was called Bhujandar. While the twenty swans were blessed with long life, the crow became immortal, all because of its yogic powers. The crow was destined to see innumerable generations.

Since he took the body of 'kagam', meaning crow, he came to be known as Kaga Bhujandar. The story of his birth is admirably told by Rishi Suka Brahma in his monumental work *Gnana Soothiram*.[1]

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[1] P.S.Acharya, *Agathiar Mudhal Variar Varai Siddhargal* 60 *Peir:Vaazhvum Vaakkum*, Narmada Pathippagam, Chennai, 2012. P. 61.

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Sketch by Ghovi

Siddha Kaga Bhujandar, because of his deep understanding and experience of life, was very much liked by the devas. In fact, he became a much-sought after siddha and was a guru to Vasishtha, one of the most celebrated Vedic Rishis and the author of several hymns in the *Rig Veda*. His knowledge and wisdom, gathered through the millennia, became so popular that he was taken to Siva's abode to answer a poser.

Nobody in Mount Kailash was able to answer Lord Siva's doubt. Everyone stood speechless, for they knew about Siva's third eye. They mumbled to themselves, until a boy named Markandeya told Vishnu to answer Siva's question for, he was very much disturbed by the sepulchral silence prevailing there.

Vishnu, without any hesitation, said that only rishis and siddhas would be able to answer Siva's question. The only siddha Vishnu could think of was Kaga Bhujandar. But the knowledgeable Siddha would not have had much interest in coming to Mount Kailash, as he cared little for the divine beings. There was only one way to bring him to the Mountain. Vishnu suggested the name of Vashishtha, for the siddha would not agree to an invitation from anybody else.

Siva appreciated the idea but desired to know why Vishnu chose Siddha Kaga Bhujandar to answer his doubt. Vishnu replied that, when He was resting on a banyan leaf during a deluge, several souls clustered around him in fear, and he watched them grieve helplessly. Not knowing what to do, he conveniently tried to sleep in a sleepless state. His Wheel of Fortune was whirling at breakneck speed and nobody was able to stop it. Then something unbelievable happened. Kaga Bhujandar, who happened to be passing by, not only stopped that great wheel from rotating but also crossed it with no difficulty. Vishnu concluded that there would be no appropriate siddha other than Kaga Bhujandar to answer the Lord's question.

Siva's greatest doubt was this: "When the world gets completely destroyed by the deluge, where will the Great Creator rest? What will happen to Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshwara and Sadasivam?"

When Siddha Kaga Bhujandar arrived, he claimed that he had been an eyewitness to several great floods, as he had perched on a tree as a crow. He had watched helplessly as the great Gods were washed away. He had seen with wide-open eyes the creation of new worlds, their destruction, and subsequent creations. He had observed the deaths of

many Brahmas, Vishnus, and Sivas, and he felt that the present living Trinity must be the 22nd or 23rd in their respective roles. He further explained his story in his great work 'Perunool.' Siddha Bogar, too, had testified to this in his *Sandakhandam*. Therefore, Siddha Kaga Bhujandar's reply answered Siva's problematic question.

This Siddha was the author of the following memorable works such as *Perunool Kavyam* (1000), *Soothiram* (500), *Meignana Vilakkam* (80), *Gnana Kavyam* (33), *Upanidadham* (32), *Gnana Soothiram* (19) and *Gnana Kural* (19).

The numbers denote the total number of verses in each book. Except for the work, *Soothiram,* all his other works are available in print.

He knew about herbs very well. Called Aadi Siddha, Kaga Bhujandar had his ashram in the Sadhura Giri hills. Once, five disciples of Bogar came to the ashram seeking his blessings. One among them strayed into the nearby forest and died an untimely death by eating a fruit poisoned by snakes. Kaga Bhujandar brought him back to life by giving him a herb called *nagathali*.[2] He helped all his disciples to lead a life of immortality. Several poems give ample testimony to the fact that he was a good astrologer too.

Another story says that he was the son of a widow. It must be mentioned that Dhritrashtra and his brother Pandu of *Mahabharata* were sons of a widow.

Siddha Kaga Bhujandar, be he the son of a widow or a crow, was doubtless a Vedic sage who obtained superhuman power, lived several lifetimes, faithfully followed the ten virtues,[3] and was ever young, bright, agile and swift. In the account given of him, historical events and mythological fictions are blended together such that it is scarcely possible to gather more from it than that he was a sage of high repute.

He is reported to have said "Welcome dear Brahma, the 21st" when he, as a crow, saw Brahma getting washed away in a deluge.

Like all the other Tamil siddhas, Kaga Bhujandar too hated idol worship and pooh-poohed the imposters who posed as Godmen. He believed that God could be felt sitting in silence and meditating upon

[2] Cucumis anguinus is its botanical name, now deemed as a major antidote to snakebite.

[3] The ten virtues are celibacy, compassion, forgiveness, meditation, truthfulness, honesty, non-violence, non-stealing, gentleness, and self-control.

the divine. He asserted that all idols were created by imaginative men, and the so-called religious poets, highly imaginative, have made a fool of their fellow men.

In one of his poems, he gave a bit of his mind:
See for yourself how stupidly
These fellows wash
The head of a stone statue,
Decorate it with flowers of many hues
And braying like donkeys
Recite mantras
Unaware of their meaning.
They know not that
God is within them.
Only those who realise this truth
Will reach the pathway to Heaven.[4]

He defined religion as something to be lived, not talked about at length. He emphasized that religion could be a joyous, exciting, life giving thing. But he was sad at heart to note that religion had become a money-spinning business. He dismissed with a sneer all the fake gurus who called themselves Godmen. Here is another poem scorning such businessman:

See for yourself how the malefactor
Tempts the empty headed
To become his disciples.
Once they are in, he will coach them in
The art of extracting wealth
From the dull witted.
On the pretext of showing
The pathways to God
He will fool others,
For how can the blind show
Any path to the equally blind!
His lies are sky high.
His disciples too will fall
Into the pit of sin.

[4] Verse 3.

The real Yogis will be looked down upon.
They are bound to lose their credit.
And the imposters will finally say,
"Who can avert the fate
Written on one's forehead!"[5]

In yet another poem, Siddha Kaga Bhujandar advises people thus:

See for yourself how cruel is this ego...
Do away with your ego
And never be friendly with egocentrics.
Run away from men
Mad after women,
For anything can happen at any time
And you will never feel free
From situations surrounding you.[6]

He scorned the caste system and very much wished to burn the books that promoted the system. His poems are lovely expressions of revolutionary ideas. They teach us the art of leading a blissful life, as life is very short.

It is said that siddhas live in their astral bodies forever and that our human eyes are not able to perceive them. It is humanly impossible to probe the depth and breadth of their mind. If one desires to do so, one should try to know the complete power of the Siddhas.

Siddha researchers are of the opinion that Kaga Bhujandar lived in Uraiyur, Trichy before he slipped into the astral body.

So, the next time you see a crow, do not try to drive him away. Instead, salute him. He may be Kaga Bhujandar still living to see perhaps another deluge. ▲

[All references to verse numbers are to Tamizhpriyan's *Pathinettu Siddharkalin Mukkiya Paadalgalum Vilakkangalum*. Publisher: Narmadha Pathipagam, Chennai, 2006. All the translations from the verses of Kaga Bhujandar quoted in this essay are free renderings done by the author.]

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[5] Verse 7.
[6] Verse 5.

In Love with Oneness

Sikhidhvaja and Cudala

Neera Kashyap

The Brihat (the great) Yoga Vasistha is a work of about 32,000 Sanskrit couplets traditionally attributed to Valmiki, the author of *Srimad Ramayana*. It is a dialogue between Sage Vasistha and prince Rama, during which Advaita (the doctrine of non-duality) in its pure form of *ajatavada* (theory of non-origination) is expounded. Significantly, the discourse details Sage Vasishta's responses to queries raised by the earnest young Rama and includes some 55 illustrative stories interspersed throughout. Among these is the story of King Sikhidhvaja and his queen Cudala, one of the most interesting and instructive tales in the whole text. It shows that a woman has the same right to Self-knowledge as a man, and, with the right method and clarity of awareness, can achieve this even sooner than a man could. By achieving jnana, the noble wide can subtly help her husband achieve Self-knowledge as well. In this story, Cudala is able to do so despite her husband's resistances based on gender and traditional orthodoxy. Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi often referred to Yoga Vasistha and even incorporated six verses from it in *His Supplement to Forty Verses* (21-27).

The story: King Sikhidhvaja, endowed with every kind of royal excellence, ruled in Malwa. He married Cudala, a princess from Saurashtra. Having lived a happy life of youthful enjoyment combined with a perfect performance of duties, they became dissatisfied with life’s pleasures and started a quest for knowledge of the Self. They began to meditate, to associate with teachers to learn the essence of the *sastras* and to put what they had learnt to practice. Being the

more enthusiastic and discriminating of the two, Cudala succeeded in realising the Truth; consequently a unique lustre brightened her face. Unable to realize the Self, Sikhidhvaja could not understand the reason for her joy. She tried to help him, but he took her advice lightly.

The reason why Cudala reached her depths while Sikhidhvaja remained involved in matters of kingship, is that Cudala's interest ran deep. Instead of keeping the wisdom learnt from wise teachers at a casual and intellectual level, Cudala dwelt with meditative reflection, or *nididhyasana* on the truths they had heard, discussed and practiced. Keeping her mind free of all other occupations, she felt determined to continue her enquiry till she had discovered who she was and what was causing her delusion.

Practicing internal observation, she saw that the body was inert and dependent on the instruments of action — *karmendriyas* (speech, locomotion, dexterity, excretion and reproduction) which, too, were inert. She then observed that the instruments of knowledge – the *jnanendriyas* (ears, eyes, nose, skin and tongue) – were subtler but again dependent – dependent on the mind. She further saw that the mind, with all its power of imagination was dependent on the intellect - the instrument responsible for discrimination and reasoning. Going deeper, she saw that the intellect was dependent on the ego – the sense of doership. Cudala then saw that the ego itself was in essence inert, nothing but a ghost of the jiva – the finite self – which, though residing in the heart, was ephemeral, living by the grace of another. Cudala took the final plunge to discover that the jiva itself was dependent on pure consciousness and activated by pure consciousness - the ego, intellect, mind and senses all being a play of consciousness.

After considerable contemplation of this kind, she exclaimed, "It is this consciousness that is known by various names – Brahman, supreme Self, etc. In it there is no division into subject-object and their relationship. Consciousness becomes conscious of its own consciousness; it cannot be realized otherwise (as an object of consciousness). It is this consciousness alone that is manifest as the mind, the intellect and the senses. This world appearance, too, is but consciousness, apart from which nothing is. Consciousness does not undergo any change: the only apparent change is the illusory

appearance, which is illusory and therefore not real. In an imaginary ocean of the mind, imaginary waves arise, just as soldiers made of clay are clay, not soldiers. Even so, the world's appearance arises in consciousness and is therefore non-different from it."[1]

With the realization that this world appearance would also disappear in the same way in which it came into being, she melted into consciousness, experiencing it as self-luminous, eternal, imperishable and pure. By remaining constantly absorbed in the Self, she became dispassionate and calm, her being radiating bliss and peace. When Sikhidhvaja asked her the reason for her renewed youth, her tranquility and radiance, she replied with truthful confidence that, having cognized the substratum of all - the incomparable Self that is indestructible - she had transcended all levels of involvement and saw things as they truly are, and so bliss and tranquility.

Her response: "I am the ruler of the universe. I am not the finite being. I delight in myself. Hence I am radiant. This I am, I am not, in truth I am nor am I; I am the all, I am naught. Hence I am radiant."[2]

Her husband responded by mocking her for her childishness and ignorance, doubting that she could shine resplendent having abandoned real substances to attain the state of nothingness. He admonished her to enjoy the royal pleasures and cease her sheer prattle, such as: "I am not the body, nor am I anything else," and "Nothing is everything."

Though rid of all impurities and attachments, a wish rose in Cudala to move about in space. She consciously set about the task of acquiring *siddhis* through the observation and mastery of the pranas by controlling the inhalation, retention and exhalation of breath. She would have known that she needed these to travel through space and to create disguises, which she could use to her husband take the right spiritual course, as he remained unconvinced of her Self-realisation as a mere woman and as his wife. In Talk 597 Bhagavan states, "Self-Realisation may be accompanied by occult powers or it may not be. If the person had sought such powers before Realisation, he may get the powers after Realisation. There are others who had not sought such

[1] Vasistha's Yoga, Swami Venkatesananda, State University of New York Press, p 424-425.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 425-6.

powers and had attempted only Self-Realisation. They do not manifest such powers. These powers may also be sought and gained even after Self-Realisation. But then they are used for a definite purpose, i.e, the benefit of others as in the case of Cudala."[3]

Meanwhile even as the royal couple lived together in harmony, Sikhidhvaja continued with his traditional practices of charity, dietary restrictions and pilgrimage till he felt a negative reaction towards his sovereignty and wealth well up inside him. He confided to Cudala that the only recourse for him was a life in the forest where there would be no influences of pleasure or pain, prosperity and adversity, to disturb the mind of the ascetic. Cudala argued against this, saying that a forest life was appropriate to old age, when they could both leave the household life together. However, that night, the king secretly slipped away to the forest, where he began a rigorous tapas of ritual prayers and japa. Cudala meditated on her own course of action and saw that she was ordained to go to her husband only after a long period of time.

While Sikhidhvaja led a hard life, enduring long fasts, Cudala reigned over the kingdom with justice for eighteen long years. Only then did she visit her husband in her subtle body. She found him old, dark and emaciated, but with a mind that had ripened considerably and was poised for her help to realise the Self. At the thought of seeing her husband again, Cudala's very eagerness agitated her mind, and she realised the strong hold of marital love. She gathered herself and aimed, through the power of yoga, to infuse the eager throbbing of her own heart into his, and to restore his heart's equilibrium in such a way that he would return to his kingdom. There, they would dwell together happily for a long time.

Knowing that he was still not ready to receive *Atmajnana* from his wife, she, out of a desire to give him enlightenment quickly, assumes the form of a young radiant Brahmin boy descended from heaven. The king greeted him with pure water, flowers and other honorariums, and was surprised to find that the Brahmin knew about his past life, as he compliments the king on his qualities of humility, courtesy and complacence, and for being highly favored by the gods for his austerity. On probing the young Brahmin's life, the king discovered

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[3] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Mungala Venkataramiah, Talk 597.

that he was sage Narada's son. Coming out of samadhi, Narada had been distracted by the sight of some beautiful heavenly nymphs bathing naked in the river. Losing control, he had emitted his seed, but gathering himself, had deposited it in a nearby pot. After a perfectly grown boy was born in this vessel, Narada took him to his father, Brahma the creator, who helped the boy attain *Brahmajnana*, named him Kumbha muni, born as he was in a *kumbha*, or pot.

Kumbha muni, in turn, asked after the king's current state. Sikhidhvaja confessed that he had abandoned his kingdom out of fear of *samsara*, wherein one repeatedly experiences pleasure and pain, birth and death. Yet, despite performing intense austerities, remaining unattached to all things and not indulging in activities, he had not found peace and fulfillment, progressing only from sorrow to greater sorrow. Kumbha muni responded with the assertion that actions by themselves do not generate fruit; it is the *vasana* or volition that makes action bear fruit. Where there is *vasana*, there is mind. Neither being real entities, when the *vasana* ceases in the mind, there is Self-knowledge. One who has attained Self-knowledge is not born.

In Bhagavan's *Upadesa Saram*, the insentient nature of action as an inescapable ordainment is highlighted in verse 1:

कर्तुराज्ञया प्राप्यते फलम् ।
कर्म किं परं कर्म तज्जडम् ॥ १॥

kartur ājñyayā prāpyate phalaṃ
karma kiṃ paraṃ karma tajjaḍam

Translation:

Action yields fruit,
For so the Lord ordains it.
How can action be the Lord?
It is insentient.

Kumbha narrated the question he once asked of his great progenitor, Brahma: "Which of the two – the observance of duties or their non-observance for the sake of knowledge – is more useful to mankind?" Brahma's response: "Knowledge is no doubt the supreme God as it leads to one's unity with the Self and to oneness, but action is performed as a duty to mankind, both as pleasure and pain during

a lifetime." Bringing up the all-important method of Self-enquiry, Kumbha asserts: "Through the *vichara*, 'Who am I?' Whence came the universe? Into what is it absorbed," the Guru alone can guide the receptive disciple to Brahmajnana."

कोऽहं कथमिदं जातं कथं शाम्यति चेति भोः।
राजन्नावेक्षसे कस्मात्किमज्ञ इव तिष्ठसि ।। ३० ।।4 (VI.I.87.30)

Translation: Why is it that you do not employ your mind to inquire into questions such as who you are, how this world has come into existence and how and when it will cease to exist (in your consciousness of Reality)? Instead of making inquiries into these solemn truths, you are passing your time like the ignorant in foolish endeavors.

Kumbha added, "While tapas can help remove impurities, the state of Self-knowledge can be gained only through the company of holy ones, by serving and enquiring with them." The king asked Kumbha muni to accept him as a disciple, admitting his foolishness. Kumbha, in turn, asks Sikhidhvaja to allow his mind to trust, so it could receive, cherish and assimilate the teaching, and not be ruled by mere curiosity.

As a start to the teaching, Kumbha muni narrated two significant parables. The first points to the king's ignorance in finding but not recognizing the value of the wish-fulfilling jewel, *Cintamani* (his wife Cudala), and throwing it away in favor of a piece of uncut glass (ritual renunciation, of relatively low value). Kumbha minced no words while interpreting the story's meaning for the king: "Giving up the kingdom was renunciation but the renunciation was complete for the king was overcome by thoughts of renunciation which his renunciation had created in him. If thoughts still operate, how can the mind be considered to have been renounced? You abandoned your bondage to kingdom, but became bound again by the ascetic life, foolishly thinking, 'I have obtained the *cintamani*,' when you gained not even a piece of crystal." ▲

(To be continued)

[4] The slokas and translations for the story of Sikhidhvaja and Cudala have been taken from *The Yoga-Vasistha of Valmiki, Book 6, Nirvana Prakarana 1,* Translated by Vihari Lal Mitra, Parimal Publications, Delhi, 2005.

Summa Iru

V.S. Krishnan

Sri Arunagirinathar, born at Tiruvannamalai, was quite devoted and knowledgeable even at a young age. As he grew up and found that his body was hindering his spiritual progress, he took the extreme decision of dispensing with his body. He then went to the top of the Arunachala temple tower and jumped to the ground from there. But rather than the hard surface of the ground, he found himself under the grip of two strong hands. The savior said, "You are not destined to die; You are the chosen one to sing songs of glory on Muruga so that devotees can get these prayer songs to reach Him." Sri Arunagirinathar experienced the presence of Muruga in his savior. The savior, who exuded a divine power, put a chain of sacred beads over the devotee and conveyed the advice (*Upadesa*): "*Summa Iru.*"

Sri Arunagirinathar emerged as an enlightened poet from this experience and composed more than 16,000 songs. Most of them have been lost, but more than 1,300 of the surviving ones have been collected together in *Thiruppugazh* (The Glory of God). In another work, *Kandhar Anubhuthi*, Sri Arungirinathar recalls the advice of "Summa Iru," which he received from what he considered as Lord Muruga Himself. He says, "When God ordained me to remain still and quiet, without a word being spoken, I kept wondering what it meant."[1]

There are two things an individual is normally engaged in: either his body is busy doing something or his mind is engaged in thinking something. Though the body and mind perform certain vital functions, the fact remains that the body itself becomes a disease and the mind turns out to be a bundle of thoughts, as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has said. What exists in all states and in all stages

[1] சும்மா இரு சொல்லற என்றலுமே, அம்மா பொருள் ஒன்று மறிந்திலனே (கந்தரனுபூதி – 12).

is the Self. It is the supreme Self which gives the consciousness of one's existence. He who is conscious of Self is realized and he who identifies himself with the body and mind is in bondage. It is to free him from this captivity and to elevate him to the higher consciousness, the advice of "*Summa Iru*" is given.

Summa Iru means remaining quiet, still, and silent, without any bodily or mental activity. It means remaining in the world and yet distancing oneself from it, without responding to any external situations. It is a state in which the individual is entirely alone, without any distractions, where pure consciousness alone prevails. When the mind is still and silent, it stops generating thoughts and, therefore, an environment congenial environment to self-awareness is created. When the person remains thoughtless and speechless, he understands everything by means of the universal language of silence. By observing silence and looking inward, one finds a new path that leads to Self-knowledge.

During deep sleep, one remains truly 'himself.' This is the blissful state where there is no mind or body. Even the external world does not exist for him. He happily remains in a state of not knowing anything. Though the consciousness level is low, he is in his natural state of happiness, devoid of distracting elements like mind and body, the state where he alone exists. But deep sleep does not last long. It is interrupted by a waking state. On waking up, though he becomes fully conscious, the body which was non-existent before now starts making demands and the mind that was still before now starts generating different thoughts.

The question comes as to how one can combine the positive factors of bodylessness and mindlessness experienced during the deep sleep state with the positive factors of full consciousness experienced in the waking state. Sri Ramana Bhagavan advised devotees to practice sleep with awareness, or sleep without being in sleep. This state of 'wakeful sleep', inactive in respect of body and mind and active in awareness, will pave the way for realization.

Summa Iru is an ideal practice, by which one remains in half sleep, far from the mind and body as in deep sleep and at the same time with full consciousness, as in waking stage. When the attention is focused on the 'now,' the mind finds no place there for its existence and makes

a hasty retreat. *Yoga Vasishta* says that by fixing the attention in the present without allowing it to wander into the past or future, one can steady the mind. *Bhagavad Gita* says that he whose mind is steady and still is *Sthitaprajna*, which refers to the state of being calm yet firm, silent yet wise, still and yet balanced.

When the mind is active, it brings all false notions, like ego, jealousy and anger, and the individual forgets his real nature. When the mind is turned towards the world outside, it becomes ego, and when it is turned inward, it becomes Self. *Summa Iru* is an effortless and simple method by which the mind is absorbed in Self.

In the book, *Happiness and the Art of Being*, Michael James says, "The word *Atma Svarupa* means the true nature of our Self which is our consciousness of being, expressed as 'I AM.' The mind is our false self, a spurious form of consciousness which we mistake as ourself. We can dissolve it only by fixing our attention firmly on our real Self, the innermost core of our being, which we always experience as our fundamental and essential consciousness. When we dissolve our mind thus in our real Self, the true nature of our Self will reveal itself as mere being, which is silent, peaceful and devoid of any movement or activity. This state, in which we thus dissolve our mind in our real Self, is attained by being in *Summa Iruthal*; detached from our body and mind and attached to our consciousness. This is the state of 'just being' – that is, the state in which we merely remain as truly and naturally as we are, devoid of any activity or thought."

Meditation requires a certain effort to curtail thoughts, or drive away thoughts, but *Summa Iru* is a simple, effective and direct method, an effortless sadhana by which the mind rests at its source, the heart, the seat of Self.

The term *Summa Iru* is not to be interpreted so as to convey a state of complete idleness or inactivity. An incident happened at Ramanasramam which gave a clear indication that *Summa Iru* does not mean idleness or inactivity. A disciple of Mahatma Gandhi came to the Ashram and found an air of inactivity and stillness prevailing there. He asked Bhagavan, "Is it not better that you do some creative work or do some service instead of just sitting there simply?" Bhagavan merely said, "Who said that I am simply sitting here?" The disciple of Gandhi did not say anything further and returned. A few months later, Gandhi

sent this disciple to assess the progress of a social welfare institution in San Francisco. On entering the apartment of the social worker, what caught his attention was the portrait of Bhagavan, sitting calm, quiet and still, being prominently displayed at the wall there. When as,ed about it, the social worker replied, "Without this picture, which gives us inspiration, we cannot do the work that we are doing."

In his introduction to the *Philosophy & Practice of the spiritual teaching of Bhagavan Sri Ramana*, Michael James says, "The state of 'just being' is one in which our mind does not rise, think or know anything and yet it is a state of full consciousness, not of anything else but only of being. It is not an art to be conscious of the Self because we are always what we are and there is no special effort needed 'to be.' If we can reach the state of stillness effortlessly during sleep, we can do so effortlessly during the waking state too. The art is to remain calm and peaceful without doing or thinking anything and yet retain a clear consciousness of being. This is the state of ever being conscious of the Self, not deterred by any thought."

A cultured lady, daughter of a well-known Solicitor of Madras came to the Ashram and asked Bhagavan, "What should I do to free myself from thoughts?" Bhagavan said in Tamil, "*Summa Iru,*" and continued, "Just try the practice and see the result for yourself." Though Bhagavan rarely conveyed *Upadesa*, he thought it necessary to give a piece of advice to this lady. *Mouna Upadesa* was the characteristic feature of Bhagavan's teachings.

In v. 36 of *Aksharamana Malai*,[2] Bhagavan says: "Oh! Arunachala, you remained in a state of total stillness and silence, without openly conveying that message to me." By being silent, Arunachala was indirectly conveying the message of silence. Guru may not necessarily give advice to his disciple in clear letters or spoken words. Here, in order to prove the efficacy of silence, Arunachala is quiet so that his disciple will get the message through experience and not through spoken words. In the next verse (v.37), Bhagavan says, "Oh Arunachala, you have shown your prowess, bestowed your grace and removed my ignorance. Having done all these wonders, you remained quiet and still."[3]

[2] சொல்லாது சொலிநீ சொல்லற நில்என்று சும்மா இருந்தாய் அருணாசலா!

[3] சோம்பியாய்ச் சும்மா சுகமுண் டுறங்கிடிற் சொல்வே றென்கதி யருணாசலா.

Most of the time, Bhagavan remained in silence. He said silence is unceasing eloquence. Devotees believed that Maharshi was the manifestation of Sri Dakshinamurti, the South-ward facing God, another form of Lord Siva. Sri Ramanar took up residence on the southern side of Arunachala hills, identified himself with Arunachala Siva and always preferred to teach through silence. Thayumanavar says, "Oh Lord, you made me sit quietly. Can there be greater happiness than this?"[4] In another song he says, "Oh Lord, my only aspiration is to remain still and silent throughout day and night."[5] He further says that by adopting the practice of *Summa Iru*, one can conquer his mind and attain high spiritual fulfillment. Vallalar said, "I do not know when I would escape from the world of maya and transcend myself to that vast space of happiness by being *Summa Iru*."

A question would arise how one can perform duties satisfactorily by being *Summa Iru*. The work should go on diligently either at the workplace or at home. It is enough if one does the practice of being still and silent during free time and increases the duration gradually. *Summa Iru* means 'just being,' or being what you basically are, beyond the mind and body. Bhagavan once told an attendant, "Attend to the work for which you came."[6] One should first attend to the main work of Self-realisation and then attend to any other secondary work. *Summa Iru*, which paves the right way, should get priority over other material aspirations.

The term *Summa Iru* is also used in lighter vein. When a person, engaged in serious conversation, is interrupted by the child, he will restrain the child by saying *Summa Iru* meaning 'keep quiet' in this context. There was an occasion when even a casual mention of the word *Summa Iru* made a profound impact on a devotee.

Sri Paramahamsa Yogananda sent a young North Indian youth to Tiruvannamalai to see Bhagavan and get his advice, if possible. The young man came to Bhagavan, prostrated, and sat with an eagerness

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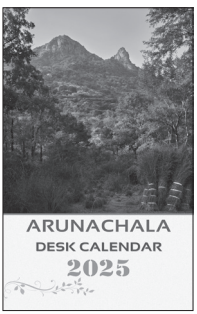
[4] சூதொன்றுமின்றி என்னைச் சும்மா இருக்க வைத்தாய் இதொன்றும் போதாதோ இன்பம் பராபரமே.

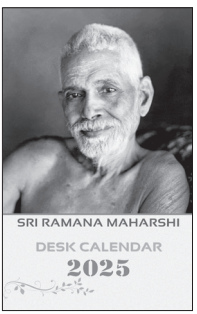
[5] சொல்லும் பொருளும்அற்றுச் சும்மா இருப்பதற்கே, அல்லும் பகலுமெனக் காசை பராபரமே.

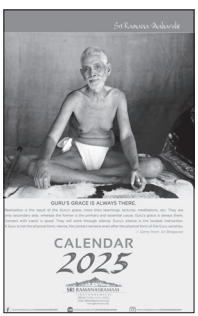
[6] வந்த வேலையை பாரு.

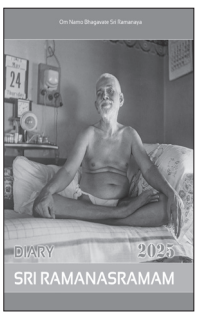
to absorb every word that came from Sri Ramana. As the loving glance of Bhagavan was cast on the youth, Bhagavan's attendant, who was standing behind, kept muttering something. Bhagavan then told the attendant in Tamil, "*Summa Iru, oyi*" (keep quiet). Having heard the words *Summa Iru* from Bhagavan, the young man asked the person next to him for the meaning of those words. When the person explained that *Summa Iru* means remaining quiet, the youth took this Tamil word as the advice given by Bhagavan to him. After paying obeisance to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, he left with the satisfaction of having received great advice from Bhagavan Sri Ramana. The two-letter words, *Summa Iru*, as used by Bhagavan serve as an effortless means towards realization and can therefore be considered as a *mahavakya* ('The Great Sayings' of the Upanishads, as characterized by the Advaita school of Vedanta, with *mahā* meaning great and *vākya*, a sentence). ▲

DIARY AND CALENDARS - 2025









The wall calendar has six sheets (12 pages) of photographs of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. The ashram's special days 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 photographs of Arunachala and Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, respectively. They are 6.5 inches in width and 10 inches in height and contain quotations from Bhagavan's teachings for each month. 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

KEYWORD

सदगुरु: Satguru

Ramesh Iyer

Every Saturday evening after pūjā at the Samādhi of Bhagavān, devotees chant the famous Śrī *Ramaṇa Satguru* with devotional fervour. The refrain is:

Ramaṇa satguru Ramaṇa satguru
Ramaṇa satguru rāyaṉē;
Ramaṇa satguru Ramaṇa satguru
Ramaṇa satguru rāyaṉē.

Here in, we will contemplate on the import of Satguru.

Sadguru (सद्गुरु), a composite word in Saṃskṛtam(संस्कृतम्) derived from two root words (known as धातु -dhātu), sat (सत्) and guru (गुरु). When the rule (called सन्धिः - sandhiḥ, popularly known as Euphonic Combination) for conjunction of these two words is applied, Sadguru results. Here the changed connection letter "d" (formed by connecting t and g) in Sadguru must be pronounced as Dental plosive, voiced but unaspirated. But as most people tend to pronounce "sad" as "saed" conveying the meaning of unhappiness, Satguru is retained here as the meaning of the composite word is derived from that of the constituents.

In *adhyātma mārgaḥ* (Spiritual Path), the word Sat[1] means Wise, That which really exists, Self, True, Virtuous, Honest, Real, etc and the word Guru[2] has many meanings, the most popular being a teacher in modern usage while it actually means a spiritual preceptor. Joined together, Satguru refers to a Self-realized Guru, who is not only a *Satpuruṣa* (a person with noble/*sattvic* qualities) ever established in the Self but also transforms the lives of the spiritual disciples

[1] *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, V.S. Apte, Page 1612.
[2] *Ibid*. Page 666.

and enables them to also become one with Him, Self-realized. In Bhagavān's literature, the words guru and Satguru are interchangeably used with the implied meaning of Satguru as can be seen in the sections below.

Who is a Guru?

The word guru finds mention in the earliest Vedic texts. Śloka 16 of *Advayatāraka Upaniṣad*, *s*tates the definition of guru, based on its constituent syllables *gu* and *ru*.

गुशब्दस्त्वन्धकारः स्यात् रुशब्दस्तन्निरोधकः ।
अन्धकारनिरोधित्वात् गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥१६॥

guśabdastvandhakāraḥ syāt ruśabdastannirodhakaḥ |
andhakāranirodhitvāt gururityabhidhīyate ||16||

The syllable "gu" means darkness, namely self-ignorance, the syllable "ru", he who dispels them through knowledge. Because of the power to dispel darkness, guru is thus named.

Katha Upaniṣad explains the need for a guru in the following words: "ātma, when taught by an inferior person, is not easily comprehended, because It is diversely regarded by disputants. But when It is taught by a guru who has become one with ātma, there can remain no more doubt about It. Atma is subtler than the subtlest and not to be known through argument."[3]

This raises the basic question in the minds of devotees of Bhagavān, do we need a guru in human form as Bhagavān did not have one. Bhagavān said, "Who is a Master? He is the Self after all. According to the stages of the development of the mind the Self manifests as the Master externally. The famous ancient saint *Avadhūta* said that he had more than 24 Masters. The Master is one from whom one learns anything. The Guru may be sometimes inanimate also, as in the case of *Avadhūta*. God, Guru and the Self are identical."[4]

Bhagavān further asserts that "The Self is one only. He tells that the Self alone is. Is not then the Self your Guru? Where else will Grace come from? It is from the Self alone. Manifestation of the Self is a

[3] *Katha Upaniṣad* 1.2.8.
[4] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Mungala Venkataramiah, Talk 23.

manifestation of Grace and vice versa. All these doubts arise because of the wrong outlook and consequent expectation of things external to oneself. Nothing is external to the Self."[5]

It is thus the Grace of the Self, that presents itself as the driving force for the ***earnest*** disciple in providing him/her with the necessary resources and capabilities towards spiritual well-being and Self-realization. The resources are in the form of Bhagavān's literature and capabilities are in the form of life experiences for the disciple to annihilate the *vāsanās*/ego.

Earnest disciple is one with utmost faith & trust (i.e. *śraddhā*) in Bhagavān and his teachings as clearly stipulated in *Devīkālottaram:*[6]

அதனாலே நிர்ப்பயனாய் ஐயமெனல் இன்றி
எதனிலுமே இச்சை இலனாய் — இதயத்தில்
நற் சிரத்தையோடு நிராகுலனாய் ஞானத்தில்
உற்சாகம் உள்ளோனாய் உற்று.

ataṉālē nirbbhayaṉāy aiyameṉal iṉdṟi
etaṉilumē ichchai ilaṉāy – idayatthil
naṟ śraddhaiyōṭu nirākulaṉāy jñāṉattil
uṟchākam uḷḷōṉāy utṟtṟu.

Therefore let the seeker be fearless, undoubting, free from desire, earnest, resolute and persevering in jnana, as explained here.

The same importance of *śraddhā* is echoed by *Bhagavadgītā sāram*[7] as well as *Gurustuti.*[8]

Adjectives of Guru

There are various spiritual gurus all over the world. Some self-styled or self-proclaimed ones. Amongst them, some are more high profile than others. Self-styled is supposed to be a subtle indicator - even warning - that no quality control spiritual lab has attested to the person's wisdom and/or holiness.

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[5] *Ibid.* Talk 157.
[6] *Devīkālottaram*, Śloka 4.
[7] *Bhagavadgītā sāram*, Ślokas 17 & 18.
[8] *Gurustuti*, Śloka 7.

D. Thiyagarajan

Our Vedic literature recommends traits/qualities that a guru possesses at all times. The traits are indicated by adjectives to identify the real ones from the unreal: *sat, jagat, loka, parama, ādi, dīna, pravitara, atula, aprameya* etc. Of these, the significance of two important adjectives are illustrated here.

Jagadguru (जगद्गुरु) or Lokaguru (लोकगुरु)

This type of guru benefits the living beings (not just the humans) across all worlds for their spiritual upliftment through their own teachings.

Lord Kṛṣṇā, the supreme *paramātma* is glorified as *jagadgurum* by *Gītā Dhyāna Ślokaḥ*.[9]

Śrī Vāsiṣṭhaganapatimuni in his exposition[10] of Śrī *Ramaṇagītā*, after listing the Tamil works written by Bhagavān, concludes:

> अत एव "विश्रुतं कविं" गुर्वर्थं यं कमपि मानुषं देवं वाऽनाश्रित्य स्वयमेव जगद्गुरुं परं ज्योतिःस्वरूपं स्वरूपलाभेन दृष्टवान् । अतो "गुरुं विना" ॥
>
> *ata eva "viśrutam kaviṃ" gurvarthaṃ yaṃ kamapi mānuṣaṃ devaṃ vā'nāśritya svayameva jagadguruṃ paraṃ jyoti:svarūpaṃ svarūpalābhena dṛṣṭavān | ato "guruṃ vinā" ||*
>
> *Bhagavān, the renowned jñāni did not take refuge under any guru in human or divine form, therefore he is independently Jagadguru, resplendent as the absolute self.*

Further, Gaṇapatimuni extols Bhagavān as lokaguru in Śrī *Ramaṇacatvāriṃśat*.[11]

Need for Satguru

Different traditions have different classification of the gurus. Śrī *Kulārṇavatantram* (which is a dialogue between Lord Śiva and Pārvatī devī), classifies gurus into six kinds and distinguishes Satguru from gurus[12]:

[9] *Gītā Dhyāna Ślokaḥ*, Śloka 5.

[10] *Śrī Ramaṇagītā - savyākhyā*, Śrī ramaṇāśram, 1946 - Page 155 for Śloka 18.21.

[11] *Śrī Ramaṇacatvāriṃśat*, Śloka 22.

[12] Śrī Kulārṇavatantram, Tārānātha Vidyāratna - Tryodaśa ullāsaḥ, śloka 128 onwards.

i) *preraka* is the "impeller" who instigates interest that leads to initiation;

ii) *sūcaka* is the "indicator" who describes the sādhanā in which interest has been awakened;

iii) *vācaka* is the "explainer" who describes the process and its object;

iv) *darśaka* is the "shower" who definitely points out the working and aims of the path in greater detail;

v) *śikṣaka* is the "trainer" who actually instructs how to do sādhanā;

vi) *bodhaka* is the "illuminator", the Satguru who lights in the *śiṣya*, the disciple.

Many are the gurus on earth who give what is other than the Self. But rare is the Satguru who brings the ātma to light. Many are the gurus who rob *śiṣyās* of their wealth. But rare is the Satguru who removes the afflictions of the *śiṣya*. He is the Satguru in whose very presence there flows the supreme bliss called ānanda.

As in the vicinity of fire, butter gets melted, so in the proximity of the holy Satguru all bad karmas dissolve. As lighted fire burns up all fuel, dry and moist, so the glance of the Satguru burns up in a moment the karmas of the *śiṣya*. As the heap of cotton blown up by a great storm scatters in all the ten directions, so the heap of negative karmas is blown away by the compassion of the Satguru. As darkness is destroyed at the very sight of the lamp, so is ignorance destroyed at the sight of the holy Satguru.

Only from the mouth of a Satguru can a jiva realize the one immutable Brahman. Such knowledge cannot be attained through the study of even ten million śāstras.

Sādhu Natanānanda in his writing *Spiritual Instructions* defines Satguru:

"Steady abidance in the Self, looking at all with an equal eye, unshakeable courage at all times, in all places and circumstances, etc."[13]

[13] *Spiritual instructions*, Chapter 1, #1.

Śrī Muruganar in *Guru Vachaka Kovai* defines[14]:

நல் ஆசிரியர் அருள் ஞானவிழிப் பட்டோர்தாம்
வல்லியத்து வாய்ப்பட்ட மான்போலப் - புல்லியல்போய்க்
கைவலியங் காணக் கடவரலால் எஞ்ஞான்றும்
கைவிடத் தாம்படார் காண்.

nal āchiriyar aruḷ jñāṉavižip paṭṭōrtām
valliyattu vāyppaṭṭa māṉpōlap - pulliyalpōyk
kaivaliyaṅġ kāṇak kaṭavaralāl ejñjñāṉdṟum
kaiviṭat tāmpaṭār kāṇ.

Those who have been blessed by the divine glance of Satguru's grace are like a deer caught in a tiger's jaw. They will realize the absolute Truth through the annihilation of ego and will never be abandoned.

"Many are the gurus who are proficient to the utmost in the Vedas and śāstras. But one who sees his own [ego's] death is the true Seer."[15]

In his book, Guru Tattva, Swami Śivānanda declares, "The Satguru is Brahman Himself. He is an ocean of bliss, knowledge and mercy. He is the captain of your soul. He is the fountain of joy. He removes all your troubles, sorrows and obstacles. He shows you the right divine path. He tears your veil of ignorance. He makes you immortal and divine. He transmutes your lower, diabolical nature. He gives you the rope of knowledge and saves you when you are drowning in this ocean of *saṃsāra*. Do not consider him to be only a man. If you take him as a man, you are a beast. Worship your Guru and bow to him with reverence."

A droplet from *guru gītā* by Sage Vyasa extols the Satguru[16]:

ब्रह्मानन्दं परमसुखदं केवलं ज्ञानमूर्तिं
द्वन्द्वातीतं गगनसदृशं तत्त्वमस्यादिलक्ष्यम् ।
एकं नित्यं विमलमचलं सर्वधीसाक्षिभूतं
भावातीतं त्रिगुणरहितं सद्गुरुं तं नमामि ॥

[14] *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, Śloka 284.
[15] *Ibid.* Śloka 163.
[16] *Śrī Skandapurāṇa's guru gītā*, śloka 111.

brahmānandaṃ paramasukhadaṃ kevalaṃ jñānamūrtiṃ
dvandvātītaṃ gaganasadṛśaṃ tattvamasyādilakṣyam |
ekaṃ nityaṃ vimalamacalaṃ sarvadhīsākṣibhūtaṃ
bhāvātītaṃ triguṇarahitaṃ sat-guruṃ taṃ namāmi ||

Salutations to that Satguru who is the bliss of Brahman, bestower of supreme joy, the embodiment of absolute wisdom, beyond duality, all-pervading like the sky, indicated by Maha Vākyas like Tat Tvam Asi, One, Eternal, Blemishless, Steadfast, Witness of everything, beyond emotions, and who has transcended three guṇas.

Bhagavān Ramaṇa, the Satguru

In the Tamil stuti Śrī *Ramaṇa Satguru* that is chanted every Saturday, its author Satyamangalam Śrī Venkatarama Iyer, who came to Bhagavān when he was in Virūpākṣa cave, wrote 25 ślokas.

These 25 ślokas can be broadly classified into 2 categories. Ślokas 1 to 15, 17 to 20 and 23 highlight Īśvara's descent as Bhagavān and specific virtues of Satguru. The remaining ślokas are an outpouring as prayers seeking spiritual upliftment. Chanting, meditating or contemplating on these ślokas alone would suffice for a seeker to attain the unattainable in one lifetime.

"One morning, when a devotee from Chidambaram, Subrahmanya Iyer began singing this song, Bhagavān also joined in the singing. The devotees were amused and began to laugh at Bhagavān himself singing his own praise. While he was expressing his amusement, Bhagavān commented, 'What is extraordinary about it? Why should one limit Ramaṇa to a form of six feet? Is it not the all-pervading divinity that you adore when you sing? Why should I not also join in the singing?'. Bhagavān thus focused the attention of the devotees on Śrī Ramaṇa, the real, the imperishable and the permanent."[17]

Even today, when singing this song, devotees connect with the presence of Bhagavān and moist their eyes in divine ecstasy, while few others dance even as they circumambulate the shrine of Bhagavān.

[17] Collated from "*The Call Divine*, May 1953" and "*The Power of the Presence*, Part Two, p. 230".

In *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, Śrī Muruganar declares the descent of Ramaṇa Satguru[18]:

"நீர்சூழ் நிலமகள்செய் நீதப் பெருந்தவத்தால்
பேர்சான்ற சுத்தப் பிரம்மமே - சீர்சால்
சகளம்கொள் சீரமண சத்குருசத் போத
அகளங்க பாதம் அகம்."

"nīrchūż nilamakaḷ chey nītap peruntavattāl
pērchāṉdṟa śuddhab birammamē – śīrchāl
sakaḷam koḷ śrīRamaṇa Satguru sat bōdha
akaḷaṅġka pādam aham."

Through the exemplary and great austerities performed by the denizens of the Earth encircled by the ocean-waters, the unparalleled absolute Brahman itself incarnated as the glorious auspicious form of Śrī Ramaṇa Satguru. May I dissolve into that blemishless feet of absolute knowledge personified.

Andavan Pitchchi, an ardent devotee of Bhagavān, sang a melodious Tamil song, that starts with:

அறிவை அறிவால் அறிந்து, அறிவே தானாய் நின்ற குருவே
தனிப்பெரும் கருணை குருவே, ரமண ஸத் குருவே.

aṟivai aṟivāl aṟintu, aṟivē tāṉāy niṉdṟa guruvē
taṉipperum karuṇai guruvē, Ramaṇa sat guruvē.

Oh! Our Guru! Oh! Ramaṇa Satguru : By knowing Self through the Self, You stood the embodiment of Self. Your great compassion is unparalleled.

In *Ramaṇa Puranam,* Śrī Muruganar elucidates that Bhagavān graces the fully surrendered devotees as their Satguru through His teachings.[19]

அவ்வாறு அவற்றை உவந்து ஆடினர்க்கோர் சத்குருவாய்ச்
செவ்வே ஓர்வார்த்தை திருவாய் மலர்வோனே!

---

[18] *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, Śloka 14.
[19] *Ramaṇa Puranam*, 357-358.

avvāṟu avaṯṟaṯai uvantu āṭiṉarkkōr Satguruvāych
chevvē ōrvārttai tiruvāy malarvōṉē!

Śrī Lakṣmaṇa śarmā ends his Śrī *Ramaṇagītikā* with:

अघदर्शने परमालसं मधुरस्मितं रमणाभिधं
तमजं शिवं परमं गुरुं मम दैवतं हृदि भावये ॥

aghadarśane paramālasaṃ madhurasmitaṃ ramaṇābhidhaṃ
tamajaṃ śivaṃ paramaṃ guruṃ mama daivataṃ hṛdi bhāvaye ||

I meditate in my heart that Supreme Guru bearing the name Ramaṇa, who totally overlooks the defects of others, who has pleasant countenance, who is my Devata, Immortal, and the most auspicious.

How does one discover Ramaṇa Satguru? Do we need proximity? Satguru is everywhere, for there is nothing else other than the Self. Bhagavān said, "The Self alone is."[20] Is there any effort - external actions or internal meditation - needed? He said, "The Guru cannot give you anything new, which you have not already. Removal of the notion that we have not realised the Self is all that is required. We are always the Self. Only, we don't realise it."[21]

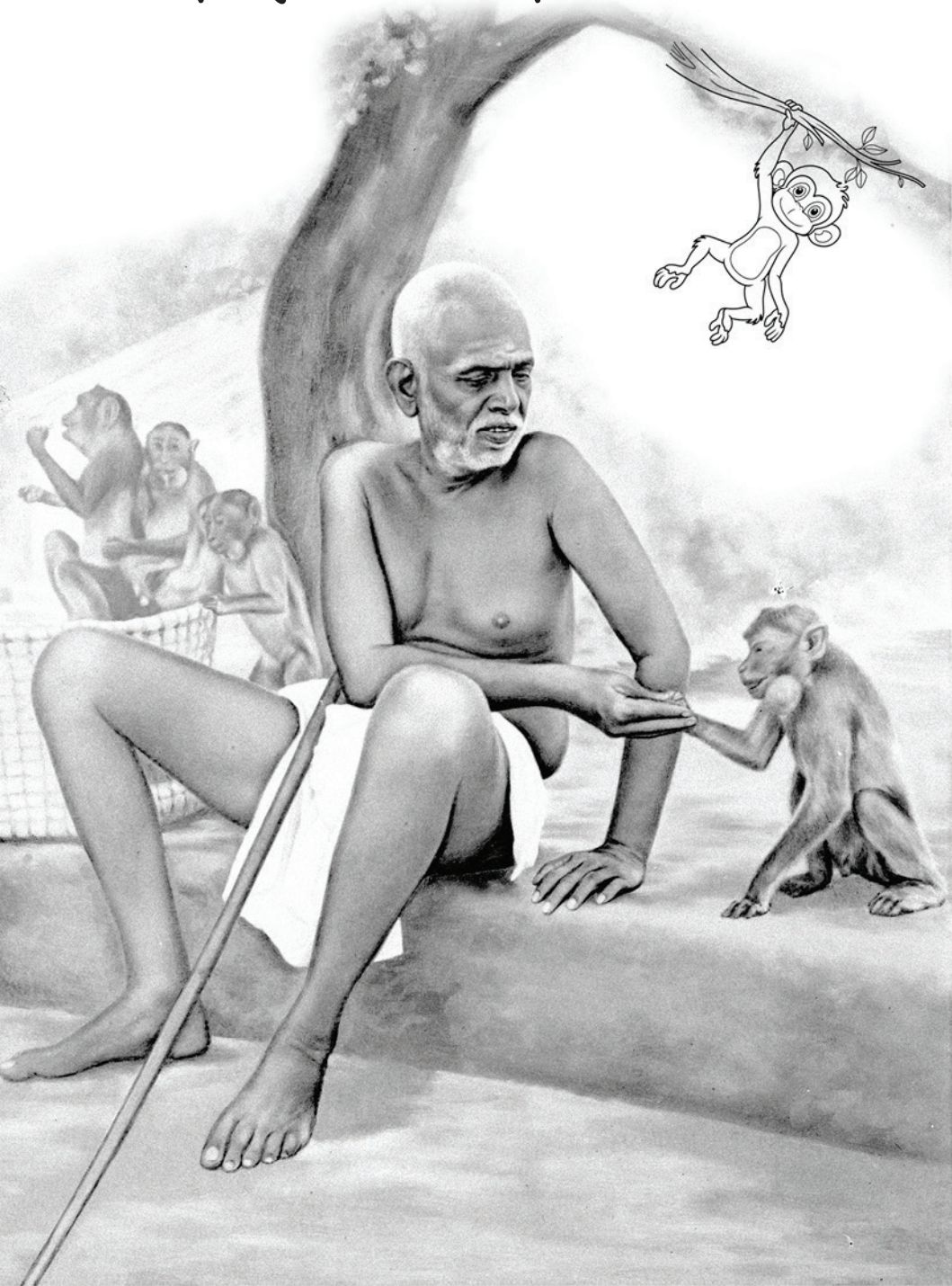
Bhagavān's oft-quoted spiritual *grantha*, *The ṛbhugītā* Tamil version in 26.15 clearly brings out:

> "That in which the fourfold means (*sādhanacatuṣṭaya*) for realization of Brahman do not exist, In which there is neither Satguru nor diligent disciple, etc ... .Ever abide in Bliss, without even an iota of intention (*saṅkalpa*), In That itself as That itself."

As the last notes of Śrī *Ramaṇa Satguru* are sung on Saturday evening an imminent silence follows and the Satguru's presence is palpable in every resonating devotee. ▲

[20] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi,* Mungala Venkataramiah, Talk 13.
[21] *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, Devaraja Mudaliar, 16-9-45 Afternoon.

Nondi's Corner



Hello young adults and children!

This is Nondi, a monkey devotee of Bhagavan. Welcome to the January 2025 edition of the Children/youth corner. In this section, I will share stories, anecdotes, puzzles and interesting facts that offer you spiritual nourishment every quarter. The aim is to inspire you and help you blossom into kind, brave and decisive adults.

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

mountainpath@gururamana.org.

Sincerely,

Your friend,

"Nondi"

How to Keep the Mind Steady

Here's a beautiful narration by Bhagavan on how to keep the mind steady by feeding it positive thoughts of God. This is from *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* (Talk 563).

As is characteristic of Bhagavan, he uses the simple example of luring a bull with sweet grass to keep it in its stall.

A group of people came on a visit to Sri Bhagavan. One of them asked, "How can I keep my mind alright?"

Bhagavan: A refractory bull is lured to the stall by means of grass. Similarly the mind must be lured by good thoughts.

Devotee: But it does not remain steady.

Bhagavan: The bull accustomed to stray takes delight in going astray. However he must be lured with luscious grass to the stall. Even so he will continue to trespass into the neighbour's fields. He must gradually be made to realise that the same kind of good grass can be had in his own place. After a time he will remain in the stall without straying. Later a time will come when, even if driven out of the stall, he will return to the stall without going into the neighbouring fields. So also the mind must be trained to take to right ways. It will gradually grow accustomed to good ways and will not return to wrong ways.

Devotee: What are the good ways to be shown to the mind?

Bhagavan: Thought of God.

D. Thiyagarajan

Youth Corner

Here's a personal account from our young friend Krishna Geethika about how she came to Bhagavan and what Bhagavan means to her. Krishna grew up in Vizag and Hyderabad. She is currently a software engineer in Hyderabad. She enjoys reading spiritual texts, visiting temples and practicing photography.

BHAGAVAN: What can I say about him? Can I even speak or write about his grace upon me? I am here at this stage of my life only because of him. His grace is eternal. Bhagavan's love towards me is like that of Lord Shiva. It is incomparable to the love of anyone in this human life because, while a father or mother might misunderstand their child at some point, Bhagavan never leaves my side. He is always with me, and I can remember countless moments when I have felt his presence in my life.

I'm Krishna Geethika from Hyderabad, presently employed as a software engineer. Since childhood, I have been surrounded by spiritual mentors. A significant milestone in my life was visiting Tiruvannamalai, the sacred place where Bhagavan lived, renowned for housing numerous sadhus and yogis, and home to the beautiful Arunachala Hill — believed to be a manifestation of Lord Shiva himself. I was 12 years old then. My parents and I visited Sri Ramanasramam. Despite being in a new place with no acquaintances, I felt at home and knew that Bhagavan was taking care of us. It was magical. From then on, he has taken care of me, and I have never left him, knowing he will never leave me or my family.

Upon returning to Hyderabad, the essence of Arunachala remained deeply ingrained within us, thanks to the profound love and grace we experienced. Bhagavan, in his infinite love, guided us to the Ramana Kendram at Hyderabad that was created with devotion by Dr. K.S. We visited this sacred space and were humbled by the presence of devoted individuals. At Ramana Kendram, we met many old devotees, including Ramannaya garu (a honorific salutation in Telugu equivalent to Mr.), who taught my sister and I to serve food to the devotees. Although we were young, they entrusted us with this responsibility, and we continue to serve food at the Kendram to this day.

On significant occasions such as September 1st (Bhagavan's advent day at Arunachala), Bhagavan's Jayanthi, and the Deepam festival, we decorate the entire Kendram premises. We serve food and sing songs dedicated to Bhagavan. One of my favorite songs, which we learned from a CD by Ilayaraja, has a beautiful meaning: "Oh Bhagavan, you are the Arunachala guru who has done something, some maya, to me. I have no medicine to get rid of your love. You sit silently, performing maya, and without speaking, we are all surrendered to your love."

These lyrics changed my entire life helping me to shake off my ego, fear, and everything else. I have fond memories of singing during our Kendram *satsangs* every Sunday, accompanied by speeches from Krithivasan garu and other devotees.

As I grew up, I became more attached to Bhagavan, learning more about his life at Arunachala through stories and books like *Ramana Kadhasudha*. Despite struggling with reading and writing Telugu, I miraculously managed to read and write it with the help of this book, and I absorbed each story deeply.

Another significant incident was during my intermediate (10+2) exams. I was an average student, but I miraculously ended up obtaining excellent marks. My results shocked my family and me; it was purely Bhagavan's grace. Another miracle in my life was securing my job. During the COVID pandemic, I attended an online interview with an MNC. Despite my lack of confidence, Bhagavan's grace helped me ace the interview on my first attempt.

To this day, Bhagavan is with me, and I owe this to my father, who believed in and guided us to Bhagavan's presence. He took us to the Kendram and on trips to Arunachala, telling us bedtime stories about Bhagavan and encouraging discussions about life and spirituality. With Bhagavan's grace, I traveled alone to Arunachala, and He always showed up in miraculous ways, like helping to secure accommodation without prior booking.

The ashram food, the Maha Prasada, is a testament to Bhagavan's love and affection. I also had the opportunity to sing my favorite song in front of Bhagavan's samadhi. My passion for photography found fulfillment as I captured moments in the ashram and the beauty of Arunachala Hill with permission from the ashram president.

Bhagavan's teachings have profoundly impacted my life, shaping how I navigate its ups and downs. His emphasis on Self-enquiry has helped me understand myself better. Whenever I feel overwhelmed or lost, I find relief in the simplicity of his teachings, focusing on the present moment and letting go of unnecessary worries about the past or future.

During a recent ashram visit, I met an Australian named Con, who has been visiting the ashram for over 20 years. He shared his experiences with Bhagavan and his sadhana

in pursuit of self-realization through teachings of "Who am I?" His insights resonated with me deeply; they felt like direct guidance from Bhagavan.

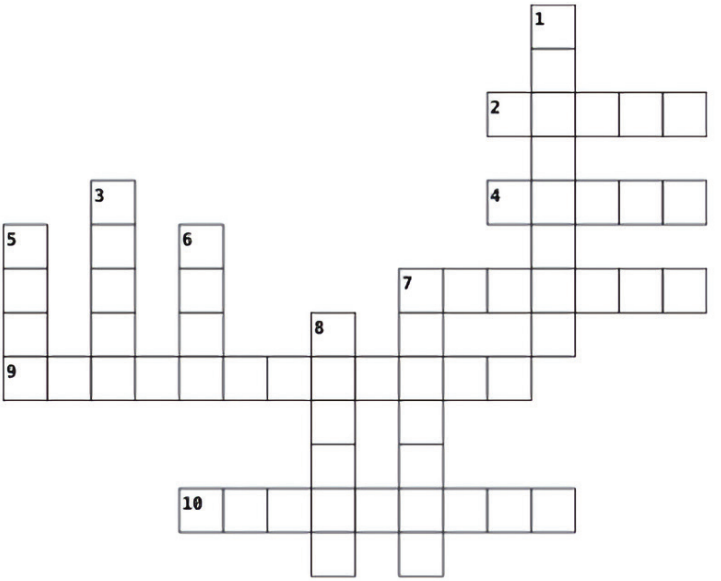
In our journey, we face many situations, but Bhagavan says *summa iru* in Tamil, meaning "Just watch the things happening around you but don't react to them." These teachings have helped me remain detached from my daily life's problems and conversations. Now, I deal with problems differently, finding wisdom in spiritual talks and discussions on the *Bhagavad Gita*, which often connect to Bhagavan's teachings.

Writing about how I came to Bhagavan and what he means to me is challenging because his grace towards me is endless. I often feel like his favourite child, promising never to leave his side in happiness or sadness. His presence fills my heart with joy and wonder, like a river flowing endlessly. In his boundless love, I find solace and guidance, like a beacon in the dark. Through his teachings, I discover the beauty of existence, like petals unfolding in the morning sun. Bhagavan is the eternal flame, illuminating my path, leading me towards inner peace and enlightenment. ▲

HERE'S THIS ISSUE'S FUN CORNER

Crossword Puzzle

Find animal devotees of Bhagavan



ACROSS

2. Bhagavan humorously asked his attendant Vaikuntavasar not be afraid of this animal - his "bed" (5)
4. Name of the lame monkey devotees (5)
7. Name of the most famous cow devotee (7)
9. Gift of the Rani of Baroda (5, 7)
10. Bhagavan fed them cashew nuts and they ran on his lap (8)

DOWN

1. Visited Skandashram fearlessly, of golden hue (8)
3. Name of the deer for whom a samadhi was built at the Ashram (5)
5. When this bird died, Bhagavan remarked, "A siddha purusha has left his body today" (4)
6. The wounded bird that Bhagavan cared for and restored to health (4)
7. Bhagavan said this animal was a jnani who came down the hill to listen to the Vedas (7)
8. Name of the dog Bhagavan tended to and who died in his hands (6)

Have fun solving these anagrams of women devotees of Bhagavan

NEREOAL LIENAPU NYOE _____

SRIU MNMGAAA _____

KMAAALKMAN _____

YCUL ESCNNRLOSE _____

UIACL SENOBRO _____

SAAMLIHKGAN _____

UAELAML _____

SAHKIAKM _____

ABHIARTPAV AJER _____

MUDAIARL APITA _____

AAIJKN AAMTH _____

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 5:

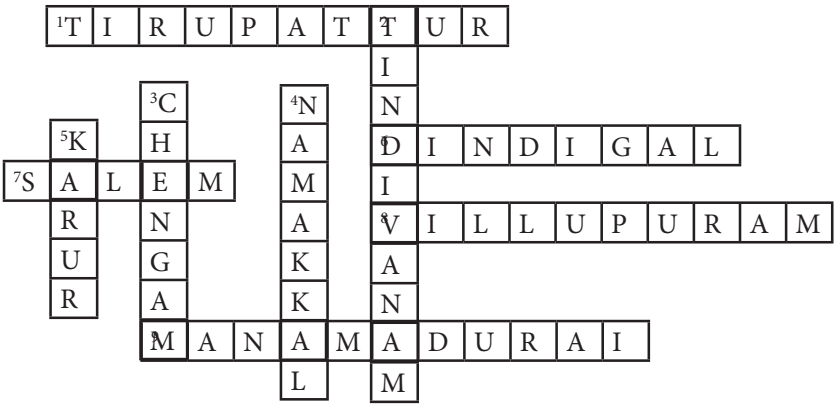
ॐ महौजसे नमः ।

Oṁ mahaujase namaḥ

Meaning: The great light

He is the light of Awareness which operates as Grace and draws all living beings to itself.

Solutions to October 2024 crossword puzzle and life events matching puzzle



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)

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

TV SERIES ON BHAGAVAN

Veteran filmmaker Bombay Chanakya, celebrated for his storytelling and collaborations with Tamil cinema legends, is producing a series on the life of spiritual teacher Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. This 26-episode series, commemorating the centenary of Sri Ramanasramam, aims to convey Maharshi's message of Self-enquiry and inner freedom. Supported by SRMH, the project was blessed at Bhagavan's Samadhi with Dr. Venkat Ramanan, the Ashram's President. The series will premiere on YouTube's FASTFLIX and Sankara TV, with plans for multilingual versions to reach a global audience, offering viewers a profound spiritual experience and insight into Maharshi's transformative teachings.

QUESTION & ANSWER

Question: *What is the meaning and concept of* Manonasa *according to Advaita. Please answer with citations from authentic Advaita scriptures or Ramana Maharshi.*

Answer: The concept of *manonasa* has been extensively discussed in various *advaitic* texts. Ramana Maharshi[1] says that

> Whatever thoughts arise as obstacles to one's *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) — the mind should not be allowed to go in their direction, but should be made to rest in one's self which is the Atman; one should remain as witness to whatever happens, adopting the attitude "Let whatever strange things happen, happen; let us see!" This should be one's practice. In other words, one should not identify oneself with appearances; one should never relinquish one's self. This is the proper means for destruction of the mind (*manonasa*) which is of the nature of seeing the body as self, and which is the cause of all the aforesaid obstacles.

Generally, in Advaita, *manonasa* implies the destruction of the mind and *sine qua non* for realization. Bhagavan emphasizes[2] that "breath-control is only an aid for rendering the mind quiescent (*manonigraha*); it will not destroy the mind (*manonasa*)." Vidyaranya says,[3] "For *jivanmukti* the obliteration of latent impressions (*vasana-kshaya*) and dissolution of the mind (*manonasa*) are the principal means." This is echoed elsewhere,[4] "*vasana-kshaya*, *jnana* and *manonasa*, must be attended to simultaneously for sufficient length of time, if not,...*jivanmukti* can never be realized, even at the end of a hundred years." The book, *Advaita Bodha Deepika*, devotes an entire chapter to *manonasa*. The *Ribhu Gita* states, "The state of firm abidance in that thought-free state after *manonasa* constitutes *moksha*."

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[1] *Self-Enquiry*, Sri Ramanasramam.
[2] *Who am I?,* Sri Ramanasramam.
[3] *Jivan mukti viveka*, Swami Vidyaranya.
[4] *Yoga Vasishtha.*

The *Upanishad*[5] equates *manonasa* to *jnana*. Shankara makes the same assertion.[6] Similarly, many Vedantic texts[7] explicitly mention that, "When the mind is dissolved (*manonasa*), everything is dissolved. What remains after that is the Brahman, peaceful,eternal and free from misery." When the *vasanas* are removed, this results in the destruction of mind (*manonasa*) and this leads to direct knowledge (*aparoksha jnana*) and Self-realisation (*atma sakshatkara*). The ignorant often ask how a jnani can still think, act, talk and remember, as there is no mind left after *manonasa*. The same question[8] is asked by Lord Rama to Vasistha, as given below:

> Rama: The result will be dullness like that of stones or wood [after *manonasa*].
>
> Vasishta: Not so. All this is only illusion. Forgetting the illusion, you are freed from it. Though seeming dull, you will be the Bliss Itself. Your intellect will be altogether clear and sharp. Without getting entangled in worldly life, but appearing active to others, remain as the very Bliss of Brahman and be happy. Unlike the blue colour of the sky, let not the illusion of the world revive in the pure Ether of Consciousness-Self. To forget this illusion is the sole means to kill the mind and remain as Bliss. Though Shiva, Vishnu, or Brahma Himself should instruct you, realisation is not possible without this one means [*manonasa*].

Mind is merely a reflection of Consciousness. When the reflection is destroyed, Consciousness shines in all its glory through the *jnani* whose mind is absent. However, to the ignorant who are unsatisfied with the answer that one can function without the mind, it is said that the *sattvic* mind works through the *jnani*. This is explained by Bhagavan[9]:

> *Vritti* belongs to the *rajasic* (active) mind. The *sattvic* mind (mind in repose) is free from it. The *sattvic* is the witness of the *rajasic*. It is no doubt true consciousness. Still it is called *sattvic* mind because the knowledge of being witness is the

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[5] *Amritabindu Upanishad*, v. 5.
[6] *Vivekachudamani*, v. 277, 278.
[7] *Yoga Vasistha Sara*, Chapter on *manonasa.*
[8] *Yoga Vasishtha sara.*
[9] *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, Talk 68.

function of *abhasa* (reflected consciousness) only. Mind is the *abhasa*. Such knowledge implies mind. But the mind is by itself inoperative. Therefore it is called *sattvic* mind.

Such is the *jivanmukta's* state. It is also said that his mind is dead [after *manonasa*]. Is it not a paradox that a *jivanmukta* has a mind and that it is dead? This has to be conceded in argument with ignorant folk. *Sattvic* mind is surmised of the *jivanmukta* and of *Isvara*. "Otherwise," they argue, "how does the *jivanmukta* live and act?" The *sattvic* mind has to be admitted as a concession to argument. The *sattvic* mind is in fact the Absolute consciousness. The object to be witnessed and the witness finally merge together and Absolute consciousness alone reigns supreme.

Thus, *manonasa* should be taken as the death of the mind that identifies the Self with the body. In deep sleep, the mind is merged and not destroyed. That which merges reappears. It may happen in meditation also. But the mind which is destroyed cannot reappear. The aim must be to destroy it and not to sink in *laya* (merging). In the peace of *dhyana* (meditation), *laya* ensues, but it is not enough. It must be supplemented by other practices for destroying the mind. Mind's destruction is the non-recognition of it as being apart from the Self. Even now the mind is not.

To truly understand the destruction of the mind, you must recognize that the mind is not separate from the Self. The mind, in its true nature, is an illusion — an extension of the Self that seems real but is not. Even now, the mind does not truly exist; realize this. How can you achieve this recognition except through your everyday actions? Life continues automatically, and the mind that appears to drive these actions is merely a phantom, a projection of the Self. This is how the mind is destroyed — not by suppression, but by seeing it for what it is: an illusion.

The difference between the concepts of merging and destruction must be grasped. Submerging the mind, like in deep sleep or temporary meditation, only makes it invisible for a time. It remains intact, ready to resurface. Sleep offers a temporary reprieve, wherein your identity and attachments fade, but upon waking, they return just as they were before. This temporary disappearance mirrors what happens when the

mind is merely submerged, not destroyed. It's like a cycle – temporary peace followed by reentry into the same tiring, repetitive patterns.

The peace gained through relaxation or meditation is fleeting and dualistic — it starts and ends. Maharshi warns against mistaking this cyclic peace for liberation. Instead of simply resting and returning to the same frustrations, you must destroy the root cause of these cycles — what binds you and perpetuates your dissatisfaction: the mind itself. Not just its surface manifestations, but its very foundation.

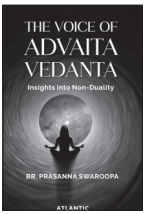
This requires more than daily practices or techniques. True destruction of the mind, called *manonasa*, means eradicating its root, not just its branches. The mind is constantly changing, so the key to destroying it is to go deeper, to the source that keeps the mind alive. This source is called *aham vṛtti* — the ego-tendency, the sense of "I" that drives the mind's endless activities.

The ego gives rise to the mind's diversity, its constant seeking and chasing. To destroy the mind, you must move beyond the mind's variations and confront the core belief of the ego: "I am incomplete, I need, I am dependent." The mind's endless chase for fulfillment arises from this sense of incompletion. The object of the chase may change, but the underlying impulse—the feeling of need—remains constant. The ego, like a central pillar around which everything revolves, drives all actions and desires.

Children play around a pillar, changing their games while the pillar remains unchanged. Similarly, the ego remains at the center of all your pursuits, even though the circumstances constantly change. This pillar, the *aham vṛtti*, is the belief that you are incomplete, that you need something external to complete yourself.

To destroy the mind is to question this fundamental belief. Are you truly incomplete? Do you really need anything to exist or to feel whole? Was it truly "you" that was born, and will it be "you" who dies? Destruction of the mind comes when you no longer believe in this false sense of incompleteness. When you stop identifying with the ego, the mind loses its power and dissolves back into the Self, leaving only the true, eternal Self behind. ▲

BOOK REVIEW



THE VOICE OF ADVAITA VEDANTA: Insights Into Non-Duality Paperback - 8 May 2024; By Br. Prasanna Swaroopa (Author); https://www.amazon.in/Voice-Advaita-Vedanta-Insights-Non-Duality/dp/8126940107/

Voice of Advaita Vedanta offers readers a transformative exploration of non-duality, distilling key teachings from essential texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Upanishads*, and works by Adi Shankaracharya and Ramana Maharshi. Through lucid English translations, the book bridges profound spiritual insights with practical guidance, making Advaita Vedanta accessible to modern seekers. The topics covered — ranging from meditation, Self-enquiry, and transcendence to the nature of reality and liberation — invite readers to engage deeply with the timeless wisdom of Advaita on their personal journey toward Self-realization.

The strength of this compilation lies in its comprehensiveness, covering major and minor texts in a clear, approachable manner. Its focus on practical applications, combined with theoretical understanding, ensures that the teachings are not limited to abstract philosophical discourse but are seen as tools for Self-discovery, inner peace, and spiritual fulfillment. The work is valuable both for seasoned Vedantic scholars and newcomers looking for insights into non-duality and liberation.

The book also serves as a bridge between ancient wisdom and the challenges of contemporary life, helping readers integrate the teachings of non-duality into daily practice. By addressing core themes such as desire, suffering, death, and the illusion of separateness, *Voice of Advaita Vedanta* not only guides readers toward Self-inquiry and meditation but also encourages detachment from transient worldly concerns. The book underscores the transformative power of recognizing the oneness of the individual and universal Self, offering a clear path toward inner liberation and lasting peace. ▲

D. Thiyagarajan

ASHRAM BULLETIN

Navaratri

The Navaratri celebrations at the shrine of Sri Matrubhuteswara were held from October 2 to October 12. At the beginning of the Navaratri festival (2/10/2023), at around 5 pm, Mother Yogambikai was taken out of the *sanctum sanctorum*, brought to the Sannidhi and consecrated in the Navaratri Kolu Mandapam. At 5.45 pm, Arati was held for Mother Yogambikai at Kolu Mandapam. The Goddess was decorated in various names and forms during the nine nights. All devotees attended and received the immense grace of the Goddess.

The auspicious Navaratri festival culminated in the grand celebration of Vijayadashami. At 6:00 pm, the beloved Mother Yogambikai was carried in a reverent procession by her devoted followers. Beginning at the Kolumandapam, the divine procession concluded at the Karpagraha, marking the end of the nine nights of spiritual fervor and divine grace.

Let us draw inspiration from this divine narrative and strive to overcome our own challenges, seeking the guidance of our spiritual teachers. May the blessings of Sri Ramana and Mother Yogambikai be upon us all!

Karthikai Deepam Festival

This year, the Karthikai Deepam Festival began with the flag hoisting ceremony at Sri Arunachaleswara Temple. On 13 December, the sacred Maha Deepam was lit at 6 pm on the Mountain peak. A special abhishekam, decoration and Vedic recitation were held at Bhagavan's Shrine. When the lamp was seen at the top of the hill, a small ghee lamp was lit in front of Bhagavan's shrine to a chorus of 'Annamalaiku Arohara!' The chanting of Aksharamanamalai was conducted every day for eleven days.

Earlier in the day, Bharani Deepam was lit in the Arunachaleswara temple at 4 am followed by the processions of Vinayakar, Murugar, Arunachaleswarar, Unnamulai Amman and Chandikeswarar around the temple. The festival concluded with the 3-day Theppam Utsavam and the Chandikeswarar Utsavam.

Bhagavan Jayanthi

The 145th Jayanti of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi was celebrated with grandeur on Dec 17, 2024 in an exemplary fashion with recitals from early morning. There were special pujas, and the chanting of Rudram, Aksharamanamalai, Ramana Stuti, etc. This was followed by abhishekam and special decoration. The final aarthi was held around 10:30 after the dedication of various songs. This was followed by a special feast wherein several thousands of people took prasadam.

Aradhana of Swami Ramananda

The aradhana of Swami Ramanananda was held at his samadhi (on 18/12/2024) that lies opposite the Mother's shrine. Swami Ramanananda, formerly known as Sri T.N. Venkataraman, passed away on December 26th, 2007. Instrumental in the ongoing development of Ramana Ashram, he assumed the role of Ashram President in 1953, succeeding his father, Chinnaswami. Swami Ramanananda continued in this position until he embraced sannyasa in 1994, subsequently retiring from his responsibilities at the Ashram.

Lucy Ma Day

Lucy Cornelssen's memorial day was observed on 31/12/2024 at the Ashram at 9.30 a.m. Her samadhi in the Ashram premises was decorated with flowers, and the devotees chanted Aksharamanamalai.

Sethupathi High School

Tiruchuzhi is the birthplace of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, where he studied at Sethupathi Primary School. To enhance the educational opportunities for the current generation of students, the Ashram undertook a project to expand the school's infrastructure with a six-room building complex. A Bhumi Puja was performed on April 24, 2024 to mark the commencement of this endeavor.

The Ashram successfully completed the construction of the six-room building complex, investing approximately Rs. 80 lakhs in the project. The newly constructed facility was formally inaugurated on October 9, 2024. The inauguration ceremony was attended by T.V. Chandramouli from Sri Ramanasramam, along with a gathering of Ramana devotees from Madurai Ramana Kendra in addition to the headmaster, teachers, and students of the school.

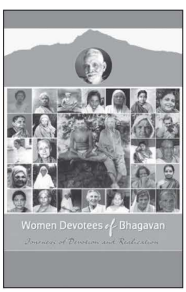
NOW AVAILABLE...

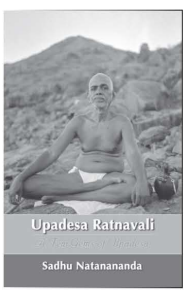
Women Devotees of Bhagavan Journeys of Devotion and Realization (English): A heartfelt tribute to the extraordinary women who found spiritual solace and enlightenment under the guidance of Sri Ramana Maharshi. This poignant collection of stories and insights offers a unique perspective on the power of devotion and the transformative nature of spiritual practice. By shedding light on the lives of these remarkable women, the book inspires readers to embark on their own spiritual journeys and discover the divine within. pp. xxxviii+340; Rs. 280/-; ISBN: 978-81-8288-335-2.

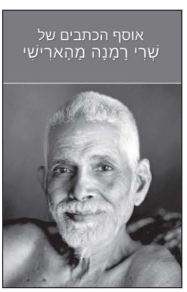
Upadesa Ratnavali: A Few Gems of Upadesa (English & Tamil): Upadesa Ratnavali offers a concise and systematic exploration of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's teachings, presented through 108 sutras. Sadhu Natanananda, a devoted disciple, meticulously captures Bhagavan's wisdom in a clear and precise manner, making it accessible to spiritual seekers. While the work may require contemplation, its direct and unadorned style guides the reader towards Self-inquiry. This bilingual edition, combining the original Tamil text with English translation, makes this profound text available to a wider audience. pp. xx+220; Rs. 160/-; ISBN: 978-81-8288-336-9.

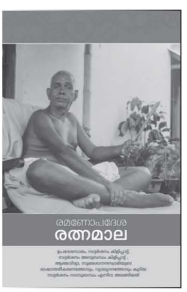
Osef haktavim shel Sri Ramana Maharshi (Hebrew): The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi in Hebrew. This invaluable collection by Arthur Osborne, translated into Hebrew by Divya (Shahar Lev) from the English. pp. 336; Rs. 350/-; ISBN: 978-81-8288-334-5.

Ramanopadesa Ratnamala – Part I&II (Malayalam): This book is a collection of the original works of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi and Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni. This book contains Upadesasaram, Saddarsanam, Sanubandam Kilipattu with commentaries, and Saddarsanam with a translation and commentary by Swami Suresananda. pp. xii+150; Rs. 150/-; ISBN: 978-81-8288-333-8.









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You can never find the mind through mind.
Pass beyond it in order to find it non-existent.
— *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Talk No. 473*

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Published by Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan, President, Sri Ramanasramam on behalf of Sri Ramanasramam
from its office at Tiruvannamalai 606603 and printed by Sri. N. Subramanian at
Sudarsan Graphics Private Limited, 4/641, 3rd Street, 12th Link Street, Kottivakkam, Chennai 600 041.
Editor: Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan